

Learning About Alcohol Abuse and Underage Drinking

Introduction

Let's talk frankly about alcohol. We all know a few people with a reputation for lifting the cheers mug a little too often. Then there are some notable celebrities who have publicly exposed their drinking problems due to shameful acts in public or accidents on stage. Perhaps an alcoholic uncle or sadly one or both of your parents may overly indulge. Do you see yourself as possibly heading in that direction? Maybe you also know a few people who seem to drink only moderately, people who don't get angry or obnoxious after one or two drinks. There are also some people who seem to be unable to stop drinking once they start. The label of "binge drinker" applies to these poor folks. For some of these people, the only control may be to stop drinking alcohol altogether.

What Type of Drinker Are You if Any?

Are you an alcohol drinker, and if so, what type of drinker are you?

- Moderate drinker?
- Occasional moderate drinker?
- Binge drinker?
- Occasional binge drinker?
- Sporting events fan drinker?
- Previous drinker – sober now?
- Drunk talker?
- Experimented only once or twice?
- Drink in vehicle while driving?
- Homeless drinker?
- Runaway drinker?
- Prostitute drinker – substance abuser?
- Gangster drinker – substance abuser?
- Now in jail for drinking?
- Served time for DUI?
- Fired from job for drinking?
- Broken relationship due to drinking?
- Killed or seriously somebody while drinking?
- Hospitalized for severe over-intoxication?
- Need detox?
- Currently in detox treatment?
- Need rehab?
- Currently in rehab program?
- Trying to control with the help of [Alcoholics Anonymous](#)?
- Have multiple types of substance abuse?
- Never drank alcohol?

Let's think about some of these types. Obviously some types of drinking are more dangerous than others. Being in school exposes you to people who run the gamut of different types and levels of drinking and taking drugs, both in high school and in college. Some of the most extreme cases may have already dropped out of school and may be living on the very fringes of society. You may know some of these people, as well. The drinking problem may be only one of

several factors that have pushed some of these people to the edge, which factors may include abusive parents or bullying in school, for example. **One type of drinking does not necessarily lead to another, but added stress could exacerbate drinking under some circumstances.**

Experimenting

When growing up we are naturally curious about different types of behaviors, experiences, places to go, people to meet, and so on. This is only natural and helps us learn about life beyond the books. Sometimes we are willing to take risks just for the fun of it. **Getting drunk or high on drugs offers fascination to many young people who are unfamiliar with the experience.** To many experimenters, however, drinking beer is not a tasty treat on the tongue. Sometimes we think of acquiring the ability to tolerate these distasteful properties as a challenge to mature or to prove our machismo. A more healthy paradigm may be the challenge to learn how to “like” tasting broccoli, if you don’t already like it. Marijuana often burns the throat and causes frightening feelings of paranoia. It’s amazing how much discomfort we willingly endure (like sticking syringes in our arms) in order to achieve a goal or subsequent pleasure, whether healthy or harmful. **Anything inhaled penetrates the nervous system directly through the lungs, which is much more potent and potentially dangerous than booze or drugs ingested through the oral digestive system.** In addition to pain, we are sometimes motivated to seek stimulating pleasure that we know is potentially dangerous or even lethal.

Moderate Drinker

If you drink no more than two drinks a day, consider yourself a moderate drinker. For women, the quota may be only one, based on your ability to metabolize alcohol. At this level you should be able to drive safely depending on the timing of your drinks and your weight. Some people may surpass the safe-driving limit of 0.08 percent of alcohol in your blood with two drinks depending on their weight and other factors, however. Even one drink slows down your reflexes to some extent. By drinking water and eating food while drinking or before driving, the safety measure will be improved. For the dating scene, moderate drinking (no more than one or two drinks) may improve your chances for a positive response from your date. If you over indulge, your date may be frightened off or your sexual performance may be compromised, if you get that far.

An occasional moderate drinker is one who drinks moderately only one or two days a week, or only on special occasions. For example, a week-end drinker avoids alcohol during the work week and only drinks on week ends. For students and professional coders, for example, there is always a need to learn and remember new information and we know that alcohol impairs the memory tenacity to some extent. You want your brain to be alert and sharp while acquiring the knowledge and skills you need in your current or future professional life.

