



Lesson Plan

Developed by Julia Taylor, M.A.
for The American School Counselors Association (ASCA) for use with the HBO Family
Documentary *SMASHED: Toxic Tales of Teens and Alcohol* made available to RADD and the
RADD Youth Coalition through the generosity of Home Box Office Network

**American School Counselors Association National Standard:
Personal/Social Development**

Standard C: students will understand safety and survival skills

Competencies

- Demonstrate the ability to assert boundaries, rights, and personal privacy
- Differentiate between situations requiring peer support and situations requiring adult or professional help
- Identify resource people in the school and community and know how to seek their help
- Apply effective problem-solving and decision-making skills to form safe and healthy choices
- Learn about the emotional and physical dangers of substance use and abuse
- Learn how to cope with peer pressure.

Level

High School Students

Goal

Students will understand the material learned and identify alternative choices to situations frequently seen in high school. Students will learn their parents' views on underage drinking and identify people they can turn to in dangerous situations. Students will undertake one action step to address underage drinking in their environment.

Materials Needed

The HBO Family documentary film, *SMASHED: Toxic Tales of Teens and Alcohol*, made available for educational use through RADD and the RADD Youth Coalition

Time Needed

Two hours over two days or one block of two hours.



Activity: Day One

Read before Viewing

Alcohol use by young people is dangerous—as well as illegal. Underage drinking is associated with physical and emotional violence, suicide, sexual assaults, and academic failure. Because an adolescent’s brain and body are still developing in crucial ways, using alcohol makes teens more vulnerable to impairments in memory and learning. Yet alcohol remains the most widely used drug among teens.

Driving while intoxicated (DWI) is a major cause of injury and death on the nation’s highways, no matter what the age of the driver. However, the *leading* cause of death among young people between 16 and 20 years old is traffic crashes—and alcohol is implicated in one-third of those deaths. But death may not be the worst-case scenario. Hundreds of thousands of teenagers each year suffer long-term injuries—sometimes lifetime injuries—from crashes that are alcohol-related. These injuries have an impact on everyone: the teen, the teen’s family and friends, the teen’s community, and society in general, costing billions of dollars each year.

Despite years of changes in the law and educational campaigns by government and private entities, too many young people still get behind the wheel while impaired or ride in a car with an impaired driver. Moreover, many parents mistakenly believe that they are promoting safety by allowing their children and the friends of their children to drink at home. This practice is dangerous and suggests to teens by implication that their parents do not take underage drinking seriously. In addition, parents who allow this behavior at home may not understand that it is illegal in many areas of the country—adding a liability issue to the ethical concerns.

For teens, the combination of driving inexperience, impulsive behaviors, and functional impairment due to alcohol use, is frequently tragic. For parents who are permissive about underage drinking, the tragedy can be compounded.

Facts and Stats

The following statistics have been provided by the National Academy of Sciences report, *Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility*, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and *Teens Today 2003*, a study conducted by Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) and Liberty Mutual Group.

- Although young people between the ages of 16 and 20 account for only seven percent of the population, 15 percent of drivers involved in fatal crashes and 13 percent of drivers who had been drinking fall into that age range
- Young males account for 77 percent of alcohol-related youth fatalities
- Approximately 20 percent of eighth graders, 35 percent of tenth graders, and 48 percent of 12th graders report having consumed alcohol recently
- About 12 percent of eighth graders, 22 percent of tenth graders, and 28 percent of 12th graders report binge drinking (five drinks in a row) in the last two weeks
- Young people between ages 12 and 20 who responded to the National Academy of Sciences questionnaire indicated that the average age for first use of alcohol was 14
- Individuals who begin drinking before the age of 15 are four times more likely to become alcohol dependent than those who begin drinking at age 21



- Younger teens are more likely than older teens to drink alcohol because of peer pressure
- Teens who have a low “sense of self” are more likely to feel stress and depression and are more susceptible to peer pressure
- The costs to society of underage drinking are conservatively estimated to be \$53 billion annually
- In 2002, 2,442 young people ages 15 to 20 died in alcohol-related traffic crashes.

Introducing the Documentary

SMASHED: Toxic Tales of Teens and Alcohol

Please introduce the film by first letting the audience know that **the HBO documentary, *SMASHED: Toxic Tales of Teens and Alcohol* was produced by HBO-Family and made available to RADD and the RADD Youth Coalition through the generosity of the Home Box Office Network.** Explain to your audience that this documentary describes the tragedy of underage drinking and driving through the eyes of medical personnel, family members, friends, and the teens themselves. The film focuses on the devastation that occurs when a crash does *not* kill, describing instead what happens to everyone when young people survive a crash—and the far-reaching consequences of impaired survival.

