Milwaukee School of Engineering
Counseling Services Newsletter

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Alcohol Use

Tom Carroll, Intern Counselor, MSOE Counseling Services

"Alcoholism is the only disease you can get yelled at for having."
Comedian Mitch Hedberg

Alcohol use (or misuse) is a perennial problem on college campuses across the US. Despite wide acceptance of a **medical model** of alcoholism (i.e. treating alcoholism as a disease) as noted above by Mr. Hedberg, alcohol misuse is also still surrounded by shame, guilt, and social stigma. As a result it is easy to read literature on alcohol misuse with a defensive, guarded, attitude. So, before reading on – **Relax.**

This newsletter will not label you an alcoholic, or judge you for being a bad person.

This newsletter does contain a few ways to help determine what levels of drinking can be problematic, but (stay relaxed!); they're at the end of the article. First, here's some basic information on alcohol use. The following statistics are cited from http://www.mentalhealthscreening.org

Who Drinks at College?

- In 2002, 36% of full-time college students (aged 18-22) reported consuming less than one alcoholic drink in the past 30 days.
- Meanwhile 56% of full-time college students reported consuming less than five or more drinks on the same occasion at least once in the past 30 days.

So over a third of college students drink less than one drink a month or don't drink at all. But of those students who do choose to drink, about two thirds reported binge-drinking (defined as having four (for women) or five (for men) drinks on one occasion). Just for reference, a standard drink contains about .6 fluid ounces of pure alcohol. This would include:

- A 12 oz. can of beer, or
- 1.5 oz. (1 shot or jigger) of spirits (i.e. gin, vodka, brandy, etc.), or
- A 5 oz. glass of table wine

How Does College Drinking Affect Students?

Sometimes students end up hurting themselves or others.

- More than 600,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are assaulted each year by another student who has been drinking
- 1,400 college students between the ages of 18 and 24 die each year from alcohol-related unintentional injuries, including motor vehicle crashes
- 500,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are unintentionally injured under the influence of alcohol

Alcohol use can also lead to risky or criminal sexual behavior.

- More than 70,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are victims of alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape
- 400,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 had unprotected sex and more than 100,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 report having been too intoxicated to know if they consented to having sex

But How Can Drinking Affect Me Personally?

College Drinking Prevention lists some risks of drinking. They include: academic problems, increased risk of suicide attempts, health problems due to drinking, increased risk of property damage, and (perhaps obviously) drunk driving (see more below). Read the rest of the list here: http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/facts/snapshot.aspx

According to www.dui.com, in Wisconsin a first offense OWI (Operating While Intoxicated) conviction will result in a fine of $150 to $300 and license revocation for at least six months. The offender also pays for mandatory assessment and counseling, legal costs, and what will likely be a significant insurance rate increase. Keep in mind that the legal blood alcohol limit in Wisconsin is now .08, or anything above .00 if you're under 21.

How Do I Know If I or Someone I Know Should Be Concerned About Alcohol Use?

There are lots of ways to assess alcohol use. One easy way is to follow the links to the confidential alcohol screen on MSOE's Counseling Center website. Go to http://www.msoe.edu/st_life/couns/ then click on the "Screening for Mental Health - Online Screening Program" link. Click the "Begin the Screening" link and then choose the Alcohol Screen.

One quick way to assess problematic drinking is to simply ask these three questions:

1. Am I drinking more than I used to?
2. Once I start drinking, am I sometimes unable to stop?
3. Do I get irritated when I'm in a place where I can't drink?

*Even one *yes* is a sign for concern.

A more in-depth look at drinking habits comes from Project IMPACT. 20 Questions About Alcohol and Drug Use

1. Do you lose time from school or work due to alcohol or drug use?
2. Do you use alcohol and drugs to feel more comfortable?
3. Do you use alcohol or drugs to build confidence?
4. Do you use alcohol and drugs when you're alone?
5. Is your alcohol or drug use affecting you reputation?
6. Do you use alcohol and drugs to escape from school, work or home worries?
7. Do you feel guilty or depressed after the use of alcohol or other drugs?
8. Does it bother you if someone comments on how much you drink alcohol or use drugs?
9. Do you feel more at ease in social situations when you are drinking or using drugs?
10. Have you ever gotten into trouble at home, school, or work because of your alcohol use?
11. Do you borrow money or "do without" other things to purchase alcohol or other drugs?
12. Do you feel a sense of power when you use alcohol or drugs?
13. Have you lost friends since you started to use alcohol or other drugs?
14. Do your friends use less alcohol or other drugs than you do?
15. Have you started to hang out with a heavy drinking/drug using crowd?
16. Do you drink or use drugs until everything is gone?
17. Do you wake up and wonder what happened the night before?
18. Have you ever been arrested or hospitalized due to your drinking or drug use?
19. Do you "tune out" information about alcohol or other drug abuse?
20. Do you think you have a problem with alcohol and other drugs?

*Answering *yes* to three or more of these questions is a sign for concern.

More Substance Use Resources

On the Web:

- As mentioned above, screening for alcohol use is available from MSOE's Counseling website at: http://www.msoe.edu/st_life/couns/
- National Institute on Drug Abuse: http://www.drugabuse.gov/

- US Department of Health and Human Services and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) National Clearinghouse for alcohol and drug information: http://www.health.org/

- SAMHSA's Substance Use Programs: http://csat.samhsa.gov/programs.html

- SAMHSA's Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator: http://www.nattc.org/treatmentHelp.html

- Alcoholics Anonymous World Services: http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org/

- Al-Anon Family Group: http://www.al-anon.alateen.org/

- American Psychiatric Association Substance Abuse and Addiction website: http://www.psych.org/public_info/substance.cfm

- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism's College Drinking Prevention Website: http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/

- National Mental Health Association's Substance Abuse Fact Sheet: http://www.nmha.org/infoctr/factsheets/02.cfm

- University of Chicago's Virtual Pamphlet Collection - Alcohol and Substance Use: http://counseling.uchicago.edu/resources/virtualpamphlets/alcohol_substances.shtml

Via Telephone:

- Alcoholics Anonymous World Services: (212) 870-3400

- Al-Anon Family Group United States Headquarters: (800) 344-2666

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: (800) 662-HELP

- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (301) 443-3860

MSOE Counseling Services is located on the Second Floor of the Kern Center (K-230). To Schedule an appointment with a Counselor, call (414) 277-7590. For more information, visit Counseling Services at: **www.msoe.edu/st_life/couns**