

A Frank Discussion on Alcohol

I feel I would not be doing my job as a college coordinator if I didn't discuss the issue of alcohol abuse on college campuses. As you may know, alcohol abuse is a major concern on college campuses throughout the nation. According to a government study, approximately 70% of college students report they consume alcohol on a regular basis, and more than 40% engage in binge drinking at least once over a two-week period (www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov). Every year students make bad choices after drinking alcohol; sadly, some parents receive horrible news regarding their child who had too much to drink or was affected by someone else who did. It seems to me that drinking in college is a topic most parents and students don't want to talk about. Too many parents turn a blind eye to such behavior, and pray that their child will make the right decisions. But I feel this topic needs to be put into the spotlight. Parents and students need to have a conversation about what their plans are and what measures they are going to take to keep themselves safe and productive in college.

If your child does plan on drinking alcohol in college, what is his/her plan for keeping themselves safe? Relying on friends to take care of them is not an appropriate plan because their safety cannot be in the hands of others—your child has to be able to rely on him- or herself. Many students who enter college don't quite understand how alcohol affects them and how they will react under the influence. As their parent, I would highly encourage you to have a conversation with them about the effects of

alcohol. Your child should have a plan of action if they ever find themselves in a bad situation. Students should be able to answer simple questions such as, what are the symptoms of intoxication, approximately how many drinks does it take for me to be over the legal limit to drive, what are the signs and symptoms of alcohol poisoning and what should I do if I or a friend is experiencing such symptoms. Talk with your child about your experience with alcohol and give him/her the tools to stay safe—e.g., why they should never accept a drink from someone if they haven't seen the person pour it. The point of these conversations is to help your child be prepared to take care of themselves and to avoid having an awkward conversation from a jail-cell payphone—or worse.

If your child plans not to drink until they reach the legal age—or if they choose to abstain altogether—he/she should have a plan for what alternatives to take part in other than drinking. Every college has alternative programs, clubs, groups, and activities that have nothing to do with alcohol. College is far too short and there are lots of great and exciting opportunities going on that don't involve alcohol. Sadly, I have talked with students who plan not to drink alcohol that have told me their plan is to watch movies in their dorm on Friday nights to avoid others who drink; I tell them that isolation is not an acceptable plan and that they must get involved in some of the many great opportunities colleges offer. Your child should plan on being a part of these groups and opportunities.

As an educator, I am hamstrung in my ability to have some of these conversations with your child. If a child asks me about drinking in college, I will tell them—every time—that they are not allowed to drink until they are 21 and that they need to abide by the law. But as their parent, you have the ability to have a much more frank discussion with them regarding alcohol. Look at it this way: in a few months, your child will start making adult decisions that will affect the rest of his/her adult life and drinking alcohol, for better or worse, is an adult decision that your child will make. Soon, your child will no longer need to check in with you, tell you where they are going, with whom they're hanging out, or what they plan to do. In every sense, your child has become a young adult that is beyond your grasp and is now making adult decisions for him/herself. The best option for parents is to have an open and honest conversation with their children and help them formulate the most appropriate plan for life in college.

- David Kelley



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- Dubuque Area Credit Grantors Association
Private Scholarship
Deadline: April 26th
Potential Award: \$500
This scholarship is open to all Wahlert seniors who plan to attend a college in the tri-state area and major in the areas of business, finance, or accounting.
For more information, students should stop by the Wahlert counseling office to pick up an application.
- Dubuque Bank & Trust Scholarship
Private Scholarship
Deadline: April 26th
Potential Award: \$500
This scholarship is open to all Wahlert seniors who plan to attend a college in the tri-state area.
For more information, students should stop by the Wahlert counseling office to pick up an application.
- Mary Kay Theisen Bondy Memorial Scholarship
Private Scholarship
Deadline: April 30th
Potential Award: \$500
This scholarship is open to all Wahlert seniors who plan to attend a four-year college and have a cumulative GPA from 3.91-3.96.
For more information, students should stop by the Wahlert counseling office to pick up an application.
- Robert D. Blue Scholarship
Private Scholarship
Deadline: May 10th
Potential Award: \$500
This scholarship is open to all Seniors who reside in the state of Iowa and plan to attend an Iowa college during the 2013-2014 school year. Students will write a 500 word essay on a citizen from the community.
For more information, visit: www.rdblue.org/scholarship/