

Is Your Alcohol Education Program Effective? Telling students drinking is bad doesn't work. So what are you to do? By Zach Kyle

According to Terry Arndt, President of Life After Graduation, LLC, most college alcohol education programs are missing the mark. Simply telling students that drinking is bad doesn't work. An effective alcohol education program needs to connect with students on a more personal level and be presented in a medium students are familiar with. This opinion is echoed by Dr. Doug Van Sickle, creator of eChug (www.e-chug.com), an online alcohol intervention that is designed not simply to educate and inform but to motivate students to change destructive drinking practices.

"Years of research and practice have consistently shown that education by itself does not change drinking behavior. *Just Say No* did not work and neither does the educational *Just Know More* approach. What campuses and students need is an alcohol use intervention not just an education." Van Sickle says.

Heavy drinking remains a major problem on college campuses. According to a University Mothers Against Drunk Driving survey, 44 percent of college students reported binge drinking in the past year, a near-identical figure to surveys from the previous two years. Also, 1,700 college students between the ages of 18-24 die each year due to alcohol-

related injuries, including drunk driving fatalities. Alcohol abuse is closely tied to STD's pregnancy, and emotional and academic problems. Something needs to change.

A more effective educational method is to present the info in a context they do immediately care about. For example, each beer, glass of wine, or mixed drink is roughly equivalent to 100 calories, so the calories from six drinks in an evening equals that of two cheeseburgers. Heavy drinkers consume



Door-Hangers from eChug

the equivalent of thirty or more hamburgers in a month in beer and booze.

Moderate-drinking students unafraid of the freshman 15 might respond more when they learn the money they spend on alcohol could buy more than 500 I-Tunes, and heavy drinkers are swigging in excess of 1,000 downloads. This type of alcohol education engages students and helps students put their own decisions into perspective.

eChug, designed by counselors and psychologists at San Diego State University, uses tools like these to motivate students to assess their alcohol consumption using personalized information about their own drinking and risk factors.

In addition, e-Chug uses another practical educational method: it compares a student's drinking habits to the student population at their university. The results are often surprising.

90-95% of Reported Date/ Acquaintance Rapes involved the perpetrator and victim being drunk.
- eChug



Posters from eChug

"When a student is compared to the overall student population at his school and thinks, 'Do I really drink more than 87 percent of students at my school?'" Van Sickle says. "It causes him to reflect."

In order to educate students about the dangers of alcohol, don't insult their intelligence with the "it's bad for you approach". Instead, think outside the box and look for new tools to educate them about the choices they make. This doesn't

mean you must appear as if you condone drinking, but you do need to ensure your students are getting information to help them make educated choices. Remember, your students are smart, but sometimes they need a little help to make the best choice.

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