Sporting Events Fan Drinker

Think of large stadiums with thousands of people enjoying baseball, basketball, football, soccer and other sports. Can you envision the scene without beer or other alcoholic drinks being enjoyed by enthusiastic fans? Have you ever participated by visiting a sports bar with some of your buddies? **Is the American pass time also the American drink time?** Although this is largely an innocent and healthy social event, often including children and entire families, this is also a situation where some people who are designated drivers or alcohol abusers are tempted to over indulge.

Although the children don’t drink in sports stadiums, they experience the exposure of adults drinking and behaving in a fanatic manner. Many other social events, as well, trigger the impulse to drink for the thrill of enjoying the moment, or for some young guys to gather up courage to meet attractive girls. Or simply to boisterously show off a few dance moves or talk bad among the guys. Hopefully, if you’re showing off some dance moves, you won’t fall on your face. Even more tragic are those fights between fans of opposing teams just about every year where sometimes people are injured or killed. Clearly alcohol contributes to these fanatic assaults. **Ask yourself if you have the maturity to limit your alcohol indulgence at sporting events to only two drinks? No mas!**

Drinking to Excess

Are some of your friends in school binge drinkers? Do you sometimes hang out with them and party with alcohol? If so, it may be a good idea to find new friends without dangerous habits. You don’t have to entirely reject your old friends,

but you can politely decline an invitation to party with alcohol. Make any polite excuse that works, including “too much homework this weekend”, or “have a big date”. If a good friend seems to have a drinking problem, you may also advise him or her to get some help. That’s what a good friend should do. You may also be helpful just by demonstrating the example of enjoying your friends without drinking. **Some people believe it’s impossible to have a good time or party without some type of drugs or alcohol. You can show them that they’re wrong.**

Definition

Drinking to excess or bingeing can be defined as having five or more drinks in one session or day, whether alone or with others. In high school or college, getting drunk can be looked at as a rite of passage or an experiment to investigate how much alcohol you can tolerate without getting sick. But this experiment gets old very quick. After bingeing, some people wake up the next day not remembering how they got to where they are. Some wake up to discover that they have been abused, robbed or injured by sleeping in a bad position or other trauma. Some never wake up. You probably know one or more persons who have experienced one of these scenarios, although you may have to prod them to admit it. **Just for fun, you may ask your friends “What’s the worst thing that ever happened to you while drinking?” or “Do you know any people close to you who were seriously injured or killed by excessive drinking?”** We have all heard about hazing practices in some colleges that have resulted in death by over drinking. Those behind the hazing not only feel sad and guilty, but also may face serious criminal prosecution for murder. Alcohol to extreme is poison to the human body. ***Be aware that [sometimes the damage of excessive drinking to the brain may be long lasting.](#)***

Mental Maturation

Anyone who wishes to experiment with this extreme level of intoxication is possibly suicidal or not mature enough to judge the consequences of his or her behavior. **Unfortunately, the teenage brain is lacking the mature growth of the prefrontal lobe that helps to protect us from risky decisions. For more information on the juvenile brain, look up keywords like “[teenage prefrontal lobe maturation](#)”.** You may have more knowledge in your brain than many other adults because of your education and personal reading or investigation, but your ability to make good decisions about risky options may be compromised by the incomplete development of parts of your brain. Don’t worry, you can still have a whole lot of fun without jumping off a cliff. And you can live to talk about it. You may even help to rescue a friend who bravely jumped into a river or ocean and injured himself. Hopefully, you are clever enough to find a safe way to get to the bottom of the cliff to help your friend without jumping in yourself. ***You can’t help your friend if you are also injured. You need to decide if you are to be a jumper or a helper. And the decision may have serious consequences, either way.*** You may also feel somewhat responsible if you encouraged him to jump in some way. Same thing with alcohol. **How would you feel if you gave somebody a bottle of whiskey and he drank too much and died? Responsibility! Responsibility! Responsibility!**

