

## REALITY CHECK PROGRAM OUTLINE

This is an outline for Reality Check: A program on social norming around alcohol.

Materials needed:

- The pieces of colored paper with the 6 questions (3 actual, 3 perceptions) at the top – one question per side of colored piece of paper. Actual use is on one side and perceived use is on the other side.
- pencils or pens for each participant
- three wastepaper baskets
- Newsprint, markers and tape

Bring participants together. Introduce the topic by saying that hopefully you all will have a great discussion about the social culture at UNH and learn some things you didn't know before. This is chance to share your perspective and all perspectives are welcome.

- ❖ Do a quick icebreaker to get students warmed up. One idea would be to have students get in a circle and share something unique (and positive) about the person across from them. If they don't know each other that well, they could just share something unique about themselves.

Another Icebreaker is to have people get in groups of three and think of something unique that they have in common. They all have a dog named Lucy, they all lived abroad at some point in their life. After have people talk about what they came up with.

- ❖ Distribute three pieces of paper that are different colors and writing utensils to use for these 6 questions. The questions will be pre-printed on both sides of the sheet of paper.  
NOTE: make sure to collect all pieces of paper and turn them in after your session. We use these anonymous response for evaluation – we want to know how effective the program is.

Yellow paper

1. Ask participants to write down their answer on the yellow sheet to the following question: “How many drinks do you drink in a typical week?” (side 1)
2. Ask participants to write down their answer to the question, “How many drinks do you think the average person in this room drinks in a typical week?” (side 2)

Blue paper

3. Then on another colored piece of paper ask them to write down – “When you party how many drinks you have?”(side 1)
4. Follow this question up with the perception question. Have them write down “When the average person in this room parties, how many drinks does she/he have?” (side 2)

Pink paper

5. Then ask them to write down on the other color (let's say it's pink) of paper the answer to the following question: "In a typical week how many nights do you drink? (side 1)
  6. Follow this up by having them write down the answer to "in a typical week, how many nights to you think the average person in this room parties?" (side 2)
- ❖ Then, they should crumple the pieces of paper up and throw them in the three wastebaskets/bowls/bags that you have set up in the room. Feel free to make this a contest of who can get it in. You can think of a reward for the winner- perhaps they can have others answer questions.
  - ❖ Then, have each participant grab a crumpled up piece of paper that is the right color for the question out of the wastepaper basket and read the number for actual use that is written on it aloud. You can have one person recording this information on the newsprint (and have someone average it) or you can have the group come to a consensus on what was the most common number that was stated (the mode). After each person reads the actual use, have them turn the piece of paper over and have each read the perception. It might be helpful to write these in the second column of the newsprint so that the group can easily see the actual vs. perceived use. I  
NOTE: If this seems extremely cumbersome to have everyone read each side of each piece of paper, you can just have a few people read their pieces of paper. Then summarize what the averages seem to be. For example, "based on what you have read, it seems that students in this room consume 4 drinks per week on average." Or, "based on what you have read about people's perceptions, it seems that on average people think that other students drink 12 drinks per week."
  - ❖ Hopefully, there will be a discrepancy between the actual use and perceived use. You can also share campus statistics at this time. It may not be necessary. If you choose campus data you should be prepared to state how the data was gathered. The data was gathered by asking students to fill out a survey in their class. The questions were worded almost the same as what we asked you here. There was a cross-representation of students in the classes (a variety of majors, year in school and gender).

Campus Data Spring 2003:

Average drinks per week – 10.1  
Percent consuming 0-6 drinks per week – 56%  
Party 1.5 nights a week  
Party 0-1 nights a week 57%  
Party 0-2 nights a week 82%

Perceptions that UNH student hold are:

Most students Party 2.6 nights a week  
95% of the students drink more than 0-1 nights a week  
57% of students party more than 0-2 nights a week.

- ❖ Ask the participants why they think there is a discrepancy? Feel free to record these on newsprint if it helps people to see it in front of them.

Some ideas to include if the students don't come up with their own include:

-the stories of the person who is drunk that get reported again and again (give party example of how small number of people are actually drunk but when it gets talked about that is all that gets mentioned).

-the media and their portrayal of college students and drinking

-bad news is more likely to get reported

example of Columbine and how there were so many stories of teenage violence after Columbine when in reality the number of incidents actually went down.

-more likely to report what we see (drunk and disorderly) than what we don't see.

-silent majority- everyone is afraid to say something because they are thinking that they are the only one when reality they aren't.

If there is no discrepancy between what they thought and what the reality is, that's ok. You can still ask them to talk about what this says and how they feel about it.

-do you think that what seems to be true on this campus is reasonable?

-Is it what you thought would be true of UNH when you got here?

-Is it something that you hope will change in your 4 years here. Do you think you will drink more or less as time goes on?

-How do you gauge if your choices are in your best interest. Is it based on what others are doing or based on some internal guidelines you have discovered for yourself?

- ❖ So, what does this say? What's your take on this? What is it like for you to be here? Are you comforted or concerned over these numbers? Any comments on the social scene at UNH?
- ❖ End it with . . .this is food for thought. Our perceptions can impact how we view others and ourselves. New information will help our perceptions to be more accurate and possibly guide our behavior in a different direction.

Some general facilitation tips:

It's ok if there are some moments of silence after you pose a question – give it a little time, usually someone will speak up eventually.

You will know the people at the program, which gives you an edge, you can turn to someone, say their name and ask them what they think.

Ask why is the argument – “everyone else does it” so commonly used to convince ourselves and others that what we are doing is ok?

Feel comfortable with humor and let it happen in the group as long as it is appropriate. It helps to break the ice. You can have fun with this. It is meant to be informal.

Don't give much attention to someone who is acting negatively or inappropriately, redirect the conversation away from them, rather than engaging them.

See if anyone has a story that backs up what they are saying – ask is there a time when you saw this?