

Alcoholism on college campuses: part 2

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Fans rumble the stands as the PA announcer’s voice roars over the loudspeakers, “Touchdown Eagles!”

Destiney Nicol, Ashland University freshman football cheerleader, waves her pom-poms in excitement.

Gazing up in the stands she could see smiling faces of friends, classmates and family. She notices a familiar face stumbling up the bleachers.

“I brought tears to my eyes when I realized it was one of my sisters. She’s always been a heavy drinker, but it made me sad that she’d pick alcohol over me today,” Nicol stated. “This was a very important day for me since it was the first college game she watched me cheer at.”

Feeling embarrassed and angry about her sister’s actions, Nicol confronted her at the half-time mark where she said, “If you cannot hold yourself together and care about drinking more than your own sister, I want you to leave.”

Nicol felt hurt that her sister would even think that it was okay for her to drink on this important day.

This has not been the first time Nicol’s sister had done something like this.

Growing up as an adopted daughter, Nicol’s sisters were both almost double her age and have always been heavy drinkers.

She watched her sisters grow up with alcohol being a large influence in their everyday lives.

“They would always have alcohol around the house, while my nieces were playing they would ask me to watch them so they could run to the fridge to get a beer,” Nicol said.

“They would always go out at night with their friends and my mom would be forced to watch their kids constantly.”

It almost became the norm for Nicol to see alcohol around the house, but she also saw what kind of impact it had on her sisters and her family. Her sisters have hurt themselves and other people physically and mentally, and she does not want to see that happen to any other person who is close to her, she said.

Coming to college at Ashland University, Destiney has not drank. It can be hard to find someone who has never drank before on a college campus, and some students may be surprised at the fact.

“Seeing the way alcohol has influenced my sisters plays a large roll into the fact that I do not drink, alongside the part that I am not twenty-one yet,” Nicol said.

According to knowyourlimits.info, your brain doesn’t fully developed until the age of 25.

Younger people’s brains are particularly vulnerable because the brain is still in the process of developing. Alcohol damages parts of the brain controlling behaviour and the ability to learn and remember.

Liver cancer, high blood pressure, heart attacks, dementia and infertility are just some of many long

term effects of heavy prolonged drinking, according to nidirect government services.

“I don’t think many people know how much alcohol affects their body,” Nicol said. “I think they self consciously know but they ignore it and put it aside and say that they will worry about it later, but in reality it is affecting their bodies right now.”

However, despite the long-term consequences, most college students still chose to drink, leaving their parents and general members of the public concerned and questioning their reasoning.

According to a 2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health by SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) college students drink as an activity to entertain and cope. Students use alcohol as a way to connect with their peers and new friends because when they are under the influence, they are more comfortable and willing to do activities outside of their comfort zone.

SAMHSA studies show that since students have more time on their hands and less structure from parents and activities, they are looking for ways to be entertained, which often results in turning to drinking. For instance, in a small town where a majority of the population is the college campus, students go to the local bar for group activities.

Coping with problems is the second biggest reason college students

whelmed feeling.

As pointed out by researchers Crystal Park and Michael Levenson in the Journal of Studies on Alcohol, drinking as an outlet of stress is problematic because, “students who drink to cope may be at a particularly high risk of developing alcohol-dependent habits that will be difficult to modify even after they leave the college environment because, although the nature of the stresses they encounter will change, encounters with stressful experiences will continue throughout their lives.”

Seeing these trends at home makes it very easy for Nicol to notice these trends in other students around campus here at AU.

“Knowing people that are addicted to alcohol and feel the need to go out and get trashed, I just don’t understand why they do that because personally I don’t like to drink. I think it’s just a way for people to escape their problems and they just try to drink them away and that just makes it worse,” she said.

Many statistics show that alcohol is a depressant. Statistics from National Institute of Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse suggest 30 percent to 50 percent of people with alcohol issues (at any given time) are also suffering from a major depressive disorder.

According to the American Psychological Association, alcohol abuse and alcoholism can worsen existing conditions or create new problems in the human body such

10 Good Mental Health Reasons NOT To Drink...

If you have issues with anxiety or depression or impulsivity, here are 10 good reasons why avoiding alcohol may be a good idea:

- Alcohol:
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1. Interferes with the processes of memory and with new learning.
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2. Interrupts normal sleep patterns, which affects energy, mood and anxiety level.
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3. Is a direct central nervous system depressant that interferes with mood stability and promotes depression.
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4. May provide short-term relief when you are anxious, but leads to rebound anxiety, which makes matters worse.
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5. Contributes to increased impulsivity.
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6. May lead to lowered inhibitions and negative choices that intensifies shame, anxiety, and depression.
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7. Increases the likelihood of using other substances.
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8. Interferes with the therapeutic effects of prescribed medications, including anti-anxiety and antidepressant medications.
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9. May be dangerous in combination with other medication.
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10. May trigger memories of past traumatic experiences that involved alcohol, leading to greater distress, increased shame, depression, anxiety or worse.

