

## Chapter 9

**Social Consequences**  
*The Morning After***Depiction Suggestions**

The following points for consideration regarding the portrayal of the social consequences of alcohol use and alcoholism were developed as a resource for entertainment development and production. They are not meant to limit the creative process.

**Legal Ramifications:**

- ◆ Consider portraying the reality that addiction to alcohol is so compulsive that the ability to stop drinking may not be sufficiently motivated by legal deterrents.
- ◆ Where appropriate, try to show or discuss the negative legal consequences that can result from binge drinking and alcohol abuse and the behaviors that can often accompany such abuse (see Fact Sheet).
- ◆ Remember that public intoxication is punishable by law in some fashion in all 50 states.
- ◆ When dealing with under-age youth, any use of alcohol is illegal. Penalties vary from state to state.

**Link to Violence:**

- ◆ Be aware that there are many factors correlating violence with alcohol, therefore, violent behavior frequently accompanies or is caused by alcohol use. Consider depicting such realities as:

1. Alcohol is the drug of choice in the United States and is the drug most associated with violence.
  2. Sometimes alcohol can reduce inhibitions that would otherwise keep aggressive behaviors in check.
  3. It is not always the alcohol user who becomes violent. Alcohol can cause people to provoke violence toward themselves through irritability, or through verbal or physical aggression.
  4. Alcohol use is associated with numerous cases of child abuse, homicide, spousal abuse, rape, assault, and suicide.
  5. Often, victims of violence turn to alcohol as an emotional escape from the violent behavior of others. Also, victims of violent behavior often use alcohol to alleviate pain from violence-related injuries.
  6. Perpetrators of violence, particularly those who have hurt or killed someone, when forced to defend themselves or others, might also turn to alcohol to escape their feelings of guilt.
- ◆ When appropriate, demonstrate the emotional, social, and financial impact of alcohol-related violence on victims,

perpetrators, family, friends, witnesses, and community.

◆ Consider that guns in the home are more likely to harm than to protect family and friends. Where a gun is shown in the home, try to show it unloaded and locked away in appropriate firearm storage, unless you plan to portray the tragic outcome of unsafe storage.

### Other Social Consequences:

◆ Attempt to show some of the physical consequences of alcohol abuse, where possible, such as injuries caused by falls, misuse of equipment, impaired driving of vehicles (including bicycles and boats), drowning, and accidental shootings.

◆ When examining character motivation, bear in mind that those who drink in excess are more likely to have an unstable job history.

◆ Although in later stages of alcoholism nearly every aspect of an alcoholic character's life is likely to be affected detrimentally, his or her job generally is the last to suffer.

◆ Keep in mind that alcohol is a depressant and likely to dull sexual desire and performance, while also lowering inhibitions. On the other hand, date rape and sexual assaults are more likely to occur when alcohol has been abused.



### Spotlight on Depiction of Health and Social Issues

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## Social Consequences

### Fact Sheet

- ◆ Alcohol was involved in 39 percent of fatal crashes and in 7 percent of all crashes in 1998.
- ◆ The 15,935 fatalities in alcohol-related crashes during 1998 represent an average of one alcohol-related fatality every 33 minutes.
- ◆ More than 305,000 persons were injured in crashes where police reported that alcohol was present – an average of one person injured approximately every 2 minutes.
- ◆ Approximately 1.5 million drivers were arrested in 1997 for driving under the influence of alcohol or narcotics. This is an arrest rate of 1 for every 122 licensed drivers in the United States.
- ◆ About 3 in every 10 Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some time in their lives.
- ◆ More than one-third (34 percent) of all pedestrians 16 years of age or older killed as a result of traffic crashes in 1998 were intoxicated.
- ◆ The effects on health, lost productivity, and the treatment of alcohol-related diseases are estimated to cost the economy \$166 billion each year.

(See Chapter 5, Impaired Driving, and Chapter 22, Violence and Drugs, for additional information.)

Source:

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov),  
*Traffic Safety Facts 1998*.



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Section II

Spotlight on

# Drugs



*Spotlight on Depiction of Health and Social Issues*

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