WHAT YOUR FRIENDS WON’T TELL YOU ABOUT DRINKING

The truth about drinking is that it makes you and your friends behave impulsively and irrationally. How? Alcohol is a powerful drug that slows the mind. So what? Well, when your mind slows down, you act without careful consideration of what you are doing or what may happen in the future, you lose your ability to think logically and exercise good judgment, and you can make some serious irreversible mistakes that you might live to regret later, all for a brief moment of fun with your friends.

Reality is that at the moment your friend offers you an alcoholic drink, the decision will be yours to make. One thing is certain though, that friend will not tell you about the dangers of drinking. To help you make an informed decision, you need to know the things that they will not tell you about drinking. The following are the dangers of drinking at a young age:

- Alcohol is a powerful drug that slows the body and mind. Alcohol-related accidents are a leading cause of teen deaths. Those who drink are more likely to engage in risky behavior. Teen drownings, suicides and murders have also been linked with alcohol use.
- Teens who drink are more likely to be hurt in a violent crime, such as rape, assault or robbery. Further, those who drink are more likely to engage in violent behavior.
- If you drink, you are more likely to make an impulsive and irrational decision regarding sex because drinking will impair your judgment. It is unfair, but know that boys and girls are looked at and treated differently after having sex.
- Teens who drink are more likely to have unprotected sex. Thus, running the risk of receiving a sexually transmitted disease (STD) or having an unwanted pregnancy.
- Teens who drink tend to have more academic and conduct problems at school. If you are shooting for good grades to get into your dream college, drinking puts your plans at risk.
- People who begin drinking as young teens are more likely to develop alcohol dependence (alcoholism) than people who wait until they are adults to drink. You are too young to develop an addiction.
- Excessive drinking can cause irreparable damage to your developing brain. Research also shows that alcohol use might permanently distort a teen's mental development. Further, long-term risks from alcohol abuse include cancer, high blood pressure, and liver disease. Who wants this, right?

Yes! Drinking can do all this. What has been said so far should be enough to change your mind about drinking, but if it does not, at least drink responsibly—pacing drinks, alternating alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks, and always eating a decent meal before drinking. Finally, please do not ride in a car with a driver who’s been drinking; instead, call your parents to pick you up. Contrary to what you might think, they will be glad you called and that you are home safe.

Finally, teens often think that drinking will make them popular, but drinking, and specially getting drunk, will not impress anyone. Being smart, athletic, compassionate, funny, or simply having good character will. Be strong! Resist peer pressure! Simply say, "Do you have any soda?" or "No thanks."