



Lesson Learned

By Kitcia Lechuga Reyes

THE AVERAGE age that adolescents first try alcohol is approximately 13 years old. Statistics show that people who start drinking before the age of 15 are more likely to develop a dependence on alcohol than those who start drinking at the age of 21 or older—they weren't lying. I was only eleven years old when I had my first encounter with an alcoholic beverage and I can assure you it was not the last.

I was date raped at twelve years old and alcohol was one of the factors that allowed this to happen. Alcohol does many things to the mind in a physical, emotional, and mental manner because it brings one out of their five senses, it alters people emotionally, and it causes one to lose control over their body. My encounter with not just one drink, but many drinks, helped me realize that a person cannot possibly gain something positive out of alcohol abuse. This experience helped me realize that a few drinks aren't worth risking your safety and protection for—and much less, the rest of your life.

One Friday night I snuck out of my house in order to go to a party with a

boy who was four years older than me. The fact that I looked older didn't do much for me because the people at the party I was taken to could still tell I was the youngest one there. Taking advantage of my immaturity and innocence, the people there made it that much easier for me to give into the traps of alcohol. Before I knew it, I was out and I was in a strange place with strange faces. I was paranoid and scared because I didn't have the slightest clue as to what was going on. It's not the way things happened that made me angry—it was the fact that I wasn't aware of what these strangers were doing to and with my body. All my belongings were gone, including my clothes. I was young and weak, but I was also a virgin, and that was something I would never get back.

Once my mother found out, I was forced to talk to the police and tell them who I had left with the night before. In that moment, I didn't know that my "friend" had taken advantage of me. I was oblivious to the fact that I was trying to save someone who hadn't thought twice to hurt me. My parents

handled the situation half correctly, half wrong. My mother slapped and yanked me around while questioning me. She yelled at me and lost all control of herself. Eventually, my older sister interfered and helped my mother put herself back together. For a while, I even received the silent treatment and not only from my mother, but from my father as well. I understand that she did the right thing by calling the police and by taking me into the hospital. But personally I feel she reacted incorrectly when she first found out what had occurred the night before. The way she handled things was wrong in my eyes because yes, she was frustrated and hurt, but I was not in my five senses to realize I had done wrong. When someone is drugged or drunk, one shouldn't react by reaching for the physical; one should go for the verbal approach and investigate the situation deeper and in a calm matter.

I gained great knowledge from this experience; some lessons cannot be taught, they simply have to be learned. A couple of drinks are not worth the pain or the trauma. Popularity and parties aren't everything in life and I only hope that this gets through to my audience. Abusing alcohol isn't healthy for anyone and it doesn't matter if you're 15, 20, or even 30. Drinking in excess cannot lead people into anything healthy. I know for a fact that no human being would like to lose their virginity to someone they don't know or lose it without them being aware of it. This might not be the case in every situation involving alcohol, but there will always be consequences. Nobody would like to lose complete control over their body. Would you? Next time you're offered a drink, think before you take it, and then think again. 🚫

ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Kitcia Lechuga Reyes is a high school senior from Denver, CO. *Alert Magazine* congratulates her for winning the Alert Scholarship and we encourage her in the pursuit of her academic goals. We would also like to encourage future seniors to participate in our scholarship program.