

Underage Drinking and The Family
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I was asked to write an article on underage drinking, I was a little baffled. There are so many problems associated with underage drinking: health, violence and psychological issues - just to name a few. A colleague was kind enough to send me a few of the previous articles that were submitted on the subject. They were all great! They covered topics like underage drinking knowledge, side effects specific to teens, and even how family dinners can reduce teen drinking. But they didn't help. I was still undecided.

To help clear my mind and come up with a topic, I decided to go to the gym. When I walked in, I saw a stack of magazines that happened to have a friend's picture on it. I grabbed it and admired her picture and achievement, but a cover story feature caught my eye. "A Woman Reveals: "My Drinking Became A Problem." I could not wait to read the article to find out what factors lead this lady to her problem with alcohol.

It's too easy and too common to stereotype people with addiction problems and think they are underprivileged, lacked family support, stability and financial resources. The lady featured in this story was quite the opposite and had a distinguished story of wealth, access and support. She told of how many of her family members had drinking problems as well. Drinking was integrated into this family as a part of normalcy. Drinking was a daily ritual. This family drank in the middle of the day, with a meal or on social occasions. Although this particular woman hid her problem, she eventually acknowledged it. The best part of this story was that in the end, the woman got help and is now in recovery! I wish her continued success in her sobriety.

The article reminded me that Seven Counties Services' Early Intervention Program (EIP) states that youth whose parents are alcoholics, are also at-risk. In fact, they are 4 times more likely to have addiction problems themselves. Enrolling in the EIP could deter youth from experiencing alcohol problems like the lady in the magazine. Underage drinking can lead to violence, crime, suicide, sexual assault and even date rape. What a tremendous risk. However, the EIP can be a part of the solution. The program offers a plethora of information on understanding the risks of alcohol, high risk behaviors and psychological and social influences that could lead to alcoholism. The program is based on sound research and provides youth with the tools they need to lead healthy lifestyles.

If you suspect your child may be experimenting with drugs or alcohol, please consider the Early Intervention Program for assessment and education. The EIP, Local information and resources are available by contacting the Seven Counties Services' Regional Prevention Center at 502-589-8600 or by going online at <http://www.sevencounties.org/> and clicking on "Prevention" under the "Our Services" tab. For an exciting opportunity for youth to become involved in efforts to reduce underage drinking, log onto <http://www.reelactionky.com/>.