Even if you are old enough to legally drink, if you look towards your future, you may ask yourself whether you want to be thought of like one of your old drunken relatives. If you need help or advice about drinking, talk to your parents or a school counselor or teacher. **Counseling is also available for innocent non-drinkers to help them cope with alcoholic parents or partners. Look up “[alcohol abuse victims](#)” for more information about this situation.**

Skill of Responsibility

As you learn new things in school to prepare for the fun and freedom of having the “wings” of an adult, one of the most important skills and disciplines you need to acquire is to take responsibility for your own actions. **As children we are protected somewhat by forgiving parents and lenient laws whenever we push the wrong buttons. But as we get older, the umbrella of childhood protection is retracted.** Unfortunately, there are too many young adults in jails and prisons for crimes they committed often under the influence of alcohol or drugs and sometimes motivated by the need for money to purchase these substances. Although their parents may love them and forgive them, as well as a few good friends, their only nightly embrace is by the cold bars of a prison cell (or worse!).

Social Maturation Pressures

Sometimes the pressures of social maturation and acceptance in school are overwhelming. You may feel strong emotions including panic and depression in this experience. **Bullies may directly question your social acceptance, even**

though most bullies are themselves lacking in personal confidence. Added pressure may be due to the need to excel academically. **For some, the resort may be to take drugs or alcohol or both in an effort to escape these pressures.** Unfortunately, the schools and colleges are too often the easiest places to find pushers who sell these items, not to mention social media, as well. However, in these same schools, there are counselors and teachers who can help you understand and deal with the feelings of panic or depression you may be experiencing.

Counseling or Advice

Consider this an important part of your education regarding how you learn to deal with emotional problems and unhealthy habits. Many very successful adults including notable celebrities have benefited by personal counseling as well as rehabilitation several times during their lives. **Each person has his or her own unique set of circumstances that may suggest different possible remedies.** That is why the personal attention of a counselor may be needed to help you move forward in a manner that works for you. Seeking help is a step in the direction of learning to be responsible for your own development and maturation. If you have a broken arm, get the best advice and doctoring available to fix it. It is your responsibility to find the best help to get it fixed.

Personal Reactions to Alcohol and Drugs

Each person also has his or her unique way of reacting to drugs and alcohol. For example, women have less tolerance for alcohol than men. Your personal body mass and metabolism are also factors. In general, the greater your body mass the more you can tolerate. The same goes for your metabolism rate, the rate by which food substances are fully digested. If you're taking illegal drugs, there are greater risks, due to the fact that the quality and purity of such drugs may not be standard or approved by inspection. Various combinations of drugs and alcohol can also increase the risks of serious health damages. **Please don't hesitate to call 9-1-1 if someone passes out due to intoxication or drugs. The number of young people 20 and under who are treated in hospital emergency rooms for drug poisoning in recent years is increasing according to [recent reports](#).** These statistics include poisoning overdoses from alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, prescription opiates, illegal drugs, nutritional supplements and other substances and drugs.

Talking Drunk

We all know the sound of a person talking drunk. Sometimes we jokingly mimic this type of talk. Unfortunately, many of us have also seen excessive anger and aggressive behavior by those under the influence. Even friendly drunken platter can be annoying or offensive. It's important to think about the impact of talking drunk, whether kindly or angrily, to members of our family and close friends. **How do you feel when a loved one talks drunk to you? Do you ask the person "Are you drinking?"** If you are both talking drunk, this could lead to lengthy meaningless discussions often ending in arguments or fights. Hopefully, in this situation you may be safely separated by a phone connection. But even over the phone, words alone can seriously hurt your feelings and damage a relationship.

Talking drunk is simply offensive and degrades your posture in the eyes of your audience, even without violence. What does "I love you" mean from a person who is drunk? Repeated episodes can destroy relationships and undermine family bonding. If you need to discuss serious issues in a relationship, make sure that neither of you is drinking when you open the discussion. And especially, do not talk about excessive drinking with a person who is drunk or drinking at the time.

Broken Relationships

In extreme cases, talking drunk may lead to a separation or divorce of married persons or principal partners. One party may feel threatened by aggressive behavior of the other. Police may be called for domestic violence. Your principal other in high school or college may decide to drop your relationship because of drunken behavior. **If you have children together, your aggressive behavior while drinking may also lead to the loss or severe limitation of visiting rights and custody of your children.**

Driving Impairment

*In case you are a passenger in a car and the driver is talking drunk and driving dangerously, for your own sake, please ask to be dropped off nearby to go to the bathroom. **If the driver won't let a sober person take the wheel, call 9-1-1 to ask for police intervention.*** You may be a hero, even though the driver may not appreciate it. That's all a part of surviving to adulthood. Don't forget, as you have probably been warned, many young folks die on the road or by deliberate suicide before they fully grow their wings of adulthood. It's bad enough to risk your own life by driving drunk, but risking the lives of your passengers and other people on the road or nearby is an atrocious disregard for human life. This is not only immature behavior, but also sociopathic. Unfortunately many adults do the same thing, sometimes described as "*never growing up*" or simply a chronic alcoholic.

Drinking in Car

Drinking in the car while driving is simply a disregard for the safety of yourself and passengers, disregard for laws, and perhaps an illusion that since you may have survived previous episodes, you can repeat this behavior with impunity for as long as you wish. False illusion! **It's like Russian roulette. Keep on pulling the trigger and sooner or later the bullet will slip into the chamber.** Do you need detox or rehab?

Suicide Thoughts

If you're thinking about suicide, do you simply want people to feel sorry for you, or are you stubborn enough to get up off the ground and prove you can outlast any adversaries or obstacles thrown in your path? Stubbornness wins! Also, be creative! Why not take a selfie with the face of your bully in the background? **Please look up "[suicide lifeline](#)" to get immediate help on the phone regarding extreme depression.** Sometimes we need a little bit of help to courageously deal with the cards in our hand. Here you can talk with someone who can not only feel sorry for you, but can also provide personalized help in a confidential manner.

Detox

Detox or detoxification is related to chemical dependency where the body painfully complains when the substances of addiction are deprived. **Detox treatment provides controlled abstinence as well as comforting substances that are healthy while the intoxicating substances are cleared from the body over time, especially from the liver.** Abstinence over time is the primary biological remedy. Try quitting for a week cold turkey to see if you need some detox help. If you can handle a week of cold turkey self-detox, progressing to a full 30 days will help to change your habits and feelings about alcohol in a more permanent manner. This may be a good challenge to your *machismo!* If you are a heavy drinker consuming bottles of straight vodka every day, for example, you probably need detox to help you quit. You will also benefit from rehab to guide your behavior moving forward. **Consider a 30-day self-detox program a good start to self-rehab.**

Rehab

If self-rehab doesn't work (see above), standard rehab is available in several ways. Rehab or rehabilitation provides behavioral guidance through either residential facilities, outpatient services or 12-step programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous. **These services help you adjust to a life without chemical dependency or substance abuse.** Costs vary based on facilities, resources and time spent on services, *except for [Alcoholics Anonymous](#) which is free.*

Homeless Drinkers

Some homeless drinkers may be homeless due to excessive drinking which may have resulted in loss of income, family and so on. Possibly some other psychological problems may have attenuated excessive drinking in some cases. Many or most homeless people who drink, however, are homeless for reasons not caused by drinking or drugs, such as unemployment, family tragedies, lack of low-income housing, and so on. **If you are homeless, you may find some help by searching for "[homeless people resources](#)".**

Juveniles

Some juveniles may have been rejected from their family homes due to addictions of various types. Others may have run away from home due to parental abuse. Whether you are a runaway or reject please know that there is help out there if you look for it. **Runaway alternatives and help in general can be found by looking up “[juvenile runaway intervention help](#)”.**

Prostitutes

Some prostitutes may also be victims of family abuse or other problems and found themselves drawn into the beckoning of their pimp who sold them on the street. Some may alternatively have decided to work independently on the streets. A person addicted to expensive drugs may also seek work on the streets to pay for such drugs. Often the pimp will offer a deal in this regard. **There is help out there for getting out of the life of prostitution. Look up “[prostitution intervention help](#)” for more information.**

Gangster Abusers

Gangsters are often serious substance abusers. Some gangs are heavily involved in drug trafficking. Their gang is propelled into selling drugs to compensate members and to pay for their addictions. Some may also be partnered with international drug cartels. Some cartels organized in state prisons require permanent membership or death. Other gangs are principally motivated by turf competition. For gangs that focus on territorial turf control, drug selling competition may not be a principal goal. If you are involved in gang activity, you may need to question whether this is the path you wish to endure for the rest of your life? **There are several non-profit organizations who are devoted to help gang members turn their lives around, remove tattoos and find employment. Look up “[gang intervention help](#)” for more information.**

Drinking on the job

Drinking or drug use on the job is not allowed by most employers and may result in immediate firing if detected. “You’re fired!!!”. In some jobs you may be able to drink at lunch without a problem, as long as you do not drink too much, or drink in your immediate employer facility. Being fired for drinking may lead to the loss of future job opportunities based on the lack of favorable references. Just don’t do it! **If you have already lost a job due to drinking or drug use, you may benefit by seeking guidance for alternative career paths from a professional guidance counselor at a community college.**

Incarcerated

You may be reading this while in jail. Perhaps you were arrested for DUI or related charges, such as a drunken brawl in a nightclub. If this behavior is habitual in your past, this stay in jail may give you some time to think about your path. How important is it for you to continue drinking while driving or going to your favorite bars? What alternatives are available to you? If you have previously spent time in prison for DUI, whether currently in jail or not, then you obviously know the dangers of drinking and driving. **The question is , do you want to take control of your life, or do you want the laws of your society to determine where you live and what you eat?**

Lethal Consequences

Ever killed someone while drinking? Your conscience is probably eating you up if you ever killed somebody or cause permanent disabilities while drinking due to reckless driving, attenuated anger, lack of attention such as falling asleep while responsible for guarding children in a pool, or accidentally dropping items that fell on another person. **Accidentally killing one of your own children due to drinking or drugging is a fate that will haunt you forever, whether punished by the justice system or not.** Even worse if this happened during a drunken fit of anger. ***Is being more careful or sober beyond your grasp?***

Your Future

You have a choice. One choice may be the path of a sober helper, helping others to avoid bad drinking habits. The laws regarding drinking alcohol and substance abuse are intended to protect you as well as the general community. You can build your character and find ways to clean up any unhealthy habits if they exist, hopefully to nip them in the bud. Being young gives you the opportunity to do just that. But you're only young once. After that, the cleanup process becomes more costly and the losses and damages due to bad habits involving alcohol or drugs involve more social relations and career impairments, let alone possible losses of income due to incarceration, if it gets to that level. **It's easy to blame someone else for your situation, but, as they say, if you're in a deep hole, stop digging!** The ladder for redemption and elevation needs to be constructed by your own hands.

Advantages of Moderate Drinking or Sobriety

Some advantages of total abstinence from alcohol or cutting back to moderate or occasional moderate drinking, include a feeling of improved health and mental acuity. You can also expect Improved sleeping at regular hours since alcohol usually awakens you at irregular times even though it may originally sedate you. How about saving from \$100 to \$300 a month or more depending on your favorite drinks and your habits of visiting bars? Try to calculate how much you spend on alcohol and bars each month on the average. Better relations with family and friends will result especially if you have demonstrated aggressive behavior when drinking. Better performance at school, work and in your field of sports is expected due to the greater production of new neurons in your central nervous system. Improved sexual performance is due to improved blood circulation.

New Years Resolution or Pre-Years Resolution?

Be creative! Instead of making a New Years Resolution, why not make a Pre-Year Resolution? This may include total abstinence from alcohol for the rest of the year, throughout the holidays, ending January 1. By doing this, you will test your will power and if successful, probably reduce or eliminate many of the noxious family scenes that often occur during the holidays. Celebrate on January 1 only if successful!

There's a time for drinking

There's a time for thinking

But no such time for stinking drunk!

Talking drunk, talking junk

Talking smelling like a skunk!

(Can you build this into a rap?)

Love yourself! Love yourself! Love yourself!

You're smart! You can do it! Play the game of survival! Play to win!

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