

## HOW DO YOU USE ALCOHOL?

### DISCUSSION LEADER'S OUTLINE

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Good morning my name is \_\_\_\_\_. Today we will talk about recognizing alcohol use.

The **ground rules** for this discussion are:

- (1) No personal attacks on anyone's opinions
- (2) Allow each participant to express themselves
- (3) Make head calls at your leisure, just don't interrupt the group
- (4) Keep your language clean as not to offend others
- (5) PARTICIPATION BY ALL!!!!!!

#### **Gain Attention**

SSgt Raymond is well respected by peers and junior Marines. Until a recent motorcycle accident, SSgt Raymond was always ready for a physical challenge. The accident damaged his lower back and weakened his ability to see at night. You heard he was drinking on the night of his accident. You've known him for years and most recently you've noticed alcohol consumption is the primary focus of his activities; his focus used to be all PT – all the time. You've had drinks with him before (the last time was nearly 1 month ago) and during those times, he never drank more than three beers in a night. You've been told that SSgt Raymond has more than doubled his alcohol use recently, having over six beers a night and mixing hard liquor beverages in the car to drink in the bar parking lot. It seems like he is taking every opportunity to get intoxicated and he's taking on additional risk by having alcohol in his car while driving from one bar to the next. SSgt Raymond's recent behavior is out of character and you're pretty sure he has a drinking problem, but when you voice your concerns he doesn't take them seriously. He admits to drinking 4 nights a week but says he's not worried about it and he thinks he's able to keep himself out of trouble. You don't see him regularly these days; maybe you can get him help through fellow Marines or other local resources.

**Key points** for the discussion today will be:

- (1) Defining a standard drink
- (2) Using the Timeline Follow Back interview method to help individuals examine their patterns of alcohol consumption

**Learning Objective:** After this guided discussion, you will be able to realistically recognize alcohol use through a better understanding of a standard alcoholic beverage and examining patterns of alcohol consumption using the Timeline Follow Back interview method.

#### **DISCUSSION**

The 36<sup>th</sup> Commandant's 2015 Planning Guidance reminds us that the Marine Corps must "remain committed to constantly improving the quality of our manning, training and equipping efforts and our resultant warfighting capability." It also states that "everything we do must contribute to our combat readiness and combat effectiveness." Low-risk choices regarding alcohol use can help you in accomplishing your mission as the Nation's 911 force. Today we'll work on equipping you with information to help reduce high-risk behaviors.

### **KEY POINT 1**

1. Alcoholic beverages can come in many forms, such as beer, wine, and hard liquor. To understand our drinking habits we'll need to define a standard drink.
2. A standard drink is equal to 14.0 grams (0.6 ounces) of pure alcohol. Generally, this amount of pure alcohol is found in the following:
  - a) A single 1.5-ounce "shot" of hard liquor/distilled spirits such as gin, rum, vodka, whiskey (80-proof, 40% alcohol content)
  - b) A single 12-ounce beer (5% alcohol content) and 8-ounces of malt liquor (7% alcohol content)
  - c) About 5 ounces of wine, this is half of what fits in a standard wine glass (12% alcohol content)
3. Look for the alcohol content on the label of canned or bottled beverages. Pay close attention to mixed drinks as a single mixed drink made with hard liquor can contain 3 or more standard drinks, depending on the type of spirits and the amount used in the recipe. For example, consuming one mixed drink made with two shots equals two standard drinks.
4. How many standard drinks is SSgt Raymond currently having per day? (Let Marines provide several answers.)
  - a) Let's do the math, SSgt Raymond used to have three beers in a night and now he's having twice that. That's six beers at the bar plus the mixed drinks in the car. If he makes his mixed drinks with two shots of hard liquor/distilled spirits, that makes each mixed drink two servings of a standard drink. SSgt Raymond is consuming at least 8 standard drinks a day.
5. Are beer and wine safer than hard liquor? (Let Marines provide several answers.)
  - a) No, the risks of drinking (health and impairment issues) are relative to quantity (how many drinks) and frequency (how often).
6. Drinking is a choice. The only way to avoid alcohol-related risks is not to drink at all. You have the responsibility, if you choose to drink, do it in a low-risk way.
7. At 21 years of age or older, keep your drinking low-risk by sticking to these guidelines:
  - a) No more than 1 standard drink in 1 hour
  - b) No more than 3 standard drinks in 1 day for men (this is 2 standard drinks per day for women)
  - c) No more than 14 standard drinks per week for men (this is 7 standard drinks per week for women)
  - d) High-risk is more than any of these guidelines, for example when males drink more than 3 alcoholic beverages a day the risk for health issues begins (for females this is 2 alcoholic beverages a day). The risk for impairment begins at more than 1 drink in an hour.
8. Most people make low-risk drinking choices most of the time. These guidelines are research-based for reducing risk, not based on drinking preferences. Some people feel comfortable in their low-risk drinking choices and others are surprised that their drinking choices are high-risk.
9. A month ago, SSgt Raymond was making low-risk drinking choices by having only 3 beers in a night. We discussed SSgt Raymond's most recent choice of at least 8 standard drinks (drinking 6 beers at the bar plus the mixed drink in the car). Is he currently making low-risk drinking choices? (Let Marines provide several answers.)
  - a) No, SSgt Raymond's choice of at least 8 standard drinks in one day is high-risk. He has admitted to drinking 4 days a week, which could mean 32 standard drinks in 1 week – this is more than 2 times the low-risk drinking guideline.
10. High-risk drinking has consequences and can lead to dependence (alcoholism) that requires professional medical treatment, as well as serious career and legal issues, up to criminal prosecution and separation from the Marine Corps. High-risk drinking can and often does lead

