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Montana Advocates Scholarship

How has drunk driving affected car accident victims? What are some of the ways this could be prevented? What can you as an individual do to improve road safety?

Driving under the influence (DUI), or impaired driving, refers to drinking alcohol then operating a motor vehicle with a blood alcohol content level of .08 or higher. Although the age group of people most likely to drive while drunk is 21 to 25, all people are affected by this act (Juergens). Every day in America, 30 people die as a result of drunk driving crashes. That's one person every 48 minutes. Drunk driving also costs the United States \$132 billion a year. Finally, on average, two in three people will be involved in a drunk driving crash in their lifetime (Statistics).

There are three main ways that drunk driving car accident victims are affected: physically, emotionally, and psychologically. How much damage sustained from a drunk driving accident just depends on the luck of those involved, the damage can range from minor scratches to fatality. Any part of the body can be harmed during a drunk accident but the most common injuries are to the legs and knees, neck, chest, spinal cord, and the brain. The brain is especially vulnerable during any collision. Those that suffer traumatic brain injury are more susceptible to seizures, long-term or permanent impairment of their physical and cognitive abilities, behavioral and emotional issues, paralysis, and coma.

A drunk driving accident oftentimes lead to physical harm and sometimes the loss of life. If any of these events happen, it is a good chance that those involved will also be affected psychologically. Those who go through drunk driving accidents run the risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The most common symptoms include flashbacks, emotional numbness, avoiding similar activities, and a change in emotional behavior. Symptoms vary from person to person and develop at different rates.

Drunk driving accidents affect those involved, as well as their friends and family members emotionally. Strong emotions often consume the survivors, especially if they lost friends or family members because of a drunk driver's negligence. Many survivors have angry thoughts which may lead to violent actions. Grief is also an emotion felt particularly when a life is lost. In extreme cases, survivors lose motivation to continue living, even rejecting society and shunning interaction from others. There are survivors who have sunk to the lowest depths of depression, with some of them never quite recovering. Many survivors have gone on to lead a normal life with the help of professional counselors or a support group (Crowley).

Having the police conduct sobriety checkpoints is a good way to prevent drunk driving. This allows police to briefly stop vehicles they suspect of drunk driving. Mandating interlocks in all vehicles would also prevent drunk driving. Interlocks prevent cars from starting if the driver has a BAC above a certain level, usually 0.02%. Mass media campaigns also help spread the consequences of drunk driving (What Works). Individually, to improve road safety, there are a few solutions: have a designated driver if you go to drink, do not drink alone, drink responsibly and call 911 if you suspect a drunk driver on the road.

Resources

Crowley, K. (2019, November 7). How Drunk Driving Accidents Effect Those Involved:

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Statistics. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.madd.org/statistics/>.

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