



# STUYVESANT HIGH SCHOOL'S SPARK PROGRAM



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## ABOUT ALCOHOL & ALCOHOLISM \*

### I. Alcohol Facts

- **Drug Class:** Depressant; Sedative Hypnotic
- **Terms/Slangs:** Ale, Beer, Booze, Brews, Brewskis, Cebeza, Fire Water, Hooch, Hard Stuff, Jacks, Juice, Liquor or Liqs, Moonshine, Porter, Proof, Vino, Whiskey, Wine
- **Law:** It is illegal to buy or possess alcohol if you are under 21.
- **Craving:** A strong need or compulsion to drink.
- **Tolerance:** The need to drink greater amounts of alcohol in order **“to feel drunk.”**
- **The alcohol** that is used in beverages is called “ethanol.”

### II. Effects on the Brain & Behavior



- **Anyone can become dependent on alcohol.** Continued exposure to alcohol changes the brain in ways that produce dependence.
- **Once alcohol** has been absorbed and distributed, it has many different effects on the brain and behavior.
- **Drinking alcohol leads to a loss** of coordination, mental functioning, poor judgment, slowed reflexes, distorted vision, memory lapses and even blackouts.
- **Social and Psychological Issues:** Drinking can lead to inappropriate social behavior which the drinker may regret. Alcohol depresses your central nervous system, lowers your inhibitions and impairs your judgment. Drinking can lead to risky behaviors, including having unprotected sex. This may expose you to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases or cause unwanted pregnancy.
- **Alcohol use effects the brain of younger people** very differently from the way it affects that of adults.

### III. About Alcoholism

- **People who are not alcoholic** sometimes do not understand why an alcoholic can't just “use a little willpower” to stop drinking. However, alcoholism has little to do with willpower.

Alcoholics are in the grip of a powerful **“craving,” or uncontrollable need**, for alcohol that overrides their ability to stop drinking. This need can be as strong as the need for food or water.

Although **some people are able to recover from alcoholism without help**, the majority of alcoholics need assistance.

With treatment and support, **many individuals are able to stop drinking and rebuild their lives.**

Many people wonder why some individuals can use alcohol without problems but others cannot. **One important reason has to do with genetics.**

**Scientists have found that** having an alcoholic family member makes it more likely that if you choose to drink you too may develop alcoholism.

Genes, however, are not the whole story. In fact, scientists now believe that **certain factors in a person's environment influence whether a person with a genetic risk for alcoholism ever develops the disease.**

**A person's risk for developing alcoholism can increase based on** the person's environment, including where and how he or she lives; family, friends, and culture; peer pressure; and even how easy it is to get alcohol.

### IV. “About The Buzz”



- When people drink they feel pleasure and relaxation during the first half hour or so, often becoming talkative and socially outgoing, but **these feelings are usually replaced by sedation** (drowsiness, mood altering) as the alcohol is eliminated from the body, so drinkers may become quiet and withdrawn later.
- **This pattern often motivates** them to drink more in order to keep the initial pleasant buzz going.

### V. Know Some Signs

- **Slurred** and/or **incoherent speech**
- **Denial** and/or **lying about how much alcohol he/she is using**
- **Belief alcohol is necessary to have fun.** Belief in control
- Having frequent **hangovers**
- **Feeling run-down, depressed** or **even suicidal**
- **“Blackout”** – forgetting what he/she did while drinking
- Having **problems at school, work or getting in trouble with the law.**

### VI. Know The Risks

- **“Binge” drinking** means having five or more drinks on one occasion (**High-risk drinking**).
- **Mixing alcohol** with **medications** or illicit drugs is extremely dangerous and can lead to direct consequences/accidental death.
- **Bottom-line, alcohol can create or exasperate personal, social and family problems.** Drinking large amounts of alcohol over a long period of time, puts your health at risk.

### SOME HELPFUL RESOURCES/REFERRALS:

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| ▪ <b>Above The Influence</b><br><a href="http://www.abovetheinfluence.com">www.abovetheinfluence.com</a> | ▪ <b>Partnership At DrugFree.org</b><br><a href="http://www.drugfree.org">www.drugfree.org</a> | ▪ <b>Substance Use &amp; Mental Health</b><br><a href="http://www.samhsa.gov">www.samhsa.gov</a> |
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\* Project Towards No Drug Abuse Education Series Courtesy of Angel Colon and Stuyvesant High School's SPARK Program