“SWALLOW THIS!”
SBU - Prevention Through the Arts

“Swallow This!” . . . Alcohol & Other Drug (AOD) Prevention Through the Arts was developed from actual Stony Brook University (SBU) student stories, relating their own experiences with alcohol, tobacco & other drugs. This award-winning program was established in 1995 and each year a brand new show is developed and performed weekly on campus.

The performance helps open dialogue on campus about the issues of substance use and it helps the audience consider the effects of substance use in their own lives.

This Prevention Through the Arts program is co-sponsored by the Center for Prevention & Outreach Health Education Office & the Department of Theatre Arts. Students have devoted many hours transforming SBU student stories into this dramatic and educational presentation.

"Swallow This!" portrays many of the consequences of AOD use experienced by students who drink heavily, by those who rarely drink or misuse AOD, and by non-users as well. It is important to remember that many people are affected by AOD use, not just the user.

Perhaps the play will evoke a story. In the telling, we may learn more about ourselves, the experiences of others and find we are not alone.

Student Perceptions vs. Reality

Semi-annual research on student AOD use & attitudes indicates that 39% of SBU students are not current alcohol users. Other students misuse AOD on a regular basis and still others; about 13% show signs of dependence.

As difficult as it is for some students to believe (especially the heavy drinkers and their friends) research results have also shown that SBU is below the national average for the number of drinks consumed per week. Due to the large number of non & light users the average SBU student alcohol consumption is 3.6 drinks per week as opposed to the national average of 5.1. The research also indicates that 38% of USB students would rather not have alcohol at the parties they attend and 80% prefer not having drugs (other than alcohol) available. Only 30% of Stony Brook students binge drink vs. the National average of 42%. Students continue to believe that peer AOD use is significantly higher than the reality. These misperceptions lead many students to feel pressure to use AOD at higher amounts and thus increase their chances of experiencing negative consequences.

Where are you on the Substance Use Continuum?

People may move up and down this continuum however if the dependence level is reached the person will need assistance to recover. Students here at Stony Brook fit into all of these categories.

1. Abstinence: No use of substances (other than prescribed medications), due to religious, personal, health or simple lack desire.

2. Use: Choosing to use a substance in a responsible and legal manner that does not put your own or another person’s health, safety or well being at risk.

3. Misuse: Any use that is harmful, or potentially harmful to yourself or others. Examples: Overdose, drinking & driving, drinking & forcing sex on someone, vandalism, missing class.
4. Abuse: A pattern of planned, systematic misuse of a substance. Use is becoming more of a compulsion than choice.

Criteria for Diagnosis: (One or more within a year’s time) *Recurrent use with problematic results, *Recurrent use in dangerous or high risk situations, *Recurrent substance-related legal problems

Examples: Regularly overusing, preoccupied with partying, having blackouts, effects on relationships, health, finances, grades, attendance. Risky situations include using and driving, using on the job, when studying, using to increase likelihood of sex, using to avoid responsibility.

5. Dependence: At this point the person cannot consistently control how much they will use, when they will use or what they will do after using. They need the substance to feel normal.

Criteria for Diagnosis: (Any three of the following occurring within a year’s time) *Changes in tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, *Lacking consistent control over amounts, times using or behavior, *Thinking about alcohol or other drugs often, *Ignoring physical or psychological consequences, *Stopping or ignoring social, school, or recreational activities, *Persistent desire or unsuccessful attempts to cut down.

Remember…those around you will probably notice the problem before you do…listen to your friends and others that care about you. Their perception is most likely clearer than yours.

Stony Brook University, Center for Prevention & Outreach – Health Education Office

Located in the Student Health Center, the Health Education Office is a resource designed to help students aim towards reaching optimum health and wellness. i.e. feeling their best, physically emotionally, socially & spiritually. There is no single solution to AOD abuse but we are committed to increasing student awareness of personal health issues, and to assisting them in pro-active decision-making that enhances wellness & academic success. If you have any questions or thoughts about this performance or about any health issue please visit or call the Health Education Office.

Health Education Office Staff

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THANK YOU
to all students who contributed material for this performance.
A special thanks to all students whose stories did not directly appear in the performance. Be assured that your insights and experiences contributed significantly to the development of this program and final script.