

# DIAGNOSING ALCOHOL PROBLEMS

Kuhn, Swartzwelder, and Wilson provided two different screening tests that are used in doctors' offices and clinics as a first indicator that an individual may have an alcohol problem. They did stress that a diagnosis of alcohol abuse, alcohol dependency, or alcoholism can be made only by a health professional trained specifically in addiction; sometimes it does more harm than good to confront a friend or relative with the impression that he or she may have a drinking problem; and these screening techniques rely on one critical component—the individual's responses.

The first screening test is called CAGE:

- Have you ever felt the need to **C**ut down on your drinking?
- Have you ever felt **A**nnoyed by someone criticizing your drinking?
- Have you ever felt **G**uilty about your drinking?
- Have you ever felt the need for an **E**ye-opener (a drink at the beginning of the day)?

If an individual gives two or more positive responses to these questions, there is a chance that he or she has some type of alcohol problem.

The second screening test is called TWEAK; this has been especially useful with women:

- **T**olerance: How many drinks does it take to make you high?
- **W**orried: Have close friends or relatives worried or complained about your drinking?
- **E**ye-opener: Do you sometimes take a drink in the morning to wake up?
- **A**mnnesia (memory loss): Has a friend or family member ever told you things you said or did while you were drinking that you could not remember?
- **(K)** Cut: Do you sometimes feel the need to cut down on your drinking?

This test is scored differently than CAGE; however, a positive score of three or more is considered to indicate that the person has a drinking problem.<sup>12</sup>