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by Gene C. Lentz, MBA, BC, PM, MRT

Make it a Double: Why?

Part I

For those of us who were born in the Keys or have been here long enough to see the rise and fall of many a good idea, we realize that a margarita is a part of our social structure in the Keys. A shot of tequila, a rum runner over a business deal, a cold beer while waiting for those immortal words: "fish on!!", is just part of what living here is all about. However, as Conchs, could we have become a little too dependent on the juice? Probably....

Let's take a moment and see the effects that this has had across the United States.

- Some 14,000,000 are addicted to alcohol.
- Some 2,600,000 binge drinkers in 2002 were between the ages of 12 and 17
- More than 2 million people per year drive under the influence
- The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration claims that alcoholism statistics indicate 17,000 alcohol-related traffic fatalities in each of the last three years
- From just alcoholism alone, alcohol abuse has caused 1,400 deaths, 500,000 injuries, 600,000 assaults, 70,000 sexual assaults according to the National Institute on Alcoholism & Alcohol Abuse
- Perhaps the most difficult

statistic is that alcohol is the fourth leading cause of death among the ages 10 to 24. Kids at age 15 who start to use alcohol before the age of 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol addiction at some point in their lives as compared to someone who starts drinking at 21.

So how do you define alcohol dependence?

- Do you want a drink everyday?
- Do you find yourself drinking alone or in secret?
- Blackouts
- Memory loss
- Lack of interest in hobbies
- Needing a drink when stressed
- Hiding alcohol
- Order doubles or setups when drinking
- Need a drink to feel normal
- Need more alcohol to get the some "buzz"

The effects of overuse of alcohol can be fatal on the body and mind. How so?

- Kidney disorders
- Liver disorders
- Gastrointestinal failure
- Blood sugar problems
- Cardiovascular problems
- Sexual dysfunction
- Menstrual problems
- Birth defects
- Neurological problems
- Possible cancer

What to do? First recognize that the problem is

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