

‘They’ll grow out of it’: The links between adolescent alcohol use/misuse, risk, resilience and emotional well-being.

The physical, cognitive and psychological development that occurs in adolescence is an influencing factor in the management of risk. A case study will be used to highlight and promote discussion of threats to adolescent mental health and emotional well-being. Potential risks of using alcohol will be identified in the case study to prompt consideration of resilience factors that could be used by services working with this group of young people. Short and long term consequences leading to socio-cultural and legal implications within the case study will be discussed and could form a stimulus to change adolescent attitudes to alcohol consumption.

Case Study Scenario

Chelsea & Carl live in Bradton with their mother Lisa, who is a divorced woman aged 35. Chelsea is 13 and Carl is 15 & they have contact with their Dad. Both children attend the local secondary school whilst Lisa is at work & enjoy hanging out with children of their own age.

Lisa feels that she is reliving her ‘lost youth’ as she believes that having had young children when she was in her twenties stifled her social life. Now Lisa is single again (for 18/12) she enjoys going out every Friday with her mates & tends to come home drunk.

Every Friday Carl ‘babysits’ Chelsea. Once Lisa is out, Chelsea & Carl have their mates round to the house for a smoke & a drink.

Lisa buys alcohol at the supermarket & the children have access to it. Even though it is not bought for them, Lisa is aware that the children drink; whilst she does not encourage it she is not proactive at discouraging it either. Chelsea, Carl & their mates binge drink. The alcohol consumed usually includes cider, lager, vodka, wine, WKD.

Chelsea is sexually interested in one of Carl’s friends & he is 17.

Both Chelsea & Carl have vomited on more than one occasion due to binge drinking & spend Saturday mornings in bed due to a hangover, so does Lisa.

Exercise

In pairs:

1. Discuss the possible physical consequences for Chelsea & Carl
2. Outline the possible psychological consequences for Chelsea & Carl
3. Describe the socio-cultural implications in this scenario.
4. Consider the legal implications in this scenario.

The information generated by participants will be collated by the leaders of the workshop and may include some of the issues in the following table.

Physical health implications	Psychological health implications
Alcohol poisoning may lead to death	Slurred speech
Organ damage such as brain, liver, heart & kidneys	Memory loss
Decreased immune function	Anxiety
Accidents (road traffic accidents) / Injuries	Lowered mood
Increases chances of 'other' drug use	Paranoia
Disinherited unplanned & regretted sexual behaviour, resulting in unplanned pregnancy/sexually transmitted infections.	Psychosis
Risk factor associated with sexual exploitation & sexual assault.	Delirium tremens
Foetal alcohol syndrome	Reduced inhibitions
Alcohol induced seizure	Self harm
Adverse interaction with prescribed medications	Suicide
Dependency: Tolerance & withdrawal syndrome	Exacerbation of underlying mental health issue.
Malnutrition & dehydration	Impaired intellectual development
	Self –esteem problems
Socio-Cultural implications	Legal implications

School absence & exclusion	Children at risk – inadequate parenting
Poor educational attainment affecting future job opportunities	Safeguarding children – professional duty of care
Accommodation problems	Offending behaviour (ASBO) criminal record will affect future employment
Relationship problems – with parents, teachers, siblings	Violent behaviour & criminal activity
Labelled as delinquent	Drink driving
Pressure to participate in risky behaviours	[Can be in a bar – age 14 years (soft drinks), 16-17's can drink beer, wine & cider with food in licensed premises, under 18's cannot buy or consume alcohol in a bar, or buy alcohol elsewhere. Police can confiscate alcohol from under 18's in public.]
Is seen as normal behaviour within peer group.	
Is a normal adult activity therefore part of learning adult behaviour	
Used for coping & stifles alternative coping strategy development.	

These can then be used to summarise the workshop and focus briefly on resilience factors and interventions that may be used to engage with young people who are using alcohol and therefore indulging in risks to their well-being.

Resilience factors

Age and maturity – how susceptible young person is to interventions, will influence type of intervention
 Positive attitude of young person
 Good parent – child relationship
 Support for education
 Degree of seriousness of alcohol consumption – risk to young person
 General context where alcohol misuse is occurring and associated factors

Interventions

Alcohol education in schools – need accurate information about effects, harm and moderation
 Social marketing campaign
 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts – young people caught drinking must attend a session with trained worker and their parents
 If arrested for alcohol misuse – referral to trained worker
 Parenting contracts – support parents in recognizing and managing adolescent behaviour
 Targeted youth support services

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