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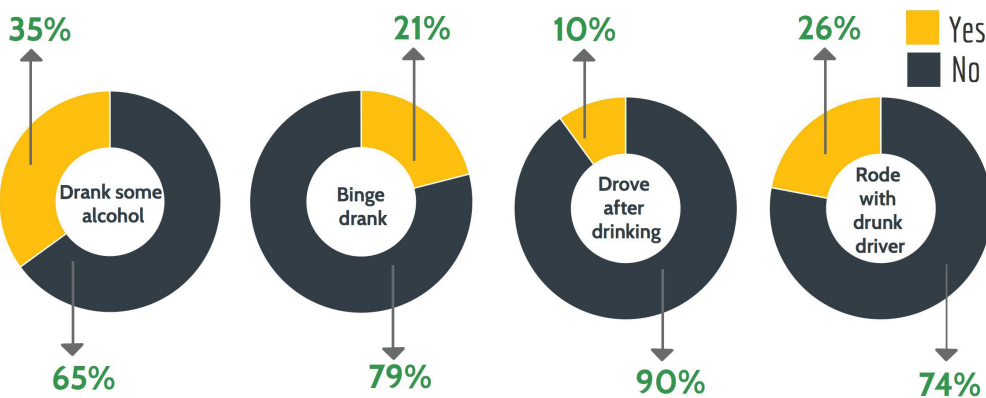
Underage & Over the Limit

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention calls underage drinking the "most commonly used and abused drug among youth in the United States." Cronkite News looks at the number of underage Americans drinking regularly and how the proposed Arizona SB 1190 would affect them. Visualization by Stephanie Habib.



Drinking among communities of people under 21

According to the 2013 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Youth Behavior Risk survey, high school students gave the following responses for the period of 30 days preceding the survey.



4,300
Annual deaths
among underage
youth

11%
U.S. alcohol
consumption by
ages 12-20

90%
of underage
drinking is binge
drinking

In one sitting, **underage** drinkers consume a greater number of drinks than adult drinkers.

Nearly **189,000** emergency room visits in 2010 were related to alcohol consumption by underage drinkers.

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drink according to SAMHSA. Having a hard time with classes or experiencing a huge trauma, such as sexual assault, can lead students to use alcohol to numb the pain.

Alcohol is also used as an outlet for stress, anxiety and depression. The feeling that a person experiences while under the influence can briefly help to relieve the over-

as depression, serious memory loss, or anxiety.

“For some people, they try to drink the pain away because they are depressed, but that just shows once they drink, so for my sisters I just feel like they have a lot build up inside just from over the years,” Nicol said. “My one sister lost her late husband to a drug overdose and

and my sisters do prove that.”

The short time high of alcohol does not outweigh the long term effects on the human body. Each person’s actions can influence another person’s life whether that be drinking alcohol on the daily or even just the way they present themselves, Nicol said.

“I hope that my actions of not drinking alcohol influences another college student to do the same, even if it’s just one student,” Nicol said, “Even if I only influence one person I still feel like a large help to this large epidemic.”

This problem isn’t isolated to Nicol’s family, it is a widespread problem in both homes and on college campuses.

Here on Ashland University’s campus, Director of Student Conduct Jonathan Locust does not believe that students understand the lifelong damages of alcohol and binge drinking.

Locust has been the Director of Student Conduct here at Ashland University for seven years and has attended a number of conferences on alcohol and drug abuse.

“Typically students some of the meetings I have with students we

talk about different situations or I also have attended a number of conferences on alcohol and drug abuse,” Locust said. “The effects are really detrimental for not only those who are underange because it is illegal but especially detrimental if you are consuming at such large quantities.”

Binge drinking to the Nation Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism is defined as having four drinks for women or five for men within a period of a few hours.

“There are a number of things that can happen if it is not controlled or not in the right environment when you are binge drinking,” Locust said.

Locust and the university believe that the last thing they want is for a student to get in trouble on campus.

Although he is over the student conduct, the goal is for the students to not get in trouble on campus but especially off of campus.

“If you get in trouble off campus and go through the court system it’s different because that’s something you’ll have to put on a job application for the rest of your life,” Locust said. “We try to mix that into the education and make sure students don’t get in trouble because it can have long lasting effects. It can affect your careers. Having to put an OVI or DUI onto a job application could be detrimental and hinder employment.”

Faculty at Ashland University have reached out to students in different ways for underage drinking. AU greek life has put together mocktails which consist of teaching students how to make good drinks but without the alcohol.

Residential assistants for the dorms have also stepped up to the plate and put together floor programs on alcohol abuse and they even have participated in the past with alcohol awareness week in November.

Although some groups and organizations have put together forums and such to help inform the students of alcohol abuse and its lifelong effects, Locust still believes that there is still room for improvement.

“I think that as a community we could all do more,” Locust said. “As a community we are nowhere near perfect and I think we can always improve and we could always do better.”

Locust said the focus is for students to come to school and get an education and move on and be a contributor to society. The last thing the university would want is for that plan to be derailed by a mistake.



PIXABAY

Alcohol is often used as an outlet for stress and depression, and while it may appear to temporarily provide a high, overtime it actually makes these problems worse. Seek professional help for healthy coping mechanisms.