

What Can You Do To Make A Difference In Substance Abuse?

The abuse of alcohol and drugs can devastate families, friendships, careers, the society, and even lives. More than 100,000 US deaths are caused by excessive alcohol consumption each year. Direct and indirect causes of death include drunk driving, cirrhosis of the liver, falls, cancer, and stroke. According to MADD "Alcohol kills 6.5 times more youth than all other illicit drugs combined." Drinking is the most serious issue among teens today.

I attend the most diverse and largest populated school in the state of Oregon, Reynolds High School. In reality, most teenagers either have tried or use drugs or alcohol. Factors that influence these actions are curiosity, peer pressure, a blood relative who is or was an alcoholic, being unaware or uninformed about the consequences and effects, depression, stress, or for the excitement of getting away with an illegal action.

My mother, who works two jobs and has recently been diagnosed with high stress levels, abuses alcohol every day when she gets home from work. She does this to escape reality while thinking it's going to make life better for that few hours of time while she's intoxicated. She is not fond of drinking, or of the after math, but she has become dependent on it almost daily. I've had talks with my mom in hope to try and understand her drinking problem and in the end she told me "it is extremely difficult to give up when one has learned to view it as an out."

In my life I've used alcohol one time. During the summer of my junior year I was stressed out about a volleyball tournament that was very unsuccessful and my team went through a lot of unnecessary drama. This was very emotional for me because I hold a lot of pride and passion into volleyball. To let go of my emotions and frustrations I ended up drinking at a party with some of my friends. This allowed for a temporary relief that lasted till I passed out and woke up the next morning with scratches all over my leg from a fall that I don't remember and a horrible headache. After that horrible incident I find drinking disgusting and hurtful. Nothing will ever come good out of drinking.

Every teenager has their own reasons for abusing substances or choosing not to. In my experiences, I chose to use alcohol to relieve my stress. This was only a temporary relief and it didn't make any of my problems diminish. The majority of teens that use alcohol or smoke do it as a way to release stress as well as relax. Some teens have to try alcohol to understand how it can truly harm them, some witness how it can affect their friends and loved ones and decide to not make those same decisions, and some will stay away from drugs and alcohol by being aware of the legal, moral, physical, emotional, and mental consequences.

In conclusion, it's critical that teens are aware of the affects and consequences of substance abuse. Those include: getting your license taken away, risking your death or someone else's death, an accident, causing family and friends pain, or even jail. Parents should be there for their children to talk to when life gets hard and they need an outlet. Love is the best outlet from the harsh reality. Parents should also talk to their children about these issues to make communities a safer place to work, learn, and have fun in.

Be The Change You Wish To See

Every teenager makes bad decisions at some point. Our raging hormones pulls us one way and our still developing brain pulls us another, while the need to fit in and be accepted pulls us in every direction possible. This internal game of tug-a-war leads some teenagers down the wrong path.

The media, our peers, and our families are the external factors that can lead a teenager to do, or not to do, drugs and alcohol. The media is heavily one sided when it comes to the lifestyle drugs and alcohol can give you. It puts a luxurious outlook on drinking and partying, and lets teens believe that it's a lifestyle with rewards, fun times, and no consequences. It fails to show you that it can ruin lives and make you a person that initially, you didn't want to be. I know this first hand. My twin sister, the person that I am closest to, has gotten into trouble with drugs and alcohol and I fear that she may never turn her life around. Ever since she has started drinking she has become an aggressive, unhappy person. She thinks drinking and partying is helping her live an exciting life but her vision is clouded by the negative influences in her life.

I think the reason for her to first start drinking was because she wanted to fit in. She wanted to feel accepted. The lifestyle came with friends. Unfortunately those friends didn't have her best interest at heart. When your peers pressure you, you feel small and overwhelmed with internal conflict. It's how you handle that conflict that can

break you down, or make you strong. Sadly, most teens don't know how to handle those situations the right way. I think the best way to approach these situations is to make a rule for yourself "No matter what I do today, or tomorrow I will always respect myself", and in hand one must know that putting drugs and alcohol is hurting your body and your mind, and is lowering your potential to be successful and healthy.

My sister has a horrible relationship with our parents. She doesn't communicate any of her feelings with them and doesn't listen to a word they have to say. I truly believe if she had an open relationship with our parents where she felt comfortable, then she would have made better decisions in her life, including those with drug and alcohol. I share so much with my parents and in turn they have shared with me. They have helped me to understand why drugs and alcohol can only hold me back and this point. I have learned through some of their mistakes. I only wish that my sister had what I had. Being drug and alcohol free empowers me to make a difference. I make a difference in my community by living by example and making good impressions on younger generations. I have involved my self in dance team, band, and student government, and as a senior other look to me. I show them that being drug and alcohol free helps me to be the successful person that I am today. Like the great Gandhi once said "you must be the change you wish to see in the world".

Drugs and alcohol abuse negatively effects every community across the United States, but most people don't realize that the "community" can be the person that is closest to you. People don't usually feel the urge to act for something unless it affects them directly, and that is more devastating then the drug and alcohol abusers themselves.

Drug and alcohol abuse is a growing problem in our society. There are always news reports of people who were hospitalized or died due to the abuse of substances. People seem to believe that they are invincible and mentally deny that bad things can happen. In reality, however, bad things happen when poor choices are made. Substance abuse is often the result of depression, the feeling caused by drugs, family values, and peer pressure. Though, no matter which factor causes substance abuse, it will always lead to detrimental effects on the body.

Coping with depression is often represented by alcohol. Television often shows people sitting at bars, consuming beer after beer to “wash away” their depression. The problem is that alcohol is a depressant, which can actually intensify the depression later on. Depression is a terrible state of mind and cannot be rid of easily. People will naturally try to find a way to destroy this feeling, and drugs are often a popular choice. Unfortunately, the little bit comfort they receive immediately is followed up by permanent body damage.

The sensation caused by drugs doesn't necessarily begin substance abuse, but it's what latches on to people and keeps them coming back (aside from the eventual addiction). Wanting to reach that high will cