

ALCOHOL: College & Teen Drinking

Conversations to Have With Your Son or Daughter

Our Brain During Alcohol Usage Is Unable to Keep Us Safe – We Are Not Able to be Responsible for Ourselves Which is a Dangerous Situation to be in.



Ali goes to a frat party and meets Bill. They both pre-gamed before the party by having at least 2 or 3 drinks. At the party, they continued to drink throughout the night which would fit the definition of binge drinking. At the end of the party, Ali and Bill had been having fun together dancing, flirting, and getting to know each other. They decided to leave together. They both had a mixture of beer, shots, and various other types of alcohol. They went to Ali's dorm and one thing led to the next. Ali became confused and didn't want to go as far as things were going. She gave no clues to Bill that she didn't want this anymore, so he continued. Ali didn't stop him because she thought he would get mad, and the situation would get worse as she remained confused about what was happening. Early that morning Bill left Ali's dorm. Ali immediately called her best friend telling her that she had been assaulted. Later that afternoon, Bill returned to Ali's dorm with a Starbucks coffee for her, believing that he had just met and spent the night with someone who he liked and wanted to date. They both have very different views of what happened that night. This is a very common occurrence at colleges.

The problem that our sons and daughters need to know: When we drink, we are unable to make decisions that reflect our true selves, and we are unable to understand what is happening around us, putting us in danger. Alcohol use breaks down our ability to understand the intent of others and to think in a way which keeps us safe.

Adding alcohol to the process of understanding other's intentions is almost impossible. This is why a female may believe she has been sexually assaulted after leaving a college party with someone and the male may feel he had a good night and met someone he could date. Both misjudged intent due to alcohol and both can experience significant consequences emotionally, physically, legally, and socially.

Within the current college culture, our daughters are getting messages that they can keep up with males by drinking just as much as them. Our sons are getting messages that drinking in excessive amounts is harmless. **What we want our sons and daughters to know is that when they put themselves in a**

position where they cannot be responsible for themselves, awful things can happen, and they will be attracted to people who have bad intentions.

College drinking on campuses is a culture that has proven to be deadly. While many students will make the choice to not drink, many will be in situations where they will make the decision to drink. Even if your student does plan on drinking or does drink, providing information on what happens while drinking is crucial. Between pre-gaming, binge drinking, and getting black out in an oversexualized college culture there can be so many opportunities for dangerous situations. Getting "blackout" is often intentional, laughed about with little concern, socially acceptable and even encouraged. While this handout does not advocate drinking, it will provide information for your young adult on the dangers of alcohol consumption and how to remain as safe.

Important Information for Students/Teens to Know

Both men and women report being sexually or physically assaulted while drinking.

One in 5 college females will report being sexually assaulted.

97,000 students between the ages of 18-24 are victims of alcohol-related sexual assaults or date rape.

More than 100,000 of 18–24-year-olds report having been too intoxicated to know if they consented to having sex and that alcohol has led to unplanned, unwanted, and unprotected sex.

When the consequences aren't injury or death, there can be life-long negative emotional and physical consequences that result from being impaired by alcohol.

We make sense of our surroundings very differently and inaccurately when we are under the influence of alcohol. We cannot trust our decisions or our ability to judge our safety or the intentions of others we are with.

Alcohol breaks down our restraints that hold the constraints of our behavior. It breaks down our true selves by causing us to see ourselves as we are not.

"Binge Drinking" - Binge drinking is defined as a pattern of drinking that brings blood alcohol concentration (BAC) levels to 0.08 g/dL. This typically occurs after 4 drinks for women and 5 drinks for men—in about 2 hours.

Our drunk self is not the same as our sober self – we make totally different decisions, and we view the world and how we see it very differently.

Alcohol will bring out the emotion of whatever the situation is – if you are depressed and drinking alone in your dorm, you will be more depressed.

Here's What Happens When We Get Drunk:

The first drink decreased the part of our brain responsible for learning, making decisions and planning outcomes. It then hits the amygdale which responds to safety and whether we are in a threatening situation. Now we are not as smart as we usually are AND we are unable to determine what is and what isn't safe for us.

Then, we drink more and at faster speeds between drinks or have shots; the part of our brain in charge of memory is impacted and we are unable to remember parts of the night. There is no rhyme or reason to what you remember or don't remember. At 0.15 blood alcohol level, the part of the brain responsible for memory shuts down entirely. This is "Blackout". Memories now stop forming.

