

Not drinking? No excuses needed

Dear Abby: I was thrilled to read "Sober in Scottsdale's" (July 28) letter about drinking. I'm a 21-year-old college student who has also struggled with choosing to be sober amidst the majority of my drunken peers. Most people my age drink only to get drunk and appear to be unable to have fun without the aid of alcohol. Every activity must be performed under the influence. While at a nightclub, one friend asked me how I was able to "dance and have a good time without being drunk."

Abby, in your response to "Sober," you said that drinkers should "mind their own business" because "there is usually a good reason why a person doesn't drink." For me, there is no medical, metabolic or addiction problem that prevents me from consuming alcohol. But I have seen the effects it has on my peers, putting them in drunken stupors, using awful judgment, and being taken to the hospital after blacking out.

I left the college of my choice after one month because I could no longer stand hearing people in the bathroom vomiting all night long. Drinkers aren't ashamed of these displays. They brag about them to their friends the next day. I sure hope this stage is one that will pass with age. I often long for the days when I was younger, when playing board games and sipping juice was considered a good



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DEAR ABBY

time. — *Not Drinking In New Jersey*

Dear Not Drinking: Apparently binge drinking is still a rite of passage for some college students. I would like to address one comment you made in your letter. With some young people, binge drinking is a phase that passes as they learn their limit, but with others it can be a pattern that begins in their teens and sometimes even younger. Read on for more comments from readers who feel as you do:

Dear Abby: I chose to be a nondrinker when my children became teenagers. I wanted to show them that I could have a good time without drinking, and I think it was an important lesson.

Parents need to seriously consider the messages they convey. I'm shocked that some allow underage drinking in their homes. One mother who had a party in her home told me the kids were drinking there for the "learning experience." I got so annoyed I asked her if she was also providing hookers, since many of the teens were probably sexually in-

experienced too. She didn't know what to say. — *Venting In South Windsor, Conn.*

Dear Abby: You said there's usually a good reason why a person doesn't drink. Can't it just be my choice? I'm not an alcoholic, and I don't take medication that alcohol would react adversely with. I enjoy an occasional glass of wine or other alcoholic beverage, but I do not need to drink in order to have a good time. And there is nothing "wrong" with me if I choose to refrain from indulging. More people should make the same choice. — *Cheryl In Madison, Ala.*

Dear Abby: I choose not to drink so I can be the designated driver should the need arise. My dad was a member of AA. And, quite frankly, I'd rather use my calories on cake than a drink. — *Designated Driver, Cedar Park, Texas*

Dear Abby: Why should a person need a reason not to drink? The question that should be asked is, "Why are these people drinking?" Personally, I'm with "Scottsdale." I don't like the taste of alcohol, don't like the effects and, more important, I don't like the death statistics associated with drinkers and those unfortunates who end up in their paths. — *Donna In Lake City, Fla.*

Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.