Hello LIVE REAL Mentors!

The holiday season is upon us. Some individuals find that drinking becomes a big part of celebrations throughout the season. According to Sarah Allen Benton, author of *Understanding the High-Functioning Alcoholic: Breaking the Cycle and Finding Hope*, “During the holidays, even those without alcohol problems may find that they are drinking more than they have the rest of the year.” As we all want the holiday season to be enjoyable and safe, keep the following facts and tips in mind and share them with students, colleagues, family, and friends:

- **Alcohol-related accidents increase over the holiday season**: significantly more alcohol-related traffic crashes occur on New Year’s Eve than on other mid-week winter evenings. Planning ahead and knowing the facts about alcohol can help make sure it truly is a Happy New Year.
- **Alcohol impacts driving ability, even before the physical signs of intoxication are present.** Critical driving-related skills, such as fine motor skills and response time, and decision-making abilities are impacted long before a person may show obvious signs of being intoxicated.
- **The effects of alcohol do not stop when drinking does.** Even after a person stops drinking, alcohol can continue to enter the bloodstream from the stomach and intestine. A person’s BAC can continue rising even after consumption has stopped, and the effects of alcohol will continue long after as well.
- **Drinking coffee or another caffeinated beverage after drinking alcohol will not sober a person up** – only TIME can do that. Caffeine will not counteract the effects alcohol has on decision-making or coordination – even if a person feels less intoxicated! Keep these other facts about sobering up in mind, as well:
  - Eating won’t sober you up - while eating prior to drinking will slow down the rate of alcohol absorption, it will not prevent the alcohol from being absorbed or sober someone up faster.
  - Sleeping isn’t magical either - a person’s BAC may still be over the limit and driving ability may still be impaired even the morning after a night of heavy drinking.
  - Taking a cold shower? Both uncomfortable and ineffective...

So, what can you do as a LIVE REAL Mentor this holiday season?

- **Speak openly and honestly with those around you about alcohol and its effects.** As strange as it sounds, talking about standard drink sizes (how many drinks are really in that eggnog or hot buttered rum?) or what mixing alcohol and caffeine does to the body can be interesting conversation topics at those awkward holiday parties.
- **Share tips for stress reduction that don’t involve alcohol consumption.** Yes, this time of year is often considered to be the most wonderful, but for many it can also be very stressful (Have you seen the crowds at the mall? Did my uncle actually just say that?). This can lead to increased drinking around the holiday season. Suggest some alternate stress-reduction activities instead,
like getting some exercise (take a walk, go sledding, grab a pair of skis, etc.) or taking some quiet time away from everything to relax and unwind.

- **Help others make a plan to consume safely** – use the online BAC calculator to help others determine how to maintain a BAC of .05 or lower. This “point of diminishing returns” is the point at which one more drink will no longer increase the desirable effects of drinking. Beyond this point, the likelihood of injury and other undesirable effects occurring is magnified. Here are some other tips to share:
  - If you plan to drink, choose the number of (standard) drinks you will have ahead of time.
  - Alternate alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks throughout the evening.
  - Select a designated driver who won’t be drinking at all that night.
  - If you are worried about someone who has possibly consumed too much, watch for the signs of alcohol poisoning (person is nonresponsive, slow or irregular breathing, vomiting, seizures) and take action immediately by calling 911 if signs are present (they do not all need to be present for alcohol poisoning to occur).

Thank you for all you do as LIVE REAL Mentors! Have a safe and happy holiday season!

Best,

Erika