

Alcoholism issue within college society

[Health & Medicine](#), [Alcoholism](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Do you remember graduating high school? Remember all the questions you had to ask yourself. What are you going to do now? Do you want to work? Do you want to go to school again for another four years? These questions are eventually answered and some choose to find a job, and others figure out that going to college is probably a good thing. Now you have realized that you want to get a taste of college life and you're back to where you started. Where do you get the money? Where do you want to go? What are you really going to get out of this?

Finally you make your decisions and you now find yourself away from home in a new environment, living the college life. College is a time where tough decisions are to be made and these choices can change the direction of your life. It is a time where in most cases students get a taste of the real world by being away from home for the first time with a new found freedom to live as they please. College life is a new experience and the pressures that come along with it have an effect on a student's path to success.

Unfortunately, alcohol is one of these pressures. Alcohol abuse is a major problem that many young men and women encounter throughout their college experience. Drinking on college campuses is a problem that affects everyone. Let's first begin by understanding what alcoholism is and what it does to us. Alcoholism can be defined as an illness or a chronic disorder that comes from constant drinking.

It obviously has serious physical and mental effects on a person. According to Louis Joylon West, M. D. a professor and Chairman of the Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences at the UCLA School of Medicine, the

attributes that define an addiction, in this case alcohol, include craving, tolerance and withdrawal phenomena (West, 28). This is a problem that exists among men and women of all ages. Alcohol addiction has no barriers to race, religion or sex; anyone can have this addiction. Is alcoholism a disease? The American Medical Association and the World Health Organization officially acknowledged alcoholism as a disease in the 1950's.

It is very apparent that alcohol abuse has major effects on major organs of the body. Ethyl alcohol, or ethanol, causes severe damage to excretory organs including the liver and kidneys. Yet the major organ affected the most by outcomes of ethanol is the brain. Long-lasting effects of impairment of normal brain functions and damage of brain tissue are results of constant drinking. These outcomes eventually lead to other diseases of the body such as cirrhosis of the liver and mental disorders including depression and anxiety.

However, addiction to alcohol has side effects not only to a person's body but effects to those who surround them. Stewart G. Wolf, a professor at the Temple University School of Medicine, states, It should be emphasized that alcoholism is more than a disease of an individual. It disrupts the equilibrium of the family structure and, in one way or another, affects every family member. New equilibriums must be established when the alcoholic stops drinking, and there are adjustments to be made throughout both the drinker's period of recovery and after the establishment of long-term sobriety (28).

College drinking among university and college campuses across the United States is very prominent. According to studies conducted by the Harvard School of Public Health, heavy drinking by college students has

gone up since the beginning of the 1990's to the present. The study conducted in 1993 included a survey of 15,103 students to learn of student drinking habits. Results of the study showed that 39 percent of surveyed students consumed alcohol until they felt drunk. The same study was conducted in 1997 among 14,521 students and showed that 52 percent "drank to get drunk", an increase of 13 percent.

However binge drinking, defined as consumption of five drinks in a row by men and at least four drinks in a row by women in the past two weeks, has gone down according to the study (American Medical News, 39). This landmark study of college drinking has changed the thoughts and ideas of college administrators. It has been proven that this is a major problem, and it is worsening among the young men and women who attend our colleges. College drinking has an effect on not only the drinkers, but on their friends and classmates as well. How are non-drinking students affected by the presence of alcohol?

Many are pressured to drink in order to fit in with a crowd. Many students feel that it is cool to be seen with a beverage in your hand at a party or a function. The need for acceptance among their peers is a big deal to many first-year students and therefore many give in to these pressures. Yet there are many students that come to college to study and not to party. It has been proven that drinking on campus has consequences for those who choose not drink as well. According to the Brown University Digest of Addiction Theory and Application, students who drink cause problems that effect other students who do not drink.

Non-drinking students, at schools where drinking was common, reported having sleeping and study difficulties (68%) as well as having to console drunken students regularly (54%). Also, the study showed that students reported being degraded and harassed by students that were intoxicated (34%) and having been sexually provoked by drunken students (26%). Students attending other schools where excessive drinking took place reported similar results (5). How does the presence of alcohol affect first-year college students? Many students that are going to college for the first time are looking for new friends and buddies to hang out with.

Fraternities and sororities at our colleges in the United States help freshmen students in finding a new home. This in turn introduces them to the social functions that exist within a college campus. The Greek society within our colleges and universities has for years been known to contribute in student drinking on campus. In the November 1, 1998 edition of the Oregonian, writer Spencer Heinz reported that four out of five people associated with college fraternities or sororities were binge drinkers (A2). Fraternity and sorority life is considered a brotherhood and sisterhood.

They encourage a family-like relationship between members and promote partying together. Unfortunately, many functions created by these fraternities and sororities do not prohibit the use of alcohol. Members are therefore allowed to drink at these parties, which exposes new students to alcohol. Many of these freshmen are not mature enough to know where to draw a line and when this occurs, problems begin. There are far too many

examples of how drinking among college fraternities and sororities have led to severe consequences.

