

## **What Is Hams?**

The letters H, A, M, S, stand for Harm reduction, Alcohol abstinence, Moderation, Support. HAMS is a free-of-charge, lay-led support group for people who want to change their drinking for the better.

HAMS believes that people are most successful when they work on goals which they have chosen for themselves. HAMS and HAMS members never attempt to choose a goal for anyone else--we each choose our own goal for our self. HAMS supports goals of safer drinking, reduced drinking, or quitting.

HAMS offers practical, how-to, information about ways to reduce your drinking, to drink safely or to quit. HAMS can be done either alone or as part of a support group. The goal of HAMS is to help each individual find a relationship with alcohol that they can be happy with.

## **The Eleven Elements of the HAMS Process**

This is the HAMS process of changing your drinking for the better. The goal is a happier life for you. Not everyone starts at element one. Some people start at element 5 or 6 or elsewhere. That is why these are not steps strictly speaking and why we call them elements instead. The HAMS flowchart helps to illustrate the HAMS process.

- 1. Do a Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) of your drinking.**
- 2. Choose a goal--harm reduction, alcohol abstinence, or moderate drinking.**
- 3. Learn about risk ranking and HAMS tools and strategies.**
- 4. Make a plan to achieve your drinking goal based on what you learned and what you know.**
- 5. Address outside issues that affect drinking.**
- 6. Use a chart to plan and track your drinking day by day.**
- 7. Evaluate your progress**
- 8. Practice damage control as needed.**
- 9. Revise and revamp plans, goals, and strategies as needed**
- 10. Graduate from HAMS or choose to stick around HAMS for continued support or to help others.**
- 11. Come back for a tune up if needed. Or come back to work on a new goal or issue.**

## **How Long Does It Take To Change a Habit?**

You might have heard that it takes 21 days to change a habit. This myth was started by a man selling a 21 day program for money. HAMS doesn't charge--so we will tell you the truth. Different people take different amounts of time to change different habits. James Prochaska has done research on change and found that tough habits like drinking or smoking cigarettes tend to have milestones at three months, six months, a year, and five years. People don't develop bad habits overnight and they don't change them overnight either. Don't be hard on yourself if you have some slips and don't become perfect overnight--or even in the mythical 21 days.