

SMART AND SOBER INITIAL REACTIONS

(1) What is your immediate reaction after watching *Smart and Sober*? How did the stories presented make you feel?

Notes:

(2) What is one thing you learned from the video that will help you stay away from alcohol and other drugs?

Notes:

(3) Many teens mistakenly believe that alcohol is cool, fun and ultimately harmless. What do you think are some of the reasons teens feel this way?

(You might want to have them name movies, magazines, advertisements and music videos they have seen recently that feature drinking as a socially-acceptable activity.)

Notes:

(4) How would you try to convince other teens that drinking is not the cool or right thing to do?

Notes:

OBSERVATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

- (1) Do any of your friends/peers drink?
 - If yes, then how do your friends/peers describe the way they act when they are drunk?

 - If no, what strategies do they use to avoid alcohol?

- (2) Many people use words such as “trashed,” “wasted,” “passed out,” and “drunk” to describe what happens to them when they drink. What do these words suggest to you? How did these words, which have very negative meanings, come to be associated with being “cool?”

- (3) Jeff began by using alcohol and marijuana, which he called his “gateway” drugs, meaning that once he grew tired of alcohol or marijuana, he moved onto other drugs. Do you see these as “gateway” drugs? Do you think it is easier for teens to try a new drug if they are already into drinking? Why or why not?

THE IMPORTANCE OF PARENTS

- (1) The teenagers in the Smart and Sober video (particularly Adrian, Claude and Lily) acknowledge that their parents heavily influence their decisions to drink or not to drink. As host Henry Winkler phrased it: “If parents expect a certain behavior from you, you want to live up to that.” How have your parents influenced your decisions? What do they say or do to keep you from drinking?

- (2) In the video, Jeff, a recovering addict, notes that “you’re more influenced to do something if you see it more often.” He believes that because both of his parents are alcoholics, it was easier for him to pick up his first drink, his twentieth drink and so on. Research shows that children who come from a family with a history of alcohol dependence are at a greater risk of developing problems with alcohol, as well. How do you feel about this statement and the research?

- (3) Lily says: “You hear your parents saying ‘don’t do this, don’t do that,’ but when they’re telling you this, you’re thinking ‘OK, you did it. You were my age once.’” How does knowing whether or not your parents used alcohol when they were underage affect your choice to drink or not to drink?

A SMART AND SOBER QUIZ

Please answer **true** or **false** to the following statements:

- (1) Beer and wine are “safer” than hard liquor.
- (2) After having too much to drink, you can get it out of your system by drinking coffee, taking a cold shower or “walking it off.”
- (3) Alcohol is not a drug.
- (4) Not everyone drinks.
- (5) Drinking alcohol has long-term consequences on your health.

Answers:

- (1) **False.** A 12-ounce of beer, a 5-ounce glass of wine, and 1 ounce of hard liquor all contain the same amount of alcohol and have the same effects on the body and mind.
- (2) **False.** It generally takes about 2 to 3 hours for a single drink to leave the body’s system: nothing can speed up this process. Also, research is showing that the most damage is done to the brain during the hangover period.
- (3) **False.** Alcohol is a drug. Dr. Peter Rogers notes in *Smart and Sober* that if alcohol were “just discovered today it would be labeled a Schedule 1 drug, which means that it has no medical usefulness, and that it’s highly addictive.” It has also “killed more people than heroin has.”
- (4) **True.** 94% of 12 to 14 year olds and 74% of 15 to 17 year olds report that they did not drink alcohol last month. Although at times it might seem like everyone is drinking, there are also a large number of teenagers who make the choice not to drink. As Laura says in the video: “I hope that teens understand that it is okay not to drink, that they don’t have to start making unhealthy choices....There are a lot of other people out there like them. I’m one of them.”
- (5) **True.** Studies on the brains of drinkers and non-drinkers prove that alcohol has a negative impact on brain development and cognitive function. Dr. Peter Rogers notes that alcohol affects the hippocampus, the part of the brain that controls short-term memory. Over time, a student who drinks extensively will likely suffer in school, because their ability to memorize and retain information will be impaired.

BIG REASONS TO SAY NO TO ALCOHOL

Multiple Choice: circle the letter of the correct answer.

