

Coping with College Series

To drink or not to drink: Making the Choice

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By the time many students arrive at Illinois State, they have decided whether they will drink alcohol or not. Often students have consumed their first drinks before coming to Illinois State. Some students, however, are undecided when they arrive on campus about if, when, where, and how they will use alcohol during their college years. Because more than 80 percent of all college students drink at least occasionally, making thoughtful choices about the use of alcohol can be a significant part of a student's learning experience.

There are a lot of reasons why people drink. These reasons include recreational uses and short-term strategies to deal with stress by escaping or avoiding the pressures of life. Many activities such as athletic events, social events and going to bars are assumed to include the availability of alcohol and an expectation to drink usually follows.

The University does not condone the use of alcohol, and there are restrictions in place throughout the campus community to limit drinking and/or encourage wise choices about alcohol use. However, if you are a student intent on obtaining and consuming alcohol, it is quite possible to do so.

When we realize that the University cannot control the behavior or choices of students regarding drinking, it becomes obvious that the choice of whether or not to drink and how much to drink becomes each individual's personal responsibility.

An informed individual understands a few facts before making the choice. Alcohol is a mind altering depressant that often inhibits judgment and reasoning. The use of alcohol often has a negative influence on decisions made or actions taken.

A sensible and safe approach to learning about drinking involves making informed choices about if, when, where, and how much to drink. In order to make informed choices, students must take into consideration the physical and emotional effects alcohol has on them as individuals, and on their relationships with others.

Learning to drink in this way does not necessarily mean learning to drink less; it means learning to drink responsibly. For example, having a designated driver or taking a cab should be decided before drinking.

Friends can often influence us to drink at a time or in an amount that conflicts with our own best judgment. Learning to assert ourselves with friends whose drinking behavior differs from what we know is best for ourselves is a very important part of learning to drink sensibly, and can be done without pressuring others to drink as you do.

However, even a person who tries hard to make responsible decisions regarding alcohol use can develop difficulties. If you think you may have a problem with alcohol use, professionals at Student Counseling Services (SSB 320), are available to help.