

Social Drinking Moderate Drinking And Abuse



by Bill Breitsprecher

Social drinking is a term that refers to drinking patterns that are considered "acceptable" among the people in which they occur. Different groups have different perspectives on when drinking is "normal." People that drink heavily may have different ideas about what they consider "normal" drinking.

The term "social drinking" is not a good way to look at alcohol use and/or abuse. It is more important to ask, "Does a pattern of drinking cause problems for ourselves, others, or society?"

Then we realize that social drinking isn't about our ideas on how alcohol use by one person compares to another. It's not about finding the "right" amount. It's about harm to ourselves, people we love, or others around us.

Moderate drinking may be defined as alcohol use that does not cause problems, either for the drinker, friends and family, or society. There's no hard-and-fast rule - we can't really say how many drinks are "social", "moderate" or "abuse."

But consider this - does anyone really ask if they are abusing alcohol if they do not see it causing problems for themselves, someone they love, their job or schoolwork, or others?

When a person is in trouble with the law directly or indirectly because of alcohol use, isn't that always a problem? Don't we have to call this "alcohol abuse"? Are there some questions that we have already answered when we think of asking them?

Alcohol is a depressant - it is also a poison. The typical reaction, a normal reaction to one drink, is a feeling of relaxation - a feeling of contentment. There is no need, no desire, no craving for another.

Have you ever watched people at a party hold a drink and stir it and stir it? They know they have had enough. They do not want another sip. They do not need one. If you offer them another drink, they probably politely say "no, I have had enough." That person can handle their alcohol.

Some people have many drinks, telling themselves that they can handle their liquor. The National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism defines binge drinking as a pattern of drinking that brings a person's blood alcohol concentration (BAC) to 0.08 grams percent or above. This typically happens when men consume more than 4 drinks and women consume more than 3 drinks in about 2 hours.

This level of intoxication is correlated with health problems, impairs drivers, and likely changes a person's judgement. It probably impacts friends, family, relationships, and job-performance. It can create problems. Do those that binge drink see these problems?

Sadly, often they do not. Some do and promise themselves that they will drink less, change their drink of choice, drink only on certain days, or switch to beer. Some solemnly swear they will never drink again.

Will any of this work? There's only one way to tell - try it. Alcohol abuse isn't really about what or how much or how often we drink. It's about problems that are directly or indirectly a result of our drinking.

I pray that those who suffer from repeated alcohol abuse will find the clarity of mind to see the problems in their lives and the outcomes of choosing to pick up a drink - that first drink.

Until then, I pray for people that are being harmed by alcohol abuse.

Alcohol Abuse Hurts Communities, Families

by: County Executive Kathleen Falk

In Dane County we see so much human misery and face enormous public safety, health and economic costs because of the misuse of alcohol.

Our state has the absolute worst rates of underage, binge, and chronic heavy drinkers in the country. We're also worst for fatal car crashes caused by alcohol.

In Dane County, more than 40% of the fatal car crashes last year involved alcohol. Three times as many people are killed in alcohol related traffic crashes than are murdered in Dane County each year. 3,000 people are booked on drunk driving charges in this county each year.



Do we want our deputies and police officers spending their shifts hauling drunks to detox instead of patrolling our neighborhoods?

Overconsumption of alcohol also hurts public health, increasing the prevalence of cancers, heart disease, and other debilitating illnesses.

It's estimated 25,000 kids in this county go home to parents who are intoxicated and may be verbally or physically abusive.

With all the greatness of our community, why do we put up with this?

We can be different.

That's why I'm going to spend the next five months studying, reading, listening, and reviewing the options for how we can best move forward to address this problem. I'll produce a set of steps I think we need to take.

But, I need your help.

We all need to look inside ourselves and think twice about what we're willing to accept as appropriate. We all can be part of the solution.

We need to do more for our young people who right now grow up in a culture of thinking the only things to do on Thursday, Friday, or Saturday nights involve a bottle-opener, can, or keg.

This effort isn't about stopping drinking to celebrate. It's about stopping the celebration of drinking.

20 Question to Self-Assess Drinking

1. Do you lose time from work due to your drinking?
2. Is drinking making your home life unhappy?
3. Do you drink because you are shy with other people?
4. Is drinking affecting your reputation?
5. Have you ever felt remorse after drinking?
6. Have you gotten into financial difficulties as a result of your drinking?
7. Have you gotten into legal troubles as a result of your drinking?
8. Does your drinking make you careless of your family's welfare?
9. Has your ambition decreased since drinking?
10. Do you crave a drink at a definite time daily?
11. Do you want a drink the next morning?
12. Does drinking cause you to have difficulty in sleeping?
13. Has your efficiency decreased since drinking?
14. Is drinking jeopardizing your job or business?
15. Do you drink to escape from worries or troubles?
16. Do you drink alone?
17. Have you ever had a complete loss of memory as a result of your drinking?
18. Has your physician ever treated you for drinking?
19. Do you drink to build up your self-confidence?
20. Have you ever been in a hospital/institution because of drinking?

Answering YES to any one question can be a warning. Answering YES to any two indicates there may be a problem. We suggest talking to someone about help when there are YES answers to three or more of these questions.

Celebrating Alcohol Awareness Month with VOICES Newspaper & Club TNT Resources for youth, families, & educators
www.breitlinks.com/alcoholawareness
 Approximately one-half of U.S. adults report a family history of alcoholism or problem drinking. Nearly 14 million Americans have alcohol disorders.

