



Identifying “Problem Drinking”

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Learning Objectives:



1. To examine the range of problematic behaviors that can result from the use and abuse of alcohol
2. To relate where confrontation should occur among the spectrum of problematic drinking behavior and consequences
3. To assess how confronting problematic drinking behavior is integral to the sister relationship and the success of the organization

Technical Requirements:

Each group needs:



- Two large sheets of flip chart paper (or poster board) and markers
- A set of 25 index cards
- Roll of masking tape

Handouts:

ZTA Handout (in Resources & Handouts section)



Time Needed:

45-60 minutes

Group Size:

Any group of 12 or more. You will divide the larger group into smaller groups. Three small groups is the ideal number, but you could modify this module for one small group, or if you have an extremely large number of women, you could have as many small groups as you need. Just adjust the supplies as needed and be sure each small group has space to do the exercise.

Room Set Up:

A larger room with open walls is best. Do not use a room where sticking masking tape to the wall is prohibited. If the room has wall hangings, it best to take them down so you have large open expanses of wall space. Each group will need a wall space of approximately 10-12 feet. If you have a large room, two small groups may use halves of a very long wall.

Preparation:

Each group will have two pieces of flip chart paper (or poster board). On the left side of each group's space, write the words “Not Serious” in large type on one piece of paper. On the right side of each group's space, write the words “Very Serious” in large type on the other piece of paper. The women in the small groups will be placing the index cards with different words/phrases on them on the continuum between “Not Serious” and “Very Serious” on the wall based on their small group discussion.

INTRODUCTION (5 minutes)

The facilitator should introduce himself/herself, welcome and thank everyone for attending the session.



Today we are going to talk about “problem drinking,” basically defined as any drinking situation that causes problems during or after drinking. Some people experience no problems when they legally consume alcohol because they use moderation or set up safeguards. Others experience many problems as a result of their drinking. Some of these problems can be very small, and some can be very serious.

ACTIVITY (40 minutes)



I am going to divide you into three (*or other number*) small groups and give each group 25 index cards. Each of these cards has a consequence of problem drinking written on it.

As a small group, you will discuss these 25 cards and then put them on the wall with the tape we’ve provided. The consequences will range between “Not Serious” and “Very Serious.”

You are not ranking these. Some might be equally serious, and that’s fine. Your group might have more on one side than the other, and that’s fine. The most important thing is that you discuss each card and come to some consensus about where it should appear on your continuum on the wall.

As you progress through the activity, some members of the group may decide that a card needs to be moved one direction or another. Allow this discussion to happen.

It’s important that you are very thoughtful about where you place each index card. The cards will likely cover space throughout the continuum, some problems seeming more serious than others.

Try to include everyone in the discussion. Don’t rush. If you need more time, just ask.

In preparation:

• Give each group two pieces of flip chart paper (or poster board). On the left side of each group’s space, write the words “Not Serious” in large type on one piece of paper. On the right side, write the words “Very Serious” in large type on the other piece of paper.



• For each group, write the following words/phrases -- one word/phrase per card (25 cards per group). If possible, give the groups a particular color of card so that you will have a green group, yellow group, etc.

1. Vomiting
2. Driving intoxicated
3. Physical fights
4. Weight gain due to alcohol use
5. Damaged relationships with friends
6. Damaged relationships with significant other
7. Intoxicated sexual encounters
8. Sexual assault occurring while intoxicated
9. Loud, obnoxious behavior
10. Lapses in memory
11. Alcohol used to cope with other life difficulties
12. Passing out due to alcohol
13. Missing classes after drinking
14. Losing valuables while intoxicated (phone, camera, etc.)
15. “Wardrobe malfunctions” while intoxicated
16. Official violation from campus police or campus authorities
17. Arrest for underage consumption
18. “Drunk dialing” or texting under the influence
19. Injuries while intoxicated (requiring stitches, etc.)
20. Suicide threats when drinking
21. Alcohol poisoning requiring a hospital stay
22. Drunken pictures posted to a social networking site
23. Can only have fun if intoxicated
24. Financial problems due to drinking
25. Getting thrown out of an establishment

When your group is done, we will take a look at your wall. Please designate a representative who can tell the large group why you placed each index card in its place.

