

THE CONSEQUENCES OF UNDER-AGE DRINKING

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Picture this: You and about 20 people are at a party, alcohol is being served and nearly everybody is drinking including you. Some of your friends have already been arrested for drinking earlier this year, but you don't think that you will be caught. The music isn't too loud and there isn't any big commotion, so you feel pretty safe. You're having a good time until you see the flashing red lights through the window. Then there is a knock at the door. The music is turned off immediately and people scatter everywhere. Drinks are being poured down the drain, people are stuffing gum into their mouths and are trying anything possible to make it look as if they have not been drinking.

Your mind races and your heart pounds as you try and think of a way to stay out of trouble. You get very nervous as you think about what is going to happen to you, and the entire time this is going on, the one question that continuously runs through your mind is, "Why did I have that stupid glass of beer?"

By this time it doesn't matter. You have already had the beer and it's your turn to take the Breathalyzer. You have already seen a few of your friends being arrested but the thought of yourself being arrested terrifies you. You blow into the tube and one cop says to the other, "J-3," meaning that there is alcohol in you and you are a minor. You're handcuffed to your friend and the two of you are escorted to the squad car.

As you ride to the station in the back of the car, many questions, cross your mind. "Will my parents find out? What will they say? How much is it going to cost to get out? Am going to have a record?" All of these questions will be answered soon enough as you are now escorted to the station and sent to be booked.

The first thing you do while being booked is answer many questions including, "Are you a homosexual? Do you do drugs? Do you have any diseases?" Once this is finished you are fingerprinted and then they take a mug shot. The mug shot really bothers you, because you know you are not a criminal but you are being treated the same way any ordinary criminal would be treated.

Now that you are finished being booked, they take you to the waiting cell where there are other people waiting to be put in jail. While you are in the waiting cell, you begin to worry about what it is going to be like spending the entire night in jail. Another thing you are worrying about is who you are going to be with in the cell.

After a while in the waiting cell, you are now taken into a room where you must strip down nude in front of an officer and put on the so-called "county blues." Once you have the "blues" on, you really begin to feel like a criminal. Now it's time to make your phone call. But to get to the phone you have to walk past your friends and a group of strangers.

This is one of the most embarrassing and humiliating times of your life, as you can feel everybody staring at you like a criminal.

You begin dialing your number because you are calling your parents. Your heart begins to thump, your hands tremble, and you start to sweat. With every ring of the phone, your heart begins to beat faster in anticipation of your parents answering the phone. Finally, your mother answers and you tell her that you're in jail. She doesn't believe you at first, but after a few minutes of explaining, she realizes the horrible story is true. You tell her that you must stay the night in jail and that she can pick you up in the morning. Actually knowing that she will be there in a few hours, so you can get out, is one of the most comforting thoughts you'll ever know.

You begin to feel a little better because you know you are getting out in the morning, but now it is time for you to go to jail. As you walk down the narrow hallway with the guard, you begin to worry about whom you will be in the cell with. When they open the door and you see some of your friends you feel relieved for a moment. But as you look around at the cell that is about the size of a dorm room, you see the dirt and filth on the walls, the scummy toilet in the middle, and the small, ripped up mats that are there for you to lie on. The cold dampness and the sight of the cell gives you a sense of dismay as you wonder who and what kind of people have been here before you.

You make it through the night with the help of your friends who are there with you. The officer is now calling out names of the people who are ready to leave because they have been bailed out. Finally, your name is called and you change back into your clothes as quickly as possible because you are dying to get out of this place. The first thing that you want to do is take a long, hot shower because you feel so dirty.

Many people agree with me that the police are coming down too hard on V.U. students. The students are not out vandalizing or causing any problems with the neighboring homes and most of the time, they are picked up either walking around or in a house off campus. The police should be out looking for drunk drivers, or stopping crimes such as vandalism and break-ins.

The biggest reason the police force is cracking down on this sort of behavior is because of the pressure from the community. Organizations such as SAD and MADD were created to try to stop this behavior, and are also pressuring law enforcers. But if they are cracking down, why does the punishment have to be so extreme? One would think that they would give you a warning before they arrest you, especially if you aren't legally drunk. And after you have been arrested, do they really have to treat you like a criminal? Why can't they just give a fine and let you go home, instead of making you spend the night in jail? As long as the police receive pressure from the community, they are going to continue cracking down on under-age drinking. For those students who do drink, they must now decide whether or not drinking is worth the chance of being arrested.