



# Alcohol and emotional health

50 minutes



## Overview

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This introductory lesson makes students 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 and wellbeing
- To know how to find ways of managing problems and stress without alcohol

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

## Resources

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- Alcohol and emotional health **video**
- Alcohol and emotional health **presentation**
- Alcohol and emotional health **scenario sheet**
- Stress-busting diamond **student sheet**
- Alcohol and emotional health **curriculum links**
- Alcohol education **guidance notes**



## Starter

Alcohol and emotional health

10 minutes

Watch the **video** (1.25 minutes) of young people talking about the relationship between being stressed or worried and drinking alcohol.

### Discussion questions

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

‘Feel, Think, Do’

25 minutes

This activity asks students to think about how they would respond in difficult situations involving alcohol, while encouraging students to separate out their feelings, thoughts and actions.

1. Arrange the class into groups of four. Give each group a scenario from the **Alcohol and emotional health scenario** sheet. One person reads out the scenario to their group. Each person individually jots down:
  - their feelings about the situation (e.g. fear, worry, shock etc.)
  - their thoughts about the situation (e.g. what can I do? who else can I get to help etc.)
  - what they would say/do to help improve the situation

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



2. Now the group shares with each other the things they jotted down:
  - the feelings that came up for each person
  - the thoughts each person had
  - what possible actions each person would have taken/or what they would have said
3. Ask each group to discuss and agree the best way to offer help in that situation.
4. Bring the groups back together and allow them time to read out their situation and explain how they would have offered support. Take feedback from other class members as each situation is discussed.

### During the discussion issues you could touch on include:

- **Alcohol and stress:** Many people drink alcohol to cope with stress. However, though alcohol can make you feel relaxed in the short term, it can actually go on to increase stress and anxiety.
- **Hangovers:** One price you are very likely to pay for drinking too much alcohol is a hangover! This can make you feel irritable, tired and stressed out. Painful symptoms such as a headache, dizziness and nausea won't help make your problems any better. Although young people can suffer less from hangovers than adults, the potential damage to internal organs remains the same.
- **Alcohol and sleep:** Sleep is an important part of the stress-busting process, especially for young people. Alcohol interferes with a good night's sleep, so you'll feel less rested the next morning.

## Plenary

Alternative ways of coping with stress

15 minutes

1. Divide the class into groups of four. Give each group a piece of A3 paper and a marker. Ask the groups to identify nine 'healthy ways of coping with stress' (e.g. playing sport, going to the cinema, spending time with friends) in order to avoid relying on addictive substances like alcohol.
2. Give each group a copy of the '**Stress busting diamond nine**'. The task is to prioritise nine ways of stress busting by filling out the diamond. The question is "What is the most useful way of stress busting?". (The top of the diamond is the most useful, bottom of the diamond is the least useful.)
3. Call the groups back together and ask each group to give their top three answers in order. The aim is to hear what students find most useful and to identify how each way helps to combat stress.



## Further discussion and useful contacts

- If young people are worried about other young people's drinking or an adult's drinking, who can they talk to?
- A good place for any young person 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 about young people and mental health. There is has a dedicated section for children and young people.