

When Substance Use Becomes “*More Than a Party*”

Kim Crowley
Substance Abuse Counselor
Student Health Center

Stress and anxiety are reasons why people drink alcohol or use drugs. For example, hurricane Katrina disrupted the lives of many students and forced them to make decisions they would not have ordinarily made. This stress and anxiety, coupled with the stressors that were present before Katrina, can make up a “cocktail” of stressors that could very well lead to substance abuse.

Substance abuse is the abnormal use of a substance which can lead to an addiction. An *addiction* is continuing to use a substance despite the negative consequences that occur from using that substance.

Some risk factors in becoming addicted are family history (genetics), willingness to experiment with risky behaviors, mental state (anxious, depressed or angry), age (higher risk in those under age 30), and support system (little social/family support suggests a higher risk for abuse).

You will know if you or someone you know has a problem with drugs or alcohol when continued use of substances occurs **DESPITE** the negative consequences of the substance use. Problems are typically reflected in personal relationships, family relationships, finances, and academics. It can also result in legal problems, emotional problems and unsafe sexual activities.

If you or someone you know has a problem with drugs or alcohol, there is help. There are many alternatives to coping with stress and anxiety, such as, exercise, talking to a friend or counselor, getting enough sleep, eating properly, and understanding your limits. You can also utilize:

- ECHUG/ETOKE- an online assessment tool at www.tulane.edu/~health;
- Some 12 step programs- support groups of persons who have decided to stop using drugs or alcohol. See www.aa.org and www.na.org;
- Individual or group counseling at the Student Health Center’s substance abuse clinic, 865-5255 ext. 230 or ERC at 865-5113.