

To Choose Booze Accrues Birthday Blues

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“Did you hear about Sam at the bars last night? It was her 21st and she was falling all over the place, her friends had to keep her from tripping down the curb she was so wasted.”

Does this sound familiar? It seems to me more often than not, induction into “adulthood” on our 21st birthday is characterized by blatant carelessness and a lack of dignity.

All across campus as well as across the country, students are celebrating the big “2-1” in various ways and styles usually less mature as in the above scenario.

As many people can imagine, this birthday carries a lot of expectations and excitement, but what many do not think about is the responsibility that comes along with being 21. In America, 21 is seen as the age of “social maturity,” since those who have reached this age have gained many legal rights. This may not seem like a big deal, but in the larger scheme of things, it is pretty powerful to think that by the age of 21, we can drive, vote, and purchase alcohol; all of the major highlights of our adolescence. But, just because you turn a certain age does not mean you are completely responsible.

Since most of my friends have turned 21 before me, I have heard plenty of entertaining birthday stories, but also, the horror stories. Waking up the next morning without any recollection of what happened the night before, or spending the night throwing up in the bathroom, are not things I want to go through after my 21st birthday. I know these are the “normal” things to do when you turn 21, but the idea of taking 21

shots and ending up in front of a toilet, instead of spending that time having fun with my friends, does not sound anything like a birthday celebration worth writing home about.

As the weeks turn into days, and my 21st birthday continues to get closer, I have decided to think about what I *want* to do, as opposed to what I *feel* societal norms assume I will do. I have every intention of having an amazing 21st birthday, and I am so lucky to have friends who, no matter how much I drink or do not drink on my birthday, will still respect and care about me regardless. I may be turning 21 in a few weeks, but I do not necessarily have to feel pressured to be any way unlike the person I am already. This is my birthday and I can drink if I want to, and this is my choice, not the choice of someone else.