What Impact Does Alcohol Have On Relationships?

According to Alcohol Action Ireland, five-hundred people in Ireland die each year due to alcohol related illnesses. Yet the number of people left behind to deal with these losses is significantly larger. This is just one example of how Alcohol abuse not only affects the person who is drinking the alcoholic drink, but also their relationships with others.

Alcohol has many affects on a person’s physical and mental health. According to Alcohol Action Ireland, eighty-eight deaths every month are directly attributable to alcohol. As previously stated, the amount of people left behind to deal with these losses is shockingly higher than these statistics. As well as causing many deaths daily, in terms of affecting a person’s physical health, alcohol is a factor in over half of all suicides in Ireland, and alcohol is also involved in over a third of cases of deliberate self-harm, peaking around weekends and public holidays. Mental health is just as important as physical health, yet this is the affect that alcohol has on a person that is probably talked about least.

Alcohol is known to affect a person’s way of thinking, while also damaging brain cells and slowing down cognitive thinking. This means that people tend to act recklessly, aggressively and not like themselves when they are intoxicated. For someone to see someone close to them in such a state of aggression and confusion can have many negative affects on their view of that person. Alcohol tends to make people loud and excited and act impulsively, which can portray them in a very negative light. In filial relationships, a child witnessing their parent’s intoxication can have a negative affect on this relationship. In Ireland, according to Alcohol Action Ireland, one in eleven children said that their parent’s drinking had a negative effect on their lives. This might not only be from tainting a child’s view of their parents, but also from parents arguing due to alcohol, lack of financial stability, domestic violence, or the child in question being reared to in an environment where alcohol abuse is considered regular and normal, therefore convincing the child that alcohol abuse is okay and possibly leading the to a life similar to that of their parents.

Although alcohol can damage a person’s opinion of a loved one, it can have far worse effects. As already mentioned, alcohol is known to cause people to act aggressively and violently, which can put the people close to the intoxicated person at risk. According to Alcohol Action Ireland, almost half of all perpetrators of homicide were intoxicated when the crime was committed and 76% of rape defendants were intoxicated at the time of the alleged offence. Alcohol induced violence can not only result in assault and homicide, but also domestic violence. According to the Institute of Alcohol Studies, in terms of domestic abuse, research typically finds that between 25% and 50% of perpetrators have been drinking at the time of assault, although in some studies the figure is as high as 73%. Domestic violence leads to unhealthy relationships, whether that be romantic, marital or filial.

Another result of alcohol abuse is financial difficulties. In a home, these financial difficulties could lead to arguing and an inability to afford basic needs, due to an excessive amount of money being spent on alcohol. According to Alcohol Action Ireland, personal spending on alcohol in Ireland was €6.47 billion in 2014, when consumption increased to 11 litres per capita, according to CSO. This lack of financial stability as a result of extensive alcohol consumption can put a strain on relationships.

In conclusion, alcohol damages relationships severely, from impairing a person’s physical and mental health, distorting a person’s opinion of someone, causing violence in the home, and causing financial instability.