Most at Florida Tech Are Not Doing It!

Contrary to the popular belief among many college students that excessive partying and alcohol are needed to have fun, a survey of 400 Florida Tech students found that a majority (70%) of Florida Tech students engage in what would be considered responsible drinking. Responsible drinkers do not engage in binge drinking, operate motor vehicles under the influence, and engage in impulsive physical and sexual acts under the influence. Perhaps we should preface this article by stating that our purpose is not to preach about abstinence. Instead, our point is to highlight that excessive alcohol use is far from the norm here at Florida Tech. Due to the many visible effects of irresponsible drinking such as increased noise, increased outgoingness, as well as a tendency to boast or over-report consumption of alcohol, many students falsely believe that these individuals are the norm on campus.

Currently many colleges are struggling with the increased incidence of binge drinking on their campuses. Binge drinking is defined as consuming five or more drinks in one sitting for men and four or more for women. And while at a national level, 44% of students currently practice this hazardous style of drinking, at Florida Tech, approximately 27% of students fall into this category. Similarly, those that would fit the diagnosis for a serious alcohol problem such as alcohol dependence account for approximately 3% of the Florida Tech population, which is lower than the national average of 7%.
Although promising, the seriousness of the consequences that have been associated with irresponsible drinking for those who still choose to engage in it unfortunately is quite detrimental.

- Over 60% of all college women who have contracted STD’s were intoxicated at the time they were infected
- 40% of all college students having academic problems abuse alcohol
- 28% of all college dropouts have alcohol as a factor for their withdrawal
- Between 75 and 90% of all violence on campus is alcohol related
- One night of heavy drinking can impair your ability to think abstractly for up to 30 days (and thus limit your ability to think through a sports play or study effectively)
- Drug and alcohol abuse is the leading cause of death for people between the ages of 15 and 24

So, why do those who drink excessively choose to do so? Perhaps the most common reason is that college students frequently overestimate how much their peers are drinking. Thus, in an attempt to keep up with these distorted peer group norms and fit in, students drink more than they normally would. Other common reasons people use/abuse alcohol are:

- Escape from school, work, financial, or relationship stressors
- Compensate for low self-esteem and shyness in social settings
- Deal with physical or psychological illnesses (e.g., pain disorders, anxiety or depression)
- Substitute for satisfying relationships
• Peer pressure and a desire to “fit in”
• Media portrayal as alcohol use being the “in thing”

The following quiz was designed to provide a rough estimate of the extent that drinking may or may not be affecting your life. Just because he or she may be capable of going to school or work each day and fulfilling important roles does not mean that, they may not be suffering from a problem.

1. Have you ever felt like you should cut down on your drinking or drug use?
2. Have you ever felt irritated by criticism of your drinking and drug use?
3. Have you ever felt guilty about your drinking, drug use, or your behavior during or following its use?
4. Do you ever take a drink or use drugs in the morning?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may have a problem with your drug and alcohol use. Although you may not be dependent on drugs or alcohol at this time, the chances of addiction will significantly increase if your pattern of use continues. Answering yes to two of these questions suggests that it is very likely that you are dependent on drugs or alcohol. Three or four yes answers indicate that there is a 95% chance that you are addicted, and professional assistance is strongly recommended. Other common signs of a problem include, but are not limited to, unsuccessful attempts to cut down or stop drinking, attempts to hide your drinking habits, and hurting yourself or someone else while drinking. Academic effects include frequent absences from class, poor concentration and memory, tardiness in handing in assignments and projects, poor
participation in class discussions, falling asleep in class, lack of motivation and self-discipline, conflict with professors and peers.

While substance abuse is a serious problem, it is fortunately a treatable one! The Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) of Florida Tech website has a more comprehensive alcohol screening device that can be taken online (www.fit.edu/caps) to further assist you in determining whether or not you may have a problem. The online alcohol screeners, as well as all services obtained through CAPS, are completely confidential. For those who would prefer more in depth information, would like to obtain treatment, or would like to learn mechanisms for dealing with a friend, roommate or loved one with a problem (which can be equally stressful), CAPS therapists are available for free appointments year round (674-8050). Additionally the CAPS website has a variety of useful articles and links addressing substance abuse and other wellness issues.