

## **HL: Mugging**

SL: Surviving campus with alcohol

Is being a teetotaler equivalent to being a party-pooper? Of course not. Says mom. But that won't stop you from being accused, mostly in good-nature, of carrying that dour disease. For whatever reasons you make a hasty retreat whenever a mug is placed in front of you – personal convictions, that one-day old resolution, perhaps people laugh when you turn into a 'red lobster' after a single sip, flatulence, making-merry was breaking the bank, your parents threatened to take away your allowance, you dissed off your girlfriend - you would still have felt some pressure to imbibe liquid gold at some point.

There isn't anything wrong about being a walking and talking prohibition - there is in fact life after alcohol, although those few who ventured there were probably never invited again. OK, that's probably an exaggeration, but it does underline the fear held by many students, as well as the challenge many face daily both in college and work – booze or wuss.

There is no question that alcohol does improve your chances in making new friends, playing beer-pong may even make you recognizable throughout college, and maybe buying a round for your professor may just give you some brownie points. Belching the loudest may even give you a free supply of alcohol for a week. If you are from a foreign country and Munch's Scream is beginning to finally make sense to you, showing your drinking prowess may be a means to break the cultural and language barrier to make friends.

So participating in an after-school revelry may have its benefits – it has shown to be greatly exaggerated, like things often are, by the media. Sure, there are those who have more alcohol in their systems than the amount allocated at Oktoberfest, but they are fortunately uncommon. The bingeing of college life, the crazy bacchanals isn't exactly the recommended prescription for students hoping to make full use of their \$40,000 per-year college education. Students in universities are more likely to be more serious about their education than downing a six-pack in record time.

A survey in SMU revealed that students were often to overestimate the alcohol intake of their peers and that most had highly responsible attitudes toward drinking. So while there clearly benefits in being part of the chugging herd, there are as many reasons to avoid drinking as a part of your socializing activities. In the US, it is estimated that there were more than 1,500 annual alcohol related deaths amongst college students. Most are traffic related. Incidents of rape are reported by 1 in 20 college women – most were heavily intoxicated at the time of the incident. It's easy to misjudge the amount you have drunk, which makes it highly possible that you have exceeded safe limits and result in alcohol poisoning. In Singapore, binge drinking and student drinking activities have been on a rise in Singapore for several years, and while there doesn't seem to be any cause of worry, one wonders if social pressures have been the cause of much of the trend.

For many, waking-up with ditch, with a splitting headache and pencil-drawn mustache doesn't fit the fun-filled night bill. To assume that alcohol is needed to have fun, is perhaps tantamount to having severe the lack of imagination. If you begin to exude dullness whenever your body has been purged of alcohol, we suggest you pick up a joke-book or learn a sleight-of-hand trick or two. Relying on the alcohol to avoid being labeled as another 'dull-Joe' is hardly ...

As past university students ourselves, we understand the effects peer-pressure can take on. But we

also need to understand that it's a part-and-parcel of a tee-totaling life - something you'll very likely encounter later in the beleaguered working world. You aren't the first to go through university life tee-totaling, and you definitely not going extinct just yet. So, in line with the Darwin's observations, we suggest you too learn to adapt, instead of succumbing to pressures and practicing ritual libations.

So, you think you will reduce your chances of meeting a someone from the opposite sex. It's true you won't meet be meeting another dipsomaniac, but we like to think of that as a good thing. Joining interest groups and sports activities, which there a likely a myriad to pick from in any campus, can resolve your social crisis. Binge drinking and stealing you professor's lawn gnomes isn't going to endear you to many. You'll have a better shot ( forgive the pun) in knowing someone over a coffee and a movie, than through incoherent ramblings after a losing several rounds of 'quarters'.

If you surrounded by several louts who've made it their sole intention to make you drink, you can always volunteer to be the designated driver, say you're on medication, or simply pour yourself a Red Bull drink and let others assume it's alcohol. If friends seem intent on dragging you to the bottom of your can, we suggest to you look elsewhere for wisest individuals to expend your time on. It may surprise some people, but keeping away from alcohol probably will earn you more respect instead.

Most students are serious about getting a wholesome education in college, and are quite capable for standing for their decisions. It's a part of education perhaps that we learn to make decisions that are the best for us and actually stick to them. This isn't high-school after-all, and the need to fit-in isn't our only priority.

So if you find yourself in a sober mire with bottles of gin being catapulted at you repeatedly, we suggest you either learn to dodge really quickly or get yourself out of there. Most of us can be more affected by our environment than others, and the best thing we could do is remove ourselves. Of course, there are lots of people who have gone through college without a sip, so jazz up you conversational skills and no one will notice.