

Alcohol and Society

Chapter 25 Lesson 3



Patterns of Alcohol Abuse

- **Binge Drinking-** *periodic, excessive drinking.* Popular among high school and college students, this can take the form of a social event or a contest to see who can drink the most in a short amount of time.
- Binge drinking can lead to serious difficulties such as dependence and alcohol poisoning.
- **Alcohol poisoning-** *a dangerous and toxic condition that occurs when a person drinks a large amount of alcohol in a short amount of time.*
- Generally when a persons blood alcohol level has reached 400 milligrams per deciliter-four times the legal limit for driving-the brains ability to control breathing is interrupted and death can result.



Alcoholism

- Many people mistakenly believe alcoholism is just a passing state when in fact **alcoholism**- *a physical and psychological dependence on the drug ethanol*- is disease.
- Another myth is that all alcoholics are “falling down” drunk, and hence easily recognized. Although this is true in some cases, most alcoholics appear clean, orderly, and well groomed.
- The one common denominator that exists among all alcoholics is that they all need help.



Traits of an Alcoholic

- People with alcoholism may exhibit one or more of the following traits:
- They are preoccupied in one way or another with alcohol
- Once they pick up the first drink, they cannot promise or predict what they will say or do, or how much they will drink
- They cannot manage tension without drinking
- They may have personality changes or memory lapses due to drinking.



Stages of Alcoholism

- **Stage One-** typically begins with social drinking, often to relax, or relieve stress or depression. Gradually, this kind of drinking becomes necessary to manage stress. A physical or psychological dependency on alcohol develops. The person begins to drink and become intoxicated more regularly. Often at this stage the drinker makes excuses and tries to rationalize his/her drinking behavior. His/her tolerance to alcohol increases, meaning more is needed to achieve the same effects.



Stages of Alcoholism cont.

- **Stage Two-** Gradually, the person reaches a point where he/she cannot stop drinking. In other words, the person is now physically dependant on the drug. He or she may drink alone and may drink everyday, with cravings for alcohol occouring early in the day. Physical and mental problems begin to become evident. Defensive behavior becomes evident as more and more excuses are made for drinking. The drinker denies and tries to hide their problem. At this point, drinking has become the central event in the persons life. Job performance and school work suffer.



Stages of Alcoholism cont.

- **Stage Three-** In the final and worst stage of the disease, drinking is more important than anything else in the persons life. The problem can no longer be denied, and it's uncontrolled. The alcoholic becomes aggressive, and isolated from friends and family, while malnutrition sets in since drinking is now more important than eating. If the alcoholic were to stop drinking at this point they would experience **delirium tremens-** *the dramatic physical, and psychological effects of alcohol withdrawal.* This consists of hallucinations, nightmares, and hot and cold flashes. At this stage of the disease, the person experience reverse tolerance since the liver can no longer break down the alcohol efficiently.



Costs to the Family

- It's estimated that there are more than 3 million teen alcoholics, with up to 5 million considered problem drinkers.
- Alcohol abuse and alcoholism are major factors in the four leading causes of accidental death: car crashes, accidental drownings, burns, and falls.
- Alcohol is a factor in 20-35 percent of all suicides, and plays a role in domestic violence, as well as spousal and child abuse.
- People who are involved with alcoholics and whose lives are enmeshed in an alcoholics problems are co-dependants. Their suffering, like that of the alcoholics, can be enormous.

Costs to Society

- Alcohol is a major factor in the three leading causes of death for 16-24 year olds. These are traffic crashes, homicides, and suicides.
- In all, alcohol claims about 100,000 Americans a year.
- Alcohol contributes to about 6 million non-fatal, and 15,000 fatal injuries a year.
- In the workplace, up to 40 percent of industrial fatalities and 47 percent of industrial injuries can be linked to alcohol.



Choosing to be Alcohol Free

- Saying no to alcohol takes a firm mental commitment from you before you go to a party or other social situation where alcohol may be served.
- Practicing what you're going to say in social situations can help you prepare for the event.
- Whatever you do to turn down a drink, keep it brief, polite, confident, and to the point. Sometimes humor, or the unexpected, creative comment can do the trick.



Alcohol and Sexual Activity

- Alcohol affects a person's judgment and may interfere with self-control over one's emotions, decisions, and behavior.
- Alcohol may cause a person to do or say things he or she otherwise would not normally do, including engaging in sexual activity.
- Some people who are shy or otherwise uncomfortable may use alcohol as an icebreaker, only to find themselves in a place or situation that they may later regret.
- It's up to you to make the choice.