- (1) Kids who drink are more likely to:
- (A) Be victims of violent crime
 - (B) Have serious problems in school
 - (C) Be involved in drinking-related traffic accidents
 - (D) Become sexually active at an earlier age and have unprotected sex
 - (E) Develop alcohol dependence as adults
 - (F) All of the above
- (2) Alcohol is frequently a factor in which leading causes of death in 15 to 24 year olds:
- (A) Car crashes
 - (B) Homicides
 - (C) Suicides
 - (D) All of the above

The answers for both 1 and 2 are All of the above.

JUST SAY NO AND BEYOND

Everyone has heard the expression “just say no” before, but saying “no” to alcohol is easier said than done. Here are some tips for saying “no” without alienating your friends:

- No thanks.
- I don't feel like it – do you have any soda?
- I'm not into alcohol.
- I'd rather do something else (suggest a movie, a game, etc.)

What is your favorite reason for saying no?

SMART AND SOBER THINGS TO DO

One of the young men in the video, Melvin, says that he made a list of 200 things to do instead of drinking. How many activities can you come up with? Create your own list of favorite alcohol-free activities.

ALCOHOL'S SLIPPERY SLOPE

Many believe that alcohol use by young people is a normal part of growing up and that the damage is minimal. The video shows tragic examples of things that happen when young people drink, from physical effects to financial setbacks to heartbreaking consequences that effect, often, an entire community. In the video, there are also young people who became addicted to alcohol. These teens never knew the control that alcohol can take from a person. Jeff, Remeika and Laura never meant to become alcoholics. The disease of alcoholism overcomes a person without the person even knowing it. Without warning, in as little as 3 to 6 months, alcohol can capture and control the lives of young people who decide to experiment.

The Problem: Alcohol's Slippery Slope into Addiction

1. At-Risk Drinking
→ Any alcohol consumption for those under 21
2. Alcohol Abuse
3. Alcohol Addiction

Contributing Factors:

1. Over 50% of people who become addicted to alcohol have a family member who is also an alcoholic.
2. When quantity and frequency of alcohol consumption increases, so does the risk of addiction.
3. More than 40 percent of individuals who start drinking before the age of 13 will develop alcohol abuse or alcohol dependence at some point in their lives.
4. Evidence suggests that alcohol use by peers is a strong predictor of adolescent use of alcohol.

The Solution:

Don't Drink Alcohol!

Just like Laura says on the website, it only took one drink for her to get hooked. So, beware of the slippery slope of alcohol and don't fall prey to it.

STATS AND FACTS: GETTING REAL

1. If drinking is delayed until age 21, a child's risk of serious alcohol problems is decreased by 70 percent.¹
2. Approximately one in four children is exposed to family alcoholism or addiction, or alcohol abuse some time before the age of 18.²
3. Statistics from the Addiction Technology Transfer Center at the University of Missouri at Kansas City indicate that alcohol has been a factor in 50 to 65 percent of all suicides among youth.
4. 40 percent of G-rated films from 1937-2000 showed alcohol use, while 37 percent of the movies depicted tobacco use.³
5. Recent advertising expenditures in the United States for beer, wine and liquor combined (\$1.4 billion) totaled about 20 times the amount spend on milk ads (\$70.5 million). A total of \$910.4 million was spent on beer ads, \$135.2 million on wine ads and \$377 million on liquor ads.⁴
6. In 1998, research indicated that the total cost attributable to the consequences of underage drinking was more than \$58 billion per year.⁵

BE SMART AND STAY SOBER!

¹ Calculated from information contained in: Grant BF and Dawson DA. Age at onset of alcohol use and association with DSM-IV alcohol abuse and dependence: Results from the National Longitudinal Alcohol Epidemiologic Survey. *Journal of Substance Abuse*. 9:103-110, 1997

² Grant BF. 2000. Estimats of US children exposed to alcohol abuse and dependence in the family. *American Journal of Public Health* 90 (1): 112-115.

³ Thompson, Kimberly and Tokota, Fumie; Harvard School of Public Health. *Journal of Pediatrics*. June, 2002.

⁴ Adams Business Research. *Adams Liquor Handbook 2001*. Norwalk, CT: Adams Business Media, 2001; Adams Business Research. *Adams Wine Handbook 2001*. New York: Adams Business Media, 2001; Adams Business Research. *Adams Beer Handbook 2001*. New York: Adams Business Media, 2001.

⁵ Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation. *Costs of Underage Drinking*. Prepared for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention National Leadership Conference, July 11-14, 1999, Reston, VA. In support of the OJJDP Enforcing the Underage Drinking Laws Program under contract 98-AH-F8-0114.