

Alcohol, Drugs and Deciding to Keep Everyone Safe



Research shows that two-thirds of men's violence in the home is done under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Many men have told us their stories about the part alcohol and drugs have played in their failure to keep others safe from abuse and violence. Here is one man's story of the way alcohol fueled his jealous rage:

"I was really drunk and full of suspicion about where she was and who she was with. I just flipped out when she came home—I don't remember it all, but I was on top of her, bashing her in the face and then I had my hands round her throat and was choking her, and she lost consciousness so I let go. When she came around I apologized to her and said I would never do a thing like that to her if I was sober—I'm not that kind of person. I must have had a blackout or something. She was crying and wanted to leave then, but I pleaded with her to stay and she did. She still denies she slept with anyone else but I don't believe her."

Would such help her want to stay faithful? What is likely to be the future of their relationship? Was the booze the cause his violence, or did he make an earlier decision to free up his violence with booze? Consider this idea in terms of this story and of your own experience:

"When we are tanked up or hyped on drugs we stop caring whether or not we become abusive and violent."

True or false?

Alcohol and drugs are often used to disinhibit violence and abuse (i.e. reduce self-control). We often make the decision to drink or drug as a way of dealing with stress or to deal with bottled up frustration and anger about issues we have not been able to resolve, but there is another hidden decision being made here, to drink or drug heavily in order to take away self-control and take away any real caring about what happens. Check out this question:

"Deciding to drink or drug heavily means we have already decided to risk becoming violent, and don't care what happens to ourselves or others."

True or false?

How is deciding to get wasted any different from actually planning to become violent? If we decide to destroy our self-control haven't we already decided that we don't care whether we frighten, degrade or injure our partners or family and not to keep them safe? Our cunning ploy is to hide behind the uncertainty about how we'll behave on the

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booze or drugs and to use it as an excuse for whatever happens and whoever gets hurt. She'll be right, we tell ourselves, but maybe she won't be right!

What decisions about drinking and drugging will we make if we genuinely care about the safety of ourselves and others? Try using the following safety plan next time you are planning a night out or a weekend with others

MAKING A SAFETY PLAN ABOUT DRINK AND DRUGS FOR A PARTICULAR OCCASION

My decision about whether to use ANY alcohol or drugs on this occasion:

My decision is TO USE ALCOHOL OR DRUGS / NOT TO USE AT ALL

If my choice above is to use alcohol and/or drugs, I now make the following choice about what kind of alcohol or drug to use (whether to drink beer, wine or spirits, and whether to use party pills, speed, marijuana etc).

My decision

I will set an upper limit on my spending on alcohol and drugs for the night out or weekend I am planning.

My decision is to spend no more than \$_____

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I will choose who to be with over the time when I am using or abstaining from alcohol or drugs so I am putting no one at risk from my abuse or violence.

My decision is to be with

and to stay away from

I will tell the following people about these decisions and ask their support for keeping to my plans and promises:

I will tell my plans to

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