**Myths about alcohol: Class Activity**

Evidence ratings:
This resource has undergone expert review. See our Help/Q&A section for more details.

Year: Year 7–8, Year 9–10
Targeted Drugs: Alcohol
Tags: Climate Schools
Time Allocated: 1 lesson

Links to National Curriculum:
ACPPS073 (Yr 7–8), ACPPS076 (Yr 7–8), ACPPS089 (Yr 9–10), ACPPS090 (Yr 9–10), ACPPS091 (Yr 9–10), ACPPS092 (Yr 9–10), ACPPS093 (Yr 9–10), ACPPS094 (Yr 9–10), ACPPS095 (Yr 9–10), ACPPS096 (Yr 9–10), ACPPS097 (Yr 9–10), ACPPS098 (Yr 9–10)

Origin: Australian
Cost: Free

Attachments
- Worksheet: Alcohol Myths

**Developers**

Climate Schools was developed by researchers currently based at the Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use at the University of Sydney, Australia, formerly based at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC), School of Psychiatry, and the NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Mental Health and Substance Use at UNSW Sydney. See Climate Schools.

**Format**
Class discussion.

**Preparation**
- Print attached class worksheet “Myths or facts about alcohol”.

**Activity**

**Class Discussion:** Hand out a copy of “Myths or facts about alcohol” to each student. Systematically work through the list of Myths and Facts on the sheet. Ask the class to determine which are myths and which are facts. Ask the class to try to explain the reason for why each point is a myth or fact.

**Background Information**

**Myth 1: Coffee will help to sober you up.**
Truth: Coffee does not help to sober you up. Neither does a cold shower, fresh air, etc. The only way of getting rid of the effects of alcohol is for your body to metabolise it and that takes time! On average your body metabolises one standard drink per hour.

**Myth 2: Alcohol makes it easier for people to socialise.**
Truth: Alcohol in small quantities can make people feel more relaxed and sociable. However, alcohol is a “downer”. Drinking too much alcohol can make people want to withdraw from others. Alternatively, drinking too much alcohol can make people feel aggressive, which also doesn’t help much with improving social relationships!

**Myth 3: Alcohol makes people feel happy.**
Truth: In small quantities that can be true. However, too much alcohol makes people feel depressed or sad!

**Myth 4: The worst thing that can happen if you drink too much alcohol is a raging hangover.**
Truth: Alcohol can lead to far greater evils than just a bad hangover. Alcohol is one of the causal factors in many traumatic and tragic accidents. Also, drinking too much alcohol can suppress the central nervous system to such an extent, that it can lead to coma or death.

**Myth 5: Drugs are a bigger problem than alcohol.**
Truth: All drugs cause harm but alcohol causes more deaths than all other illegal drugs combined.

**Myth 6: Drinking makes you cool.**
Truth: Drinking too much alcohol can lead to people feeling sick or vomiting. It makes people less concerned about what they say or do. Both of these factors can lead to socially embarrassing situations and certainly do not make people "cool".

**Myth 7: You’re tough and cool if you can handle lots of alcohol.**
Truth: People with a larger lean body mass may be able to handle more alcohol than the average person. Being bigger doesn’t necessarily make a person cooler or tougher. Another reason some people can handle more alcohol is because their bodies have become tolerant to the effects of alcohol. This means that their liver may actually already be damaged or has learned to work harder to clear the alcohol. Having a damaged liver is hardly tough or cool. It can actually be quite serious!

**Myth 8: Alcohol makes you sexy.**
Truth: Alcohol may increase a person’s interest in sex, but it decreases their ability to perform. Alcohol may also decrease a person’s inhibitions resulting in unplanned situations and situations which they wouldn’t normally have consented to. These situations have the potential to result in pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, sexual assault, etc.

Myth 9: Everyone does it.
Truth: This is not true. While most 13-14 year olds might have tried a sip of alcohol across their whole lives, very few drink to excess. Only 1 in 50 report drinking above a level that increases the risk of alcohol-related injury on a single occasion.

Myth 10: Alcohol is not a drug.
Truth: Alcohol is often not thought of as a drug because it is legal. Alcohol is a drug which slows down the central nervous system and is second only to tobacco as a cause of drug related deaths and hospitalisations in Australia. Alcohol belongs to a class of drugs called depressants.

Myth 11: Mixing drinks makes you more intoxicated.
Truth: It is the total amount of alcohol in all the different drinks combined, which will determine the level of intoxication, not the actual switching between different kinds of drinks. Alcohol is alcohol. However, people who mix drinks may be drinking more alcohol because they are trying different kinds, resulting in a higher concentration of alcohol.

Myth 12: Switching between drinks causes a hangover.
Truth: It is the amount of alcohol consumed and the concentration of congeners (toxic by-products from the production of alcohol), which will determine if a person suffers from a hangover, not the switching between types.

Two interesting facts about alcohol:
Fact 1: Fizzy (carbonated) alcoholic drinks affect you more rapidly as carbonation causes the valve between the stomach and small intestine to open. This allows the alcohol to enter the bloodstream from the small intestine more quickly.

Fact 2: Alcohol contains calories, but little else of nutritional value.

Benefits
- Students learn to critically evaluate health information.

Evidence Base
Secondary teachers reviewed this and other Climate School activities, with 92.3% rating these activities as good or very good. This particular activity was among the most popular activities selected for implementation by teachers.

The benefits of implementing individual activities from the Climate schools has not been examined. The benefits of implementing the entire 6 session Climate schools program has been supported by multiple research studies, see Climate Schools: Alcohol Module.

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