

Is there an Art to Sensible Drinking? – An opinion by Ian Bass

I once saw a young guy around my age being ejected from a bar by the security guards, as he was completely smashed. It was easy to tell, as he was slurring his words, trying to fight the security guards, and stumbling all about the place. He had become really aggressive towards his friends, he had tried to get them to fight as they weren't getting drunk. He staggered down the high street vomiting several times and then collapsed soon after, only to vomit again and lie there in a pool of his own sick – no friends, no dignity and no one to help him. He probably ended up being banned from every pub in Herefordshire. And is also at a serious risk of Drink related disease, like Cancer, and Liver Disease.

After this incident a question came into my head, I don't know where from, but seeing that man lying there it just popped into my head. "Everyone drinks, but what does responsible drinking mean, and is there an art to it?" I think this man was drinking due to peer pressure, and to try a look 'big' in front of his friends, he allowed himself to be a victim to them, and they ended up laughing at him, and not helping him.

I think this type of alcohol consumption defeats the objective of drinking. There must be some way in which you can drink, and stay in control of your bodily functions, and not turn into this man, on the floor in his own sick. I think that he chose to do this, but he could have tried to have ignored his friends, known his limit, and stuck to it.

So after leaving, I was thinking about my question: "Everyone drinks, but what does responsible drinking mean, and is there an art to it?"

- 1) Why drink to get drunk? You can still have a good time without alcohol, and you would be able to see how your friends acted whilst drunks, and you could imagine what you would be like. Or if you are planning to have alcohol as part of your plan of the evening, drinking in moderation is the most fun, as you would still be all there, but not be losing your judgement.
- 2) Know your limit – this is about self-awareness of how much alcohol you have consumed and how your judgment could be becoming clouded. There are some indicators to look out for if you are trying to stick to your limit, like wobbly walks to the toilet, blurry vision, and saying embarrassing things) As soon as this starts happening this is probably your limit and the point where you are starting to be less in control. You will not be able to make sensible decisions regarding your welfare and are no longer practicing 'the art or sensible drinking.'
- 3) Have good friends around you who are sensible, they will advise you on how much alcohol you have had, and they won't pile peer pressure on you to drink over your limit to become a joke to them.
- 4) Eat food with the drink, this is to try and extend the amount of alcohol you can drink – you may still drink the same, but not be as drunk as you would be, as the food will take away some of the potency of the alcohol.
- 5) Most importantly: don't follow the herd and be your own person. Do what you want to do and don't be afraid to say no to your friends.

In my opinion Alcohol could be a good thing because if you know your limit, you can see how the world is quite good and you would be treating it more like an art form, rather than abusing it.

As soon as you are past this limit you get into the dangerous territory of health problems, unplanned pregnancies, STI's, clouded judgment and becoming the person, completely smashed, and face down in a pool of your own vomit, ejected from a bar.

I think that being tipsy is the limit. It could possibly be classified as responsible drinking as you are still in control, but you are on a high, and not drunk.

A good saying that I have been told summarises my points up well: "Tipsy and together rather than drunk and dangerous"

However some people do drink primarily to reach the objective of being drunk, where they are trying to get away from the world, and their judgement is clouded. So another question formed in my head: "If you are going to get drunk what could you do to minimize the damage and risk to yourself?"

I was thinking that you could:

- 1) Plan how to get home. Make sure you have someone you trust with you and keep any taxi/bus fare separate from your spending money, and have the numbers of taxi firms in your phone. If driving, agree before hand who will be the designated driver or who will walk you home if you do get completely off your face.
- 2) Drink soft drinks in between periods of alcohol consumption; this could help to stop you getting drunk as quickly as you would if you were just continuously drinking.
- 3) Eat food whilst you are out and drinking to try and stop becoming drunk as quickly.
- 4) Do it in moderation – this will lead to less health complications in later life. You can still be able to have a good time with friends, and seeing them drunk might give you an indication of how you might act when you are drunk. So if you do this you could be able to see that you can still have a good time without being drunk.

By Ian Bass