

AOD PODCAST DRAFT- ALCOHOL AWARENESS MONTH

Hey guys! Wow, this feels actually so insane to be back in this studio and making another podcast for this outstanding counseling center. For those of you who are new, I'm Bethann Long, and this is "In the Mix" with AOD, a podcast provided to you by the Grand Valley State University Alcohol and Other Drugs Services Office. We have entered the month of April, which means we have made it to Alcohol Awareness Month. At this point in the semester, it's a good time to look at our own drinking habits and see where we stand. In this episode, let's look at the importance of Alcohol Awareness Month and how to handle triggers.

Alcohol dependence is considered to be one of America's top health problems, claiming the lives of more than 90,000 people every year. Alcohol Use Disorder can lead to underestimating the ability to control the craving or to quit, misunderstanding the amount of alcohol consumed, and discounting the impact it can have on lives. Not only is denial common among those misusing alcohol, denial is also common among friends and family members who are uncomfortable with acknowledging the gravity and reality of the problem. This month is also meant to serve as a helpful reminder to break the stigma that is surrounding Alcohol Use Disorder.

If you're looking to change your own drinking habits, there are things you can do to help handle the urges to drink. Among those that use, it's normal to have urges to drink, which can refer to a broad range of thoughts, physical sensations, or emotions that tempt you to drink, even when you have at least a little bit of desire not to. This can create a sense of loss of control. In good news, urges to drink are usually short-lived and controllable. There are ways to learn to recognize, avoid, and cope with these urges. Over time you'll find that your urges to drink will lose strength, and you'll gain confidence in your ability to deal with the urges that may still arise. It's important to recognize the two types of triggers which include external and internal triggers.

- External triggers include people, places, things, or times of day that offer drinking opportunities. These tempting situations can be more obvious and avoidable than internal triggers.
- Internal triggers can be hard to understand because the urge to drink can seem to pop up out of nowhere. If you stop to think about it, you'll be able to find that the urge could have been set off by thoughts, a positive emotion such as excitement, a negative emotion such as frustration, or a physical sensation such as tension or nervousness.

Tracking these urges over a period of time will help you become more aware of when and how you experience urges, what triggers them, and ways to control them. Next would be learning how to avoid tempting situations. Keep alcohol to a minimum at home and when out in social environments avoid activities involving drinking. If you are feeling guilty for stepping away from activities with friends, remember that this isn't forever. It'll become easier to gradually ease yourself back into some situations that you once avoided. This is a good time to suggest alternate activities that don't involve drinking.

Stay motivated by reminding yourself of your reasons for making a change. It could benefit you to have these reminders with you all of the time on your phone so that you always have access to them. Make sure to talk it through with someone you trust when you feel tempted to drink. Have a friend that you can call or bring along with you for support in situations such as this! It can also be helpful to have alternative activities to distract yourself with when you feel urges sneaking up on you. Some healthy alternatives could include texting or calling a friend, working out with some music, showering, meditating, taking a walk, or practicing a hobby that keeps your mind busy. It's important to leave tempting situations quickly and respectfully, and having a plan for this put into place before going out helps immensely.

Overall, Alcohol Awareness Month aims to educate and raise awareness on the risks and consequences associated with excessive drinking. The AOD office is always here to help students navigate responsible drinking habits and serve as a support for those struggling with alcohol and other substance-related issues. For more information, or to schedule an appointment to meet with one of our staff members, visit us in 206 Student Services or give us a call at (616) 331-2537.