HBO Family created the documentary to heighten awareness of the underage drinking and driving problem in the United States. The network sought out the award-winning team of Kirk Simon and Karen Goodman, who proposed the concept of filming whatever “came through the door” as young people involved in underage drinking and driving collisions were brought to the University of Maryland's R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center in Baltimore. The resulting footage—more dramatic and compelling than anyone expected—was assembled in a manner that teaches without preaching about the toxic mix of underage drinking and driving.

To expand the reach of this compelling film, HBO contacted RADD: The Entertainment Industry's Voice for Road Safety (Recording Artists, Actors, and Athletes Against Drunk Driving). Impressed by the film's potential to have an impact on teens, the internationally-recognized nonprofit incorporated **SMASHED: Toxic Tales of Teens and Alcohol** into its underage drinking prevention campaign and HBO responded by generously donating to RADD limited educational distribution rights for the documentary.

With HBO's support and a small grant from the National Organizations for Youth Safety (NOYS) (www.NOYS.org), RADD formed a coalition and selected as its lead partners two fellow NOYS members—Family Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) and Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD). National membership organizations with chapters in middle schools and high schools throughout the country, SADD and FCCLA are distributing more than 14,000 copies of **SMASHED: Toxic Tales of Teens and Alcohol** to their affiliates.

SMASHED: Toxic Tales of Teens and Alcohol offers an unvarnished look at the results of underage drinking and driving as its consequences are brought to the shock trauma center by ambulance and helicopter. Thanks to the vision of the Simon/Goodman team, and the willingness of HBO to make its documentary available through RADD, your community now has the opportunity to have an unvarnished look at the consequences of underage drinking in **SMASHED: Toxic Tales of Teens and Alcohol**. **This DVD is licensed to RADD by HBO for**



chapter, school and community screenings for educational purposes only. Duplication and any form of transmission on broadcast, cable and/or closed-circuit television is forbidden.

Before-Viewing-Test

Have the participants complete the Before-Viewing Test attached to this discussion guide and collect them when everyone is done.

Before-Viewing Questions for Discussion

- Aside from drinking and driving, can you think of other ways a teen who has been drinking could get seriously hurt or injured? Do you know of any examples?
- Aside from death, can you describe the possible consequences of drinking and driving?
- Does anyone have any personal stories about drinking and driving that he or she would like to share?

Note to Facilitators: Be prepared for tears and emotional responses from your students

SHOW THE HBO DOCUMENTARY, *SMASHED: Toxic Tales of Teens and Alcohol.*

After-Viewing Questions for Discussion

- What is your reaction to HBO's *SMASHED: Toxic Tales of Teens and Alcohol*?
- In the film, Warren says, "I never thought it would happen to me, not in a million years." Do you feel this way? Why?
- A man in the film says, "Everybody thinks they are invincible—nothing can happen to me—and you just make that one dumb mistake and then that's it, your life changes forever." What do you think he meant by this?
- At the end of the film, one teenager seems prone to drinking again. Why do you think he has that attitude? What would you say to him?

After-Viewing Test

Have the participants complete the post-test and collect them when everyone is done. Ask participants to discuss the differences between their pre-test and post-test answers. The anonymous pre- and post-tests should be forwarded to:

Cheryl Neverman, Youth Team Leader
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
400 Seventh Street SW
NTI-111, Room 5118
Washington, DC 20590

Note: Schools and groups that mail Before-Viewing and After-Viewing tests and Action Plans to NHTSA at the address above may be eligible to receive rewards from RADD. (Supplies are limited. Specific items to be awarded will vary at the sole discretion of RADD.) For more



information, please visit the *SMASHED: Toxic Tales of Teens and Alcohol* area on the RADD Web site at www.radd.org.

Homework

Ask students if they would call their parents or another trusted adult if they were someplace where people were drinking and they were worried about how to get home safely. What do they think their parents would say? The homework assignment is to go home and ask their parents what they would say.

Activity: Day Two

Group Work

- Brainstorm about all of the excuses you have heard, given, or can think of why someone would choose to drive while drunk. Write a response to each excuse.
- Make a list of things you might do or say if you were at a place where people were drinking and you didn't want to participate. Can you see yourself saying or doing these things?
- One of the teen participants in the documentary fell over an escalator in a mall and was seriously injured. Brainstorm ways, besides driving a car, that you could receive a brain injury after drinking alcohol.
- Make a list of people who will support you in making responsible decisions. Would your name appear on anyone else's list?
- What would you do if your friend's parents allowed your friend to drink at home and, while visiting your friend, you, too, were offered alcohol? How do you think your own parents would react if they knew?

