



# Alcohol and emotional health

50 minutes



## Overview

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This lesson makes pupils aware of the impact that alcohol can have on emotional health.

All of our resources are flexible and can be easily adapted to suit individual teachers' needs. The resources can be taught alongside other PSHE topics, for example, nutrition, drugs or sex education. Teachers can pick and choose which activities to use, and when to teach them.

## Learning objectives

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- To understand how alcohol can affect emotional health
- To know how to find ways of managing problems and stress without alcohol

During a lesson like this, which looks at how people feel, pupils might want to draw on their own experiences. To ensure that the session doesn't get too personal, you can remind pupils to talk about "someone I know" rather than naming individuals.

## Resources

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- Alcohol and emotional health **video**
- Alcohol and emotional health **lesson plan**
- Susie's letter **pupil sheet**
- Top ten stress busters **pupil sheet**
- Alcohol education **guidance notes**



## Starter

Alcohol and emotional health

10 minutes

Watch the **video** (1.13 minutes) of young people talking about the relationship between being stressed or worried and drinking alcohol.

1. Some people who feel worried or stressed (but by no means everyone) will try to deal with their problems by drinking alcohol. Why do you think they do this?
2. Explain that although alcohol might make you feel good in the short term, it can actually make problems worse. Here are two important facts about the longer term consequences:
  - Alcohol is a depressant – it can ultimately leave you feeling more upset, not happier.
  - Research suggests that 43% of people in the UK drink to ‘forget about their problems at least some of the time’<sup>1</sup> – but of course the problems come back and drinking alcohol can cause a whole new set of problems.

Make it clear that you’re not assuming they or their families drink alcohol – but they may know about or have seen people who do. This lesson is about thinking of ways to deal with problems without using alcohol.

## Main activity

Helping others

30 minutes

Explain to pupils that tobacco and alcohol are the most commonly used drugs in the UK and a lot of people are dependent on them. Ask them if they can name any soap operas they may have seen which involve places where people drink alcohol – and take feedback from the group. Examples might include:

- *Coronation Street* – The Rovers Return
- *EastEnders* – The Queen Vic and The Albert
- *Hollyoaks* – The Dog (in the Pond) and The Loft nightclub

As well as drinking alcohol in pubs, bars and restaurants, people may also drink alcohol at home, for example, when eating a meal, at a party or special occasion, watching TV.

Explain that most people who drink too much alcohol don’t enjoy feeling dependent. That’s why a lot of people try to stop. It isn’t easy for people who are dependent to stop smoking or drinking alcohol on their own. They need help and support.

<sup>1</sup> Ipsos-Mori (2015), Drinkaware Monitor 2014: Adults’ drinking behaviours and attitudes in the UK. London, Drinkaware Trust.



## Answering Susie's letter

1. Ask the pupils to imagine they are an agony aunt or uncle. Give each pupil pair a copy of **Susie's letter pupil sheet**.
2. Read it out aloud and ask them to consider the discussion points in pairs. Depending on the ability level of the pupils, ask them to come up with a verbal reply or write the reply as a letter, TV/radio script or poster.
3. Allow 15 minutes for the task and then ask for volunteers to read out their replies. Use the suggestions at the bottom of the letter to draw out the different worries that Susie faces and how she might deal with them and, at the same time, help her sister.

## Key messages for discussion

- Problems like Susie's are not the responsibility of children to solve – they are difficult even for the adults involved.
- It is good to want to help and the best thing to do is seek help from an adult you trust.
- Look after your own emotions – if you are feeling down because of the problems faced by someone you love, then make sure you do things you enjoy too. Don't let your schoolwork or friendships suffer – ask for help from someone you like and trust.

## Plenary

Top ten stress busters

10 minutes

- We can all find ways of managing problems and stress without alcohol. Distribute the **Top ten stress busters pupil sheet**. Pupils can work individually to rank them in their own order of what they think would work for them.
- After the class has ranked the list they should give their own suggestions. Create a list for display with all the class ideas for overcoming stress and feeling better when faced with problems.



## Further discussion and useful contacts

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- If children are worried about other children drinking, who can they talk to?
- If children are worried about adults drinking, who can they talk to?
- A good place for any child to turn to if they have such worries is Childline: **Freephone 08001111 / [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)**
- **[www.thesite.org](http://www.thesite.org)** and **[www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)** both have sections with advice and information about alcohol and young people.
- **[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)** provides information and advice on young people and mental health. There is a dedicated section for children and young people.