



reality check
 is a health promotion campaign
 that tells UNH students
the truth
 about their own alcohol use
 and choice★making.



what is social norming?

Social norming is a health prevention method that involves thorough analysis of the “norms” of any community, then publicizing the results in order to break the illusion of misperception. Usually, the perceived norm - such as “most UNH students drink excessively” - isn’t accurate.

how does it work?

Each year, we conduct a survey from a representative sample of students, to gather information about UNH students’ attitudes, behaviors and perceptions regarding alcohol. our research tells us is that UNH students, like college students everywhere, tend to overestimate the amount and frequency with which their peers consume alcohol and other drugs. We want to provide UNH students with accurate information that will help them make informed decisions about using alcohol.



UNH Reality Check is different from the traditional prevention approach of telling students the negative consequences, destructive behaviors, and rates of alcohol abuse. Instead, we focus on positive behaviors and healthy majorities.

Our campaign depends on the input of UNH students.

how you can help.

The more sources students hear this information from, the better! Now that you have the facts, you can use this knowledge to:



Accurately answer questions from students and parents about alcohol use at UNH.

Challenge misperceptions about alcohol use at UNH. When you see or hear misperceptions about alcohol use at UNH [e.g., “everybody gets trashed on the weekends”], share the accurate information.

On the flip side, avoid passing on inaccurate information! It can spread like a virus from student to student. Help be part of the cure.

If you have questions or ideas, or want to know more, call Kathleen at 2. or email Kathleen at UNH Health Services. kgbishop@unh.edu

how do you know what you know?

optical illusions

It's easy to see why many people react skeptically to the news that a majority of UNH students practice moderation when they drink. The findings of social norms statistics seemingly contradict their own experiences.

But is perception reality, or does perception shape "reality"? If we look at some exact numbers closely, we can see how our own perceptions can be distorted. [NOTE: This is not scientific data, but rather an illustration of how our perceptions can be easily altered to reflect a non-truth.]



Picture it.

You're at a house party off campus. Lots of people, loud music. There's a lot going on. But what's really happening here? Let's take a closer look.

For the sake of argument, let's say there are 90 people at the party. Of those 90 people:

70 are drinking



20 aren't drinking [Why not? Some have an exam the next day. Some are designated drivers. Others just don't feel like drinking.]

Look closer.

Let's look at the same 90 people in closer detail. Of the 70 people at the party that *are* drinking:

40 are drinking moderately

20 are drinking heavily. [They shouldn't be driving, but they're not out-of-control.]

10 are drinking heavily and are out-of-control.

What are those 10 out-of-control people doing?

2 are making out.

2 are in a fight.

2 are passed out in the corner.

2 are in a screaming match.



1 is vomiting.

1 [everyone's favorite] is streaking.

What will you remember?

Naturally, the most extreme and most visible people are those 10. But even though their numbers are few, their actions will stand out in people's minds when they leave. Their actions become indelibly linked with memories of the party. Does this sound familiar?

"Hey, how'd the party go on Saturday?"

"Oh, man, everybody was trashed!"



Actually, only 10 people were trashed; it's just not as much fun to say that 20 people were sober!



most of us

The UNH Reality Check Campaign