

# HEALTHY ABSTAINER PROFILE

As part of teaching healthy drinking practices, it is important to discuss responsible abstinence from alcohol use. People who choose to abstain from alcohol use benefit from demonstrations of support and acceptance from healthy drinkers they encounter. Whether one abstains for one weekend or forever, information about healthy abstinence is useful and supportive.

## **Healthy Abstainers:**

### **Make a personal healthy decision to avoid alcohol use.**

This decision to abstain is a free choice made by the person instead of bowing to peer pressure or authoritarian control.

### **Respect the choice made by healthy drinker.**

This means tolerating and respecting the choice made by a drinker who displays a healthy and responsible relationship with alcohol. This does not mean they respect or tolerate dangerous, exploitive or rude behavior by any drinker.

### **Have the techniques to minimize the risks which may accompany abstinence.**

These are primarily social and may run from subtle pressure to verbal abuse, ridicule, and ostracism. Such pressure is encountered more frequently from beginning drinkers (young adults) and problem drinkers. Most healthy abstainers have a repertoire of effective responses.

### **Recognize alcohol as a potent drug.**

There are many potent drugs. The healthy abstainer makes responsible choices regarding the use or non-use of other potent drugs (nicotine, heroin, caffeine, sedatives, etc.) The healthy abstainer does not abstain by substituting one potent drug for another.

### **Abstain for positive reasons.**

Healthy abstainers do so out of love for self, health, God, others, joie de vivre. They do not abstain out of fear or death, fear of others, fear of God. Although fear may initiate abstinence, it rarely maintains abstinence over time.

## Everyone Doesn't Drink Sometimes

Choosing to drink alcohol or to abstain is a personal decision. If a person learns to drink moderately and safely, drinking does not have to be high risk. However, there are times when abstaining from alcohol use is the most appropriate decision for everyone to make.

Those who most often hassle others about their decision not to drink are immature, inexperienced drinkers. This same group of drinkers also tends to feel uncomfortable with their own drinking and is affected by pressure to drink from others.

**IF YOU ARE SURE OF YOUR DECISION AND STRONG ENOUGH TO STICK BY IT, SUPPORT YOUR DECISION BY:**

- being around friends who support your decision not to drink
- finding an activity where there will be no alcohol (movie, miniature golf, play, basketball, game)
- going to a party, but bringing your own beverage

**IF YOU NEED HELP STICKING TO YOUR DECISION TO ABSTAIN, OR YOU NEED A TEMPORARY EXCUSE FOR NOT DRINKING, THESE MIGHT WORK FOR YOU:**

- if you attend a social event where alcohol is the main event, go with another abstainer
- avoid people who push drinking
- host a party and stay sober
- bring a soft drink
- have mineral water in a glass with ice
- pick up an empty beer can when you get there and fill it with water or a soft drink (IF you feel you need to feel like you are drinking alcohol)

**NOTE:** alcohol use is always risky for pregnant women, individuals on medication or those addicted to alcohol.