Studies show that college students believe that drinking four or five drinks during the night is considered a low amount. It is not unusual for college students to have more than twenty drinks over the course of the night. Many students will pregame and drink even before they get to the event where they will be drinking. During a survey at a top tiered college, one in 10 students reported being blackout within the past two weeks. This number is greater when the student is involved in Greek Life.

There is an extreme difference between alcohol consumption and gender. Females often drink as much as males – this puts them at an even greater risk of being blackout. Females usually drink more wine or mixed drinks which have a greater alcohol content and raise blood alcohol levels faster than males who typically drink more beer. Females are also more likely to skip meals putting them at an even higher rate of increasing blood alcohol levels. Having a meal in your stomach reduces alcohol consumption by one third. Women also have less body fluid than men causing them to also have a faster rate of BAL.

Warn your student about doing multiple shots in a short period of time. This causes alcohol poisoning and is extremely dangerous. High levels of blood alcohol damages the brain and other bodily organs before the liver can metabolize the alcohol. People who do rapid shots consume deadly amounts of alcohol before they even feel the slightest bit intoxicated. If they wait to stop drinking shots until they start to feel the effects, it's already too late.

Alcohol Poisoning - Alcohol acts as a central nervous system depressant. It affects breathing, heart rate and involuntary muscle responses, such as the gag reflex. High levels of blood alcohol, a condition called "acute alcohol poisoning," is a serious medical emergency that can lead to brain damage, coma, and death. Alcohol poisoning usually results from drinking a large amount of alcohol in a short amount of time—binge drinking. By the time the negative effects are noticed, they have drunk too much and can find themselves in very dangerous situations, including alcohol poisoning which can lead to serious consequences and death.

Alcohol makes whatever is in front of us much more important to us and long-term considerations of consequences fade or are not able to be accessed.

When you are drunk, your understanding of your true self changes.

Underage drinking is illegal. It can have serious legal consequences which can alter dreams of college and life success. It can result in charges of MIPs (Minor in Possession), jail, school expulsion, fines and having legal charges which can impact future employment. Don't let one night ruin what you've worked so hard to achieve.

When it comes to driving, legally drunk means having a blood alcohol concentration of 0.08% or higher. A female who is 130 lbs. can reach this limit by drinking only two drinks in an hour.

Any amount of alcohol consumption before driving can affect performance behind the wheel. In fact, a recent study showed that having a single drink can significantly affect a person's driving ability – Buzz Driving.

Stick with one drink an hour so that the stomach can digest the alcohol, never drinking on an empty stomach, and never drive after drinking or getting into the car of someone who has.

KEY TIPS FOR A STUDENT THAT IS CONSIDERING DRINKING

Avoid doing shots. Shots and beer bongs have a danger of alcohol being absorbed too quickly which can lead to blackouts and serious bouts of vomiting. Avoid any method of drinking in which alcohol is being consumed very quickly. Drinks made with diet soda are absorbed more quickly than those made with regular soda. The whole idea is that if your student has decided to drink, slow down the pace of drinking to avoid black outs, passing out, or vomiting. Some people even add ice to their white wine to slow them down.

Alcohol mixed with food takes longer to absorb than alcohol consumed on an empty stomach. Eating a full meal before drinking can slow down the rate at which alcohol enters the bloodstream.

Alternating alcoholic drinks with non-alcoholic drinks can do a lot to help slow down the rate of alcohol consumption.

Don't let strangers pour drinks and don't leave your drink unattended due to Rohypnol aka Roofies the date rape drug. Males are not immune from this either. The best scenario is to drink a beverage that you can open yourself. This drug is unfortunately common on college campuses and bars.

Plan transportation. Never drive to a party if there is a plan or possibility of drinking. Using campus transportation is the most sensible decision.

Travel in pairs. It is always important to have a good friend at your side when you participate in alcohol consumption. Friends can help keep each other safe. Sexual predators target the intoxicated. Merely being male is not a safeguard either. Both genders are extremely vulnerable to crime and acts of violence when intoxicated. Having another person at your side is the best way to reduce these types of situations.

Anyone who passes out from drinking should not be left to "sleep it off". People can continue to absorb alcohol even after passing out, and this can lead to a fatal overdose of alcohol. Being left to sleep after becoming drunk can lead to aspiration (choking on their own vomit) and choking to death. It's important to stay with someone who might have had too much to drink, and not to assume that he/she will be fine after "sleeping it off." If this happens, this is a sign that the person is in danger and may need help. Calling an RA or an adult will be important.

If someone has seizures, slow or irregular breathing, or blue/pale skin - or you cannot wake him/her - call 911.