to poor decisions, such as overspending, unprotected sex, driving under the influence, and fighting.

- a) Are there any risks associated with SSgt Raymond's situation? (Let Marines provide several answers.)
- b) Yes, if SSgt Raymond was intoxicated when his motorcycle accident occurred, he could face administrative and legal issues, on and off base. His high-risk drinking on 4 days a week obstructs fitness of body and mind; he may not be PTing as often and may have a difficult time focusing on mission.

11. There are ways to help make low-risk drinking choices:

- a) Fill your time with healthy activities and relationships that do not involve drinking.
- b) Decide ahead of time, when, where, and how much you will drink.
- c) Measure your drinks when pouring from a wine or liquor bottle.
- d) You can choose beer and wine with lower alcohol content. You can also use less liquor and more mix in mixed drinks.
- e) Pace your drinking; don't consume more than 1 standard drink an hour.
- f) Alternate non-alcoholic drinks between alcohol drinks.
- g) Include food when drinking, alcohol will more slowly absorb into your system.
- h) Keep only a small amount or no alcohol at home.
- i) Certain people, places, or situations (activities/times of day) may make you choose drinking even when you don't want to; try to avoid these "triggers." When triggers arise, plan an alternative to drinking.
- j) When you are fighting the urge to drink, accept it and ride it out without giving in, knowing that it will soon pass.
- k) Remember, not drinking is always an option and it's the only no-risk option.
- l) Remind yourself of your reasons for not drinking; you can carry these reminders with you in writing or stored in your cellphone.

**Interim Summary:** We just finished defining a standard drink to help you compare your drinking choices to low-risk guidelines. Let's examine patterns of alcohol consumption using the Timeline Follow Back interview method.

## **KEY POINT 2**

We mentioned that some people are comfortable in their low-risk drinking choices and others may be surprised that their drinking choices are high-risk. When we acknowledge high-risk drinking we can make changes to lower the risk.

1. Some people have never thought about their drinking choices and the risks associated. Recording our drinking on a calendar using the Timeline Follow Back interview method is a way to make note of our drinking choices by quantity (how many drinks) and frequency (how often).
2. This method is typically accomplished with an interviewer (possibly your significant other, a mentor/NCO/SNCO, etc.), a participant (you), and a calendar.
  - a) The interviewer prompts the participant to remember their drinking choices during a set time period ranging from 7 days to 24 months prior. The participant will identify days they consumed alcoholic beverages and note the total standard drinks consumed on those days. Below, we'll use the set time period of the previous 30 days.
  - b) An "X" is placed on the current day and the participant starts by recalling the total number of standard drinks consumed on the previous day, and then works backward 30 days.
  - c) The interviewer assists the participant in remembering his or her drinking habits by

indicating holidays and special events such as birthdays, celebrations, leave, vacations, periods of transition in duty status, and between duty stations. Some people have routine weekday, weekend, and seasonal activities where they drink alcoholic beverages. For example, the participant plays softball twice a week during the summer and consumes 3 standard drinks per game.

- d) The total number of standard drinks consumed is written on each calendar day. A zero is marked on days the participant did not consume alcohol.
  - e) Remember the definition of a standard drink, if the participant consumed a single 1.5-ounce “shot” of hard liquor/ distilled spirits, later in that day they consumed a single 12-ounce beer and a mixed drink with a double “shot,” this counts as 4 standard drinks for that day – the participant marks 4 on that calendar day.
3. When the participant finishes noting their alcohol consumption for the previous 30 days, that calendar is used to see:
- a) The total standard drinks consumed in the past 30 days. The participant is then able to say, “In the last month, I drank \_\_\_\_ standard drinks.”
  - b) The total drinking days in the past 30 days. The participant is then able to say, “In the last month, I drank on \_\_\_\_ days.”
  - c) The highest number of standard drinks consumed on any drinking day in the past 30 days. “In the last month, \_\_\_\_ was the peak number of standard drinks during any drinking day.”
  - d) The average number of drinking days per week (the range is from 0-7 days). The participant is then able to say, “In the last month, on average I drank \_\_\_\_ days per week.”
  - e) The average number of standard drinks on drinking days (total drinks divided by drinking days). The participant is then able to say, “In the last month, on days when I drank, on average I drank \_\_\_\_ standard drinks.”
4. Remember for males, if you are drinking more than 14 standard drinks per week or more than 3 drinks in a day, your drinking choices are considered high-risk. For females, if you are drinking more than 7 standard drinks per week or more than 2 drinks in a day, your drinking choices are considered high-risk. If your drinking is above these guidelines, it is advisable to develop strategies to reduce your drinking.
5. When they know their drinking habits, many people can change their drinking choices on their own but some individuals will need additional help.
- a) Peers, the chain of command, chaplains, medical/MCCS services, and the DSTRESS Line (domestic and international 1-877-476-7734) can help before issues become overwhelming, and direct to other resources if necessary. To reach the DSTRESS Line from Okinawa and MCAS Iwakuni dial DSN 645-7734 and local cell/land line 098-970-7734.
  - b) The Substance Abuse Control Officer, Substance Abuse Counseling Center, and Military Family Life Consultants can be very helpful in addressing issues associated with high-risk drinking.
6. The Timeline Follow Back interview is copyrighted and has no cost for use when completed by individuals on paper or online. The paper-pencil version is enclosed.

### **SUMMARY/CONCLUSION**

Today we discussed realistically recognizing our alcohol use through a better understanding of a standard alcoholic beverage and examining patterns of alcohol consumption using the Timeline Follow Back interview method. High-risk drinking degrades performance, conduct, discipline, and mission effectiveness. It’s important to identify high-risk drinking patterns and mitigate the risk associated by changing drinking choices.

**Closing Statement:**

Drinking is a choice. Many Marines choose not to drink at all. You have the responsibility, if you choose to drink, to do it in a low-risk way. When we acknowledge high-risk drinking, we can make changes to lower the risk. Lowering our risk helps to mitigate alcohol-related issues, such as physical dependence, legal consequences, and degraded performance.

**END OF DISCUSSION****RESOURCES**

1. MAPIT Guide. Retrieved from [http://bhinc.usmc-mccs.org/uploads/MAPIT\\_Guide.pdf](http://bhinc.usmc-mccs.org/uploads/MAPIT_Guide.pdf).
2. Strategies for Cutting Down. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism National Institutes of Health. Retrieved from <http://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/Strategies/TipsToTry.asp>.
3. Instructions for Filling Out the Timeline Alcohol Use Calendar. Sobell, L. C. & Sobell, M. B., 2000. Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/gsc/forms/TLFBAIcoholInstructions.pdf>.
4. Timeline Followback Calendar. Sobell, L. C. & Sobell, M. B., 2004. Retrieved from [http://www.nova.edu/gsc/online\\_files.html#time\\_followback](http://www.nova.edu/gsc/online_files.html#time_followback).
5. PRIME For Life Participant Workbook, Version 8.0. Daugherty, R & O'Bryan, T., 2004. Prevention Research Institute.

**ENCLOSURE 1****TIMELINE FOLLOWBACK CALENDAR: 2015**

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<b>Complete the Following</b>											
Start Date (Day 1): _____				End Date (yesterday): _____							
MO		DY		YR		MO		DY		YR	

2015	SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
					1 New Year's Day	2	3
J	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
A	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
N	18	19 M. Luther King	20	21	22	23	24
	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
F	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
E	8	9	10	11	12	13	14 Valentine's Day
B	15	16 Pres. Day	17	18	19 Chinese New Yr	20	21
	22	23	24	25	26	27	28

M	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
R	15	16	17 St. Patrick's Day	18	19	20	21
	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
	29	30	31	1	2	3 Passover	4 Good Friday
A	5 Easter	6	7	8	9	10	11
P	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
R	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
	26	27	28	29	30	1	2
M	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
A	10 Mother's Day	11	12	13	14	15	16
Y	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
	24	25 Memorial Day	26	27	28	29	30
	31						
2015	SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5	6
J	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
U	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
N	21 Father's Day	22	23	24	25	26	27
	28	29	30	1	2	3	4 Independence Day
J	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
U	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
L	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
	26	27	28	29	30	31	1
A	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
U	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
G	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
	30	31	1	2	3	4	5
S	6	7 Labor Day	8	9	10	11	12
E	13 Rosh Hashanah	14	15	16	17	18	19 Rosh Hashanah
P	20	21	22 Yom Kippur	23	24	25	26
	27	28	29	30	1	2	3
O	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
C	11	12 Columbus Day	13	14	15	16	17
T	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
	25	26	27	28	29	30	31 Halloween

N	1	2	3 Election Day	4	5	6	7
O	8	9	10	11 Veterans Day	12	13	14
V	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
	22	23	24	25	26 Thanksgiving	27	28
	29	30	1	2	3	4	5
D	6 Hanukkah	7	8	9	10	11	12
E	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
C	20	21	22	23	24	25 Christmas	26
	27	28	29	30	31 New Year's Eve		