Allow 15 minutes for the activity.

Watch to make sure that the groups aren't simply ranking the cards in order of seriousness. Tell them to slow down and discuss each consequence card. Each one should be discussed, and then the group should agree where it belongs on the continuum. A group who is doing this thoughtfully will move a card around several times.

Note to the Facilitator:

- Make sure that the groups are seriously discussing where the cards should be placed, not just ranking in order of seriousness. A group who is doing this thoughtfully will move a card around several times.



When each group has finished placing its cards, refocus everyone in and allow each group to talk about the placement of its cards. You will probably see general agreement between the groups, but where you see disparities, ask about them with questions like, "Why did you place (this card) so far to this side?"

After each group has discussed its continuum, give the next set of directions



Now I want each group to look at its continuum. I want you to discuss where you would draw two distinct lines.



- At what point on your continuum should a sister feel compelled to confront another sister, in a caring way, about the problems she's experiencing due to alcohol?
- At what point on your continuum do the problem behaviors become the chapter's problem and obligation to act?

Once you have had your discussion and you've decided, create two lines using your masking tape. You should have three sections to your continuum.

- To the left should be the problem behaviors that are not serious enough to confront.
- In the middle will be the behaviors that sisters should confront individually, without the chapter's formal involvement.
- To the right should be the problems that require chapter action.

Take the time to discuss this thoroughly and take everyone's opinion into account as you decide where to tape your lines. When you're done, we'll come back and discuss what your small group decided.

Note to the Facilitator:

- Prepare for the next activity while the groups are deciding where to take their lines. You will be creating one large unified continuum. You can do this on an unused stretch of wall space.

Allow about five to 10 minutes for this. Some groups might do this very quickly, and others might take more time discussing. You might even see some more moving of index cards, and that's fine.

When groups are done, allow them to come back and explain their decisions. Ask groups if they agree with the other group's decisions.



I'm now going to create a continuum for our organization as a whole. Let's move the cards that everyone agreed on.

If everyone put "driving while intoxicated" in their third section, then grab that card from one of the small group's walls, and move it onto the third section of the unified continuum, etc. After you've moved the problem behaviors that everyone agreed on, ask the group to discuss where the disputed ones should go. Allow the discussions to happen, particularly if there is disagreement. By the end, you should have one continuum that enjoys general consensus.



I have extra index cards. Would anyone like to suggest another problem behavior and then suggest where it should be placed on the continuum?

This part of the exercise is important, because it allows the group to identify behaviors that they have struggled with, specifically. Be careful that it doesn't turn into an attack on any one woman. Allow discussion around each suggestion. If they are only suggesting very serious behaviors, ask them to give you some additional ones that they consider "not serious" and unworthy of confrontation.

PROCESSING (10 minutes)



Ask the participants several final questions to process the activity.

- Do all of us agree on what behaviors are problematic and those that are not?
- How would a new member know where these problems belong on the continuum? Do we tell them during the new member program?
- What is the best way to talk to someone about a drinking problem that is moderately serious? Do we wait to confront members only when a drinking problem has reached the "very serious" category?
- How do we know when a problem drinking behavior has become the organization's problem, requiring formal action?
- What can we do as sisters to assist a member when she is experiencing negative consequences from her use and/or abuse of alcohol?
- Does a woman see the seriousness of her consequences the same way her sisters do? What do you say to a woman who doesn't think the negative consequences of her behavior are serious at all?
- Can anyone think about statements in our organization's *Creed* or mission statement that should guide us as it relates to our discussions about high risk drinking? *Distribute ZTA Handout.*



At its very core, Zeta Tau Alpha is about love. Loving a sister sometimes means you have to confront and address issues as they relate to problem drinking. It might be hard, it might be challenging, but in the end, if you are trying to love your sister, then addressing problem drinking is the right thing to do.

To finish I'd like to provide a reminder about the policies that relate to alcohol. As members of our organization, we have the responsibility to live up to its expectations, of which include several alcohol policies. Review these on your own with the ZTA Handout provided.