# What impact does alcohol have on relationships?

„Growing up with four brothers, I thought I was safe. Safe from the world, bad people, my dad. I never thought something that happened so long ago would stay with me for the rest of my life. I was scared, and I don’t think that that feeling ever really left me”

According to Alcoholireland.ie, one in eleven children said their parent’s drinking had a negative effect on their lives. However, behind this and every other statistic is a story. Stories, that are masked by shocking numbers and facts, catching your attention for a while but not quite enough to make you act, to change something. Sitting in class, listening to my English teacher reading out facts and statistics, girls snickering at the back, I began to think people don’t care. Because unless it involves them, everything is fine. Nothing is fine.

Childhood is supposed to be a time of innocence and happiness. According to alcoholireland.ie, in Ireland, there is an estimated 271,000 children under the age of fifteen who are living with parents that are regular risky drinkers. That is 271,000 children who couldn’t get help with their homework at home. 271,000 children who couldn’t accomplish their goals and dreams because their parents were ‘too drunk’ to bring them to football practice. 271,000 children who tried to be the therapist, the ‘fixer’, the hero of their parent’s lives, addiction and problems, looking after someone who is supposed to look after them. 271,000 children who may never got to fully experience childhood, teenage hood and sometimes even adulthood, with Adult Children of Alcoholics Syndrome (ACoA). From guilt to denial, for these people, forgetting is nearly impossible. Waiting until the day they turn eighteen, the day they decide to move out of their home, the day they leave the place they feel unhappy in. But is anywhere else better? College, Work and relationships are stressful, and for people with ACoA it just may be too much. It may cause something to crack inside. Sometimes they do something, they promised themselves they would never do. From now on it’s not a choice. Alcohol becomes a necessity in their lives.

Excluding, severe illnesses and major economic losses, sometimes the hardest impact of alcohol is losing the trust of a loved one. No matter if it’s the trust of your child or your spouse. The Health Ireland Survey carried out in 2015 found that, 60% of men who drink do so weekly, while 46% of women do the same. Although, it does not state that these people are at risk, the more you drink, the more you are prone to anxiety and depression. According to Alcoholireland.ie, three deaths per day were alcohol related. Mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, husbands and wives. I once came upon this quote: “ Pain is temporary, quitting lasts forever.” Actionireland.ie says, “alcohol is a factor in more than half of all completed suicides and over one third of cases of deliberate self-harm.” So many people are giving up. They are giving up on themselves, giving up on life.

So does alcohol really give people happiness? Is it an escape from reality? Does it make people more confident? Does alcohol reveal people’s true identity? Or does it mask their true colours? I’m still young, but one thing that I already learned from life is that you always have a choice. You have a choice to get into that car, when you know it’s unsafe. You have a choice to get help or to not get help. You have a choice to drink. The only obstacle is realising you have that choice.