Heavy consumption of alcohol has been the cause of an increased number of assaults and unintentional injuries on campuses across the United States. Alcohol related deaths have gone up as well. A direct example is the case of Benjamin Wynne, an undergraduate student that attended Louisiana State University. Upon gaining acceptance into the fraternity, Alpha Sigma Epsilon, the fraternity had a party where alcoholic drinks were served. Wynne died the next morning with a blood alcohol level of . 588. The fraternity eventually was charged with purchasing alcohol for eighty-six underage drinkers and pleaded no contest.

This is an unfortunate freak accident but who is to say that it will not happen again? The fraternity that he wanted to become a part of caused his death. Yes, Benjamin Wynne's case was very extreme in its nature but heavy drinking is very much a part of the life that exists within fraternities and sororities. We cannot say that fraternities and sororities are the cause of all drinking-related problems on campus. The truth is that these organizations benefit a lot of students. Many colleges do not have fraternities and sororities but this does not make them different from any other school.

They still have the same problems with alcohol and students are affected in the same ways. Take for instance Southwestern Oregon Community College, a college without fraternities and sororities. Many students at this college see alcohol at their parties and just like any other college, there are students cannot handle the problems that their drinking creates. Unfortunately, it can

change their lives. A student at Southwestern Oregon Community College, who we will call Haley to protect her identity, is a prime example of this. How do we begin to solve this problem?

There is obviously no one single person, no single cause that can be put to blame for this problem that exists at our colleges. Yet it must be realized that unfortunately, as wrong as it may be, alcohol becomes a part of many students' lives. Many American-College students go to parties where alcohol is present. But the majority of these students are underage, illegal drinkers according to our laws. The point being that trying to tell students not to drink and hoping that they will listen does not work very well.

Richard P. Keeling, author of an article titled " Drinking in College: the Politics of Research and Prevention", writes The very nature of the academy is to encourage exploration, discovery and the testing of new ideas and experiences. Besides, many college and university students are of, or achieve, legal drinking age while they are enrolled. Higher education, therefore, cannot have a credible policy the simple option available to secondary schools: " just say no. " It is not enough for institutions of higher learning to advocate (or " teach") abstinence (51). Preventing alcohol abuse among students should be through education of the problems that come about from alcohol, not by just simply saying that drinking is wrong.

Saying that it is wrong to drink before reaching the legal age will not prevent our young adults from abusing alcohol. The only outcome of this is that we will have young adults abusing alcohol legally, as soon as they reach the age of twenty-one. Abstinence does not educate our college students of the

dangers that are caused by the use of alcohol; it only makes them ignorant to what can happen. Education can be in the form of health forums, increasing alcohol awareness on campus and the creation of prevention programs.

These are all far superior alternatives to promoting abstinence from alcohol because it teaches students in a mature way. It provides them with knowledge and understanding instead of trying to tell them what to do. The fact is that there is no way to eliminate the use of alcohol thus our only prevention is to educate kids at our colleges and universities properly and maturely. Programs must be installed in every school in the United States to lead our future in the right direction. We must teach our youth that alcohol is a very habit-forming, addictive drug that has severe aftermaths.

Students must understand what the risks are and what measures can be used to inform others of this problem. Clifford R. Browell, Chairman of the Department of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation at the Teachers College of Columbia University states, Education about alcohol deserves a prominent place in the school curriculum. Education is viewed as a process for the development of proper attitudes, habits, knowledges and skills that involve experiences of greatest value now, and to prepare youth for later happiness and success- " to live most and serve best.

Emphasis on academic achievement seems to be running far too ahead of subject matter designed to make human beings better able to cope with problems associated with wholesome personal and family living and responsible citizenry. (168) Our education systems have placed an emphasis

on learning in a classroom. Yet learning how to add numbers and how to write papers are not the only things we must learn to become mature. The point is that there are other things we must learn in a classroom. This includes the understanding of how alcohol can effect our futures. Alcoholism affects those around them.

It is important to understand that alcohol can take over a person" s ability to function in a normal manner and that traditional habits can be broken with ease. Again it can be emphasized that there is not one student that is immune to this problem, it affects everyone. We, as a society, do not want our future generations to experience these problems. Our prospective lawyers, doctors, engineers and scientists lie within the youth that attend our colleges and universities. It has been shown that there definitely is a problem that lies within our systems of higher education and things must be done in order to stop this problem.

Our future is within our young men and women and for many of them, their success starts with a proper education in order for them to achieve theirgoalsand aspirations. As a society, we need to assist them in their path to prosperity and therefore recognizing the problems that can harm them. Alcohol will probably never disappear on our colleges and universities. Consequently, our primary concern should be to educate our students of the dangers that can affect them. Without this the problem will only get worse.