

Binge drinking has been around since the beginnings of civilization - ever since the Greeks invented mead the Mesopotamians beer, and the Romans wine, people have gotten hammered over the substance. While we've been protesting against overconsumption for just as long, we still have a major issue with binge drinking, especially in the U.S. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, over a quarter of US adults binge drink - as a result, we experience the loss of 88,000 people due to alcohol overdose. The situation in the US with alcohol is dire, but there are ways to improve our toxic relationship with alcohol.

The main issue at hand with binge drinking is the mindset that people come in with when they do so. One of the most popular ideologies in the US with alcohol is to get "turnd up", which basically means to get hammered on purpose. This is the main problem: people binge drink because they want to get drunk for kicks and giggles, but rarely do Americans actually care about what kind of liquor they're drinking. Nowadays, people will turn to shots and hard liquors while turning down small beers and weak wines. While people down this poison to avoid their problems or just "for fun", the after effects, short-term and long-term, remain - the ruining of the liver, kidney, brain, and other body parts, along with the massive hangovers that come afterwards. Studies have shown that alcohol numbs the brain and kills synapses and neurons alike, impairing your memory and capability to learn. In addition, alcohol consumption can reduce testosterone and result in erectile dysfunction, so saying that liquor's a manly drink is quite ironic.

While drinking with food is perfectly fine, US teenagers and young adults often find themselves drinking too much, too often, so how do we fix this? What we shouldn't do is ban alcohol - the Roaring 20's and Prohibition showed just how ineffective and catastrophic that course of action is. During this period of banned alcohol consumption, bootlegging operations started to occur in the backwoods countryside, where moonshiners would create kicked-off hard liquors and sell them to mobsters, who in turn distributed the booze in speakeasies. To make a long story short, the Prohibition era was one where crime soared and people died due to poisoned liquor. Once we repealed the ban, crime lost an avenue of revenue and alcohol was re-regulated to be "safe" for consumption.

It actually serves a good point as to why we're encountering issues with alcoholism: the legal age rating. In the US, the legal age to drink is 21 years of age, while almost every else alcohol is permitted at lower ages. In addition to this, the American household often forbids their children to drink at all; on the flipside, European countries often allow teens to interact with alcohol in small quantities. What the Europeans do at first seems counterproductive but is actually genius: by allowing teens to have small, healthy quantities, you're teaching them the proper etiquette for drinking. When they grow up, they see no need to guzzle down half a gallon of beer and end up puking in the toilet, a common occurrence at the American frat house. We in the US have a paradoxical nature with the brew: while underage drinking is a federal offense and is heavily persecuted, advertisements for drinking are rampant, and adults do quite a bit of it. The overall setting is one where parents don't consider to teach their kids the right ways to drink, mostly due to legal reasons but also because of the societal norms that render the European format unorthodox. This leaves teens in cognitive dissonance - they're taught that underage drinking is bad, but then they see all their parents and advertisements guzzling down alcoholic beverages. This turns alcohol into a forbidden fruit for American teenagers, and so they seek the sauce without experience or knowledge of its complicated, double-edged nature. This results in teens stealing liquor from the home, buying it illegally from adults middle-manning it to them, and when they do reach the legal age, going all out on the liquor consumption. In fact, dying from overdoses often occurs at 21st birthday parties and soon after, when the youth adult completely lets loose and drinks intoxicating amounts of booze. All of this is because of how we regulate alcohol in the US: we restrict it specifically for adults, absolutely prohibit youngster from trying it, and so people do illegal and dangerous things to get the booze without understanding the consequences.

In summary, the solutions are strange but there: lower the legal drinking age, and cultivate an understanding amongst the young on how to drink. While these methods seem opposite to what we're trying to prevent, it has been a tried-and-tested way to bring about healthy drinking habits. In countries all around the world, alcohol is much more liberally allowed and results in fewer alcoholics and alcohol overdoses: isn't time for us to join them?