**Drinking Behaviors**

**The Line Between Use and Abuse**

**The Spectrum of Alcohol Use:**

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| No Drinking  **Light**  Having alcoholic drinks less than 1 time per month  Having no more than 1-2 drinks per occasion  Experiencing “intoxication” very few times within a lifespan | **Moderate**  Having alcoholic drinks only 1-4 times per month  Having no more than 1-3 drinks per occasion  Experiencing a “high” from alcohol less than 7 times in a year  Becoming “drunk” only 1-4 times within a lifespan  **“You do not have to be an “alcoholic” to have a drinking problem”** | **Heavy**  Having alcoholic drinks 1-7 times per week  Having 1-6 drinks per occasion.  Experiencing a “high” from alcohol on a weekly basis  Becoming “drunk” only once per month | **Careless**  When you drink, you sometimes drink too much  You experience at least one of the following problems:   * Arguments with family * Occasionally missing work * Loss of money * An alcohol related arrest | **Problem**  You experience some of the following, more severe problems:   * Family complains about your drinking * Separation & divorce * Injuries * Fights * Belligerence * Losing your job or disciplinary action at work * Missing appointments, work, & events * Unpaid bills * Multiple arrests * Health problems | Death from Alcoholism  **Alcoholic**  Inability to consistently predict your frequency or effect of drinking  You experience physical addiction.   * Changes in tolerances * Withdrawal effect * Morning drinking * Neglecting to eat * The “shakes” * Lying * Sneaking drinks * Making excuses for your behavior * Frequent blackouts * Binges * Severe health problems (liver failure, diabetes) * Hospitalization |

**Questions:**

1. What do all the “abuse” categories (careless, problem, & alcoholic) have in common?
2. Although it is possible to remain under one of these categories for a prolonged period of time, people often move along this spectrum. Do you think people are more likely to move to the left or to the right on this spectrum? Why?
3. Once people hit the “alcoholic” category, they need medical assistance (hospitalization) in order to remove (or reduce) alcohol from their lives. Why do you think people may resist getting help prior to reaching that category?
4. What can people do to ensure they don’t reach (or remain) in one of the “abuse” categories?
5. Where do you fall on this spectrum?

1. Do you know anyone who falls into one of the last 3 categories?
2. What should you do if you see someone being irresponsible with alcohol? (keep in mind, you cannot “fix” other people. Getting help is a choice the “abuser” has to make for him/herself)

(There are resources for help and information)