

Villanova University

Class of 2009

#33397

I did not want to get out of bed that morning. Not because I had a headache or because my mouth was cotton dry – I was not one of the “lucky” drinkers last night. I did not want to face the morning... and my roommate. I was going to have to tell her something she did not want to hear, something she wouldn't remember. When she woke up, I had gathered the courage to explain to her what she had done last night, and I had the strength to comfort her in her tears. The night before, she had consumed so much alcohol that she blacked out for a large portion of the night – the portion in which she cheated on a boy she had been dating for years, a boy she loved, a boy she saw a future with.

I witnessed a number of my floor mates being treated paramedics. I saw a few friends go through the judiciary process as a result of underage, on-campus drinking; they were on the verge of losing their college housing – and their college experience.

Up until these experiences, I had always wanted to be a big “party girl” – someone who went out five of the seven nights in a week, who had fun, who went crazy.

But my perspective changed. I changed.

I questioned this drinking culture. Is having a “good time” a few nights a week really worth losing the vast array of opportunities and experiences that college offers? And why does having a good time have to involve drinking – why can't people have fun being their un-intoxicated selves?

I remembered what I had learned about drinking on alcohol.edu. I recalled all of the physical consequences that could occur from drinking, even at just one alcohol-saturated night a week. As a biology student, the scientific facts could not be denied. I guess that's one thing that impacted me. I felt like this was my one body, my one chance to live – and I wanted to keep it healthy and working at its highest potential. Alcohol.edu helped me to see myself from that point of view. I was not about to force ill health on my body so that others would think I was “cool”.

After the realization that I did not want for myself what I saw others endure, I sought out alternative activities. I was lucky – my school had a late night program, something that I think may have saved a number of students, including myself, from the destructive life of excessive drinking. It gave me a chance to meet people who didn't *need* alcohol and loved themselves as they were, not feeling the need to change themselves with alcohol. These were the people I wanted to surround myself with. These were people that made me feel good about myself, and I hoped I made them feel better, too.

As much as students impacted me, teachers also had an influence. Some of the core classes, such as theology and ethics, helped me to develop my decision-making skills. Theology made me contemplate greater questions than, “What outfit should I wear to this movie?” I would not necessarily call myself a religious person, but the class did make me think. It showed me that I am free to make my own decisions and operate according to my own conscience. But what is my conscience telling me – what kind of person do I want to be? I had to think about this question... college is supposed to be a time to grow and learn about myself. It was time for me to step up to the plate and determine what was right for me and who I wanted to become.

I concluded that alcohol would not be a necessary component to my development. I wanted to know myself intimately, without the barrier of an outside substance. But I realize that

this is not the conclusion that everyone makes. I respect that each student must take a serious look at himself or herself and decide what kind of person they want to become. With all of the negativity surrounding and resulting from alcohol, I find it difficult to believe that someone would choose this to be their best path. But maybe it's better to live and learn? Maybe it is the right path for some at the moment. I cannot judge those who are different from me, but I can know what is right for me, and I can be there for those who might be struggling because of their decisions.

With all of this said, I cannot say that alcohol and heavy drinking is not a part of the college party scene. But I can say that college students have the strength to decide what is right for them – and that they are not alone in turning away from alcohol. Often, there are other fun and exciting things to do on or near the campus. Parties where alcohol is present can still be fun even if you are not drinking. In other words, there are alternatives, and you are not alone in choosing them.

When alcohol is not abused, students can learn about themselves at a more intimate level. Isn't that what college is for? Students should look at themselves and decide what kind of person they want to become.

Alcohol does not have to be a part of you. The only thing that needs to be a part of learning more about yourself is *you*. Learn to know and love the true, natural you.