2022 has recently begun and and the new year always brings new years resolutions. The idea to promise to do something different. We tend to have a goal in mind, prepare the tools to succeed and have high motivation to achieve the goal. Well, for some the goal may be to give up alcohol or other substances for a cleaner life style. This big change can be difficult, but now is always a good time to make a change in lifestyle for a better future.

Hey, welcome back to another episode of, “In the Mix.” As Always I’m your host, Zachary Plisko. My mission is to inform students to be safe, be responsible, and be smart when using substances. For episode six, we’ll be talking about creating new habits for the new year when it comes to alcohol and other substance use. I’ll be talking about breaking the old habits, how to develop new habits and provide example strategies to stop using substances.

First, lets talk about recoginzing relationships with substances.

When looking at personal relationships with substances discover what the substance serves you. Some might not see alcohol, marijuana or other substances as a glaring issue, but detemine if it intevenes with mental well-being, physical well-being, relationships, and work and daily routines.

Think about the benefits of not having a substance part of your everyday routine. Be realistic with how it’s involved with everyday life. If it’s interrupting certain aspects of life, think about building new habits to live a healthier life.

Creating new habits can be long-term processes, but if you keep working, it allows for a better life without substances. *(Elavate .org site)*

One way to build a new habit is think about where you want to go with it. What’s the bigger picture? Where are you today? Where do you want to be in the future? Writing down goals on paper will help develop the idea and serve as a good reference tool.

A recurring idea in the episode will be about thinking small. As the new habit without substance begins, look back from where you started and when settle changes are noticed, that can serve as accomplishments. Identify where you’re at and keep determination with small steps to the overall goal.

Keep in mind that there’s other factors in being substance free. Harmful patterns like lack of sleep and school stress can be harmful to achieving the goal. Be aware of these other factors if there’s a setback, forgive yourself and continue building the healthy habit.

Having peers around can be very benefical. The challange with builidng a new habit is the willpower and motivation. Having others around can help the moral stay high and keep accountability.

Keep going strong, even if you experience some set backs.

After knowing how to create new habits, let’s clarify why some habits don’t work out.

Trying to change all at once. When building a new habit such as stoppage of drinking, starting small is a good idea to begin with. An idea could be to cut drinking down to once drink a day, to one every other day and slowly build off of that. Often people try cutting out the substance completely which leads to urges to do it. This leaves for the motivation needed to be really high and leads to the lack of effort to break the old habit.

Another problem is seeking a result and not building a new habit without the substance. Every New Year’s resolution looks for some kind of result and associate numerical values. Instead, focus on new behaviors and have those be the result. When people don’t see the results happening, they feel discouraged and give up.

Assuming small changes don’t add up could also impact new habits without substances. Taking the small victories can help a lot. If you didn’t drink one day, that small change could lead to bigger results later on. It’s a matter of recoginzing the small changes made daily, rather than, keeping the main goal in mind all the time.

Lastly, not changing the environment around you can have an impact. Settle things like alcohol in the fridge, substaances sitting out on the desk may urge people to use. A good start is to limit the amount drinks or substances in a given area. An example is, if there’s a six pack of alcohol in the fridge, it’s enticing to drink. Instead, hide a few, empty and throw out the cans, simply keep them out of sight. The idea is the substances are in convenient spaces, making the urge to use the substance less.

After talking about creating new habits, let’s go over some examples on doing so.

*Harvard Health* provides many helpful strategies when it comes to alcohol intake.

1. Set a goal. There’s no “one size fits all” answer to achieving a goal. Make a suitable and obtainable goal that’s ost comfortable for you. Set an expectation that’s tangible.

2. Keep a diary to track the amount of substance use. For a few weeks, try to keep track of every drink you have. Include information about what and how much. Compare the amount you drink to your overall goal.

3. Don’t keep substancesl in your household. Having none near you can help prevent temptation to drink.

4. Choose substance-free days. Pick one or two days each week where you want to abstain from using the substance. Do this for about a month to see how you feel emotionally and physically with less use.

5. Stay Busy. Begin basic exercising like a walk or yoga. Or go out for the evening to a movie or out to a restaurant. After a long day, pick up a new hobby or revisit an old one. There’s painting, board games, playing an instrument — these and other activities are good alternatives to drinking.

6. Watch for peer pressure. When going out with friends to a bar, party or any other social envrionements, peer pressure may happen. Refer to episode one, season two to find strategies on combating peer pressure.

This podcast and tips can only go so far to help. By no means am I a professional. If wanting help right away, consult a doctor where they can refer professionals and programs to help with substance use. Specialists can determine the best individulaized treatment option and may provide consueling.

The Alcohol and Other Drugs Service here at Grand Valley does have resources available for students, faculty, and staff.

Recovery Meetings are open to individuals who has a desire to stop using alcohol and other drugs. There are a types of meetings that suit to your needs.

Like Alcoholics Annoymous. It’s a 12-step program for individuals to share their experience, strength and hope with each other. The idea is to solve common issues and help other recover from an alcohol problem. It’s a good start for those looking to get serious of not drinking.

Another meeting is the Narcotics Anonymous. It’s another 12-step program that welcomes any individual who want to overcome any type of substance problem.

Both of these meetings are good ideas for those wanting a fresh start to a new year and wanting to ditch substance use.

If interested in attending a meeting heads to gvsu.edu/aod/recovery-meetings-at-gvsu-1.htm.

Here you’ll find when meetings are and zoom links.

That concludes episode six of, “In the Mix.” Remember it’s never too late to start a healthier lifestyle without substances. Again, I’m Zachary Plisko, see you in the next episode.