

## Learning to Drink Responsibly: Not Just a Slogan

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There are now an increasing number of liquor ads on TV that end their commercials with the slogan: "drink responsibly". This is a fine sentiment but just how does one do that? Responsible drinking is a matter of education, but it is precisely this lack of education, that causes so many alcohol related problems. In fact it is almost a "right of passage" for teens to start drinking (albeit illegally) before they turn twenty-one. However, given this arbitrary age restriction, many young people celebrate their "passing" with family and friends by legally consuming alcoholic beverages on their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. What do they need to know?

Many well--intentioned family and friends will simply allow the celebrant to get drunk... and even pass out. There is no "learning to drink responsibly" in this. In fact it can be dangerous as when College fraternities and sororities encourage their members to consume their legal age to drink in shots of alcohol: drinking 21 shots of alcohol at one time has led to a number of deaths due to alcohol poisoning.

So first and foremost the novice user of alcohol needs to be informed that alcohol can be a toxic poison that can kill. However, it can also be a euphoric drug... depending on dose. It is this emphasis on dose that makes a Breathalyzer an excellent gift for anyone being initiated into the use of alcohol.

Breathalyzers have commonly been used as a means of social control. This is particularly true for operating a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol. Police will use them when checking someone's blood alcohol concentration (BAC) when assessing a charge of DUI. They are also used to see if someone has been drinking when they are not allowed to do so such as persons that have a "no drinking" stipulation on their probation or parole order or persons in recovery. Thus, they have been associated with what is negative in relation to alcohol. The Breathalyzer has not been used

as a feed back tool to educate people on what sensations are associated with a certain BAC. Breathalyzers can be used to moderate one's drinking so that people do not end up socially embarrassed, sick, dependent, or dead. However, tracking one's BAC is the basis for controlled drinking, knowing what dose provides which sensations. For example someone may say after using a Breathalyzer.

I feel "relaxed but alert" and my BAC registers at .035.

Now I feel "happy and humorous" and my BAC registers at .056.

I feel myself "spacing out", my BAC is .07 and even though my BAC is under .08 (the legal limit to drive), I'm still not all right to drive. I've "spaced-out".

Of course, this type of planning and monitoring seldom occurs with apprentice users of alcohol. The motives of others who encourage someone to drink are varied but in many instances they are related to power and status: "I can hold my liquor better than you." This is particularly true for sexual drinking: "Candy is dandy but liquor is quicker". quicker for "seduction". Seduction through the use of alcohol is a good example of a mindset. There is a big difference between wanting to exert power over someone by seducing him or her through the use of alcohol versus wanting someone to experience euphoria. Exemplifying once again that those with whom one becomes intoxicated can have a major effect on the nature and extent of that intoxication.

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