Role Playing

Assign volunteer students to a role. Read the summaries below to them and let the students act out the rest. Process the actions of the students. Remember that recent studies suggest that the majority of high school students have consumed (or their friends have consumed) alcohol, or they drink regularly (or have friends who do). Applaud and praise positive decision making skills to avoid alcohol and elicit suggestions for alternatives to choices that are not positive.

Role Play One Summary: Peer Pressure

Two Girls: Shari and Krista

Two Boys: Steve and Terrance

Shari is a high school sophomore, an honor roll student, and not very popular. She has been hanging out with the same circle of friends since she was in seventh grade. In history class, Shari is paired with Krista for a project. Krista, a varsity cheerleader and the president of the sophomore class, is going out with Steve—a junior, and the hottest guy in school. Shari and Krista become friends while working on the project and Shari begins to ditch her “uncool” friends. Shari likes Terrance, one of Steve's friends, and Krista announces to Shari that they are having a private party on Friday night—and Shari is invited! Shari is excited about the party and nervous at the same time. Shari knows there will be alcohol at the party and thinks she will



look like a dork if she does not drink. But she is dying to hang out with Terrance and finally feels like she is accepted at school. What happens next?

Role Play Two Summary: Obliging Parents

Two Girls: Jennifer and Anna

One Adult: Jennifer's Mother

Jennifer, a high school junior, is at her friend Anna's house and they have been drinking Anna's parents' beer. Anna's parents don't mind if she drinks as long as she does so at home. Jennifer has two beers, feels weird, and is afraid to drive home. She calls everyone she knows to drive her home, but nobody answers. Anna's parents are in bed, and Jennifer has to be home by midnight or she is in major trouble. She calls her mom. What happens next?

Role Play Three Summary: Buying Booze

Two Boys: Eric and Kevin

Kevin is a senior in high school and quite popular. He and his friends are going to party tonight after the basketball game. Two rival schools are playing each other and there will be a bonfire afterwards. This is going to be the coolest party of the year and Kevin has been named "the supplier." His parents always have a ton of booze and never seem to notice if he steals it. Kevin goes to get the booze and realizes his parents have not replenished the supply. He calls his friend Eric and tells him the problem. Eric tells Kevin to go get a five-finger discount or pay someone to get it—but that Kevin had better have the "highlights of the party" when he gets there. What happens next?

Homework

Follow up by asking students about their parents' reactions to the homework question posed on Day One. Some parents would be supportive, and some would exact penalties that may make students think that driving while intoxicated is preferable to letting their parents know they've been drinking. If this is the case, talk as a class about what students could do and to whom they could go. Reiterate that being grounded for a week, a month, even a year is better than being permanently "grounded" or injured for life.

Developing an Individual Action Plan

Close the loop by asking each student to develop an action plan to reduce underage drinking and drinking and driving. Some potential partners and activities are listed here and on the following pages. Include each level that applies.

- *Community Level:* Task forces involving parents, media, faith-based groups, police, schools, civic leaders, hospitals/EMS, chapters of national student organizations like FCCLA and SADD
- *School Level:* Clubs, SGA, students (diverse voices), awareness-raising activities, enforcement policies, educate/learn about safety and health risks (physical, mental)
- *Family Level:* Family meeting to discuss rules, rules enforcement, and available help (Alateen, Alanon and others)
- *Individual Level:* Reach out to a friend who is using; attend an Alanon or Alateen meeting with a friend or alone; participate in school or community activities listed above



Resources and Opportunities for Long-Term Involvement

Many opportunities exist to help teens reject destructive decisions and develop reasons to make positive choices. For example, young people are less likely to participate in high-risk behavior if they are involved in community service, youth leadership, and other activities offered through youth-led organizations. For those who are interested, the following organizations can provide information about additional programs as well as opportunities for continuing teen involvement in this important issue.

Alateen, <http://www.al-anon.org/alateen.html>.

FCCLA (Family, Career and Community Leaders of America), through its FACTS (Families Acting for Community Traffic Safety) program, which has a CD available, www.fcclainc.org

NOYS (National Organizations for Youth Safety), www.noys.com.

RADD (Recording Artists, Actors & Athletes Against Drunk Driving), the entertainment industry's voice for road safety, www.radd.org.

SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions), www.sadd.org.

Web site for Teens, Office of National Drug Control Policy,
http://www.freevibe.com/Drug_Facts/alcohol.asp