

## Getting Buzzed:

### Winning the Alcohol and Substance Abuse War | ChapClark, Ph.D. and Catherine Hart-Weber, Ph.D.

**Introduction:** It seems the youth culture has always included substance abuse, a sort of rite of passage. But in many cases experimentation can lead to full blown out addiction. Why does this happen? What is it about the teen years that cause them to abuse and medicate their problems and better yet, what can we as leaders do to help prevent the abuse and possible addictions?

#### I. What is going on in the youth culture?

- A. Confusing data with conflicting research: one hand says we're making progress but on other hand it's very obvious that it's everywhere. The question is "why are kids getting involved anyways?"
- B. Training issues in behavior rather than deeper issues
- C. Youth culture – the substance is readily available

#### II. Adolescent development stage and abuse

- A. Early adolescence
  1. Experimentation
  2. Not a reaction
  3. Parental and community boundaries are needed
- B. Adolescent
  1. Reasons are varied
  2. Cultural issues
- C. College years
  1. More talk rather than using
  2. Christian and non-Christian colleges alike
  3. Associated with having fun
  4. Dealing with insecurities

#### III. Levels of usage – Why teens use

- A. Experimentation that leads to addiction; usually it's not intentionally at the beginning.
- B. Source of self-medication to deal with stress, anxiety and pain
- C. Multiple diagnosis

#### IV. Reasons for self-medication

- A. Recognition of pain
- B. Party alone
- C. Desire to connect and celebrate life; desire to bond and get together.
- D. Lack of positive ways to celebrate life

#### V. Ways to help/Prevention issues

- A. Provide a healthy, positive, meaningful way to celebrate life
- B. Create a space for teens to hang out
- C. Teens need an alternative to boredom; teens have not been given a better alternative way to celebrate life.
- D. Elevate kids' expectation of what it means to live life
  1. Needs to be more than just an event
  2. Give them purpose and meaning
  3. Opportunities to make a meaningful contribution to another life

- E. Multi-dimensional model
  - 1. Physical
  - 2. Psychological; self-medicating
  - 3. Family issues; parents need help to be in a relationship & communicate
  - 4. Culture
- F. Starts with creating an internal sense of strength and purpose
- G. Don't overreact and become overly punitive – invest time in connection.

**Study Questions:**

1. Discuss the current teen culture and how it may be different or the same as yours.
2. Why is it important to understand the developmental stages of an adolescent's growth as it relates to substance abuse?
3. Discuss ways you and your church can provide an alternative to experimentation and boredom in the life of your teens.
4. Discuss why you think teens abuse alcohol and drugs