



CRIME PREVENTION HANDOUT

FACTORS IN DRINKING AND VIOLENCE

Fights, killings, rapes and suicides are common forms of violence. Unfortunately, alcohol is often a factor. It is estimated that as much as 90% of violent crimes that occur on college campus is a direct result of drinking alcohol. This handout gives information on the factors involved in and risk reduction strategies for alcohol violence.

FACTORS IN ALCOHOL-RELATED VIOLENCE

Alcohol is a depressant, reaching first the higher brain centers - inhibiting self-consciousness, anxieties, and capacity for good judgment. Further consumption affects the lower centers, affecting motor functions causing drunks to stumble and slur. With excessive consumption, alcohol poisoning depresses the respiratory centre at the base of the brain, and may cause death. The presence of food in the stomach slows the absorption of alcohol into the blood and brain.

Psychologically, alcohol is often described as 'disinhibiting'. This helps explain its popularity as a social lubricant as well its association with street disorder, crime and violence.

Models have been developed, based mainly on studies of men, to explain how alcohol shapes interactions that result in violence. The effect of alcohol on higher brain functions reduce the number of cues to understanding a situation which the intoxicated person is able to perceive. It also affects how the person reacts to actions of others that may appear unreasonable, while impairing usual coping mechanisms.

Statistics in Alcohol Violence

- In one study of interpersonal violence, men had been drinking in an estimated 45 percent of cases and women had been drinking in 20 percent of cases.
- Women whose partners abused alcohol were 3.6 times more likely than other women to be assaulted by their partners.
- In 1997, 40 percent of convicted rape and sexual assault offenders said that they were drinking at the time of their crime.
- In 2002, more than 70,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 were victims of alcohol-related sexual assault in the U.S.
- In those violent incidents recorded by the police in which alcohol was a factor, about nine percent of the offenders and nearly 14 percent of the victims were under age 21.

Reducing Your Risk to Alcohol Violence

- Be aware that alcohol affects the way you feel and act.
- Eat a heavy meal before drinking to slow down the absorption of alcohol in your body.
- If you feel threatened at a party or others around you begin to argue or act angry, then leave the party.
- Don't carry a weapon or be around someone who does while drinking.
- Don't encourage or approve reckless and irresponsible behavior caused by intoxication.

Conclusion

Remember, you are responsible for your decisions about when to drink and how much. You are equally responsible for all the consequences that may result from making poor decisions when it comes to drinking.

References:

1. The Marin Institute at http://www.marininstitute.org/alcohol_policy/violence.htm
2. Alcohol and Violence by Linda Hill, The Alcohol & Public Health Research Unit at <http://www.aphru.ac.nz/hot/violence.htm>
3. Alcohol 101 + at www.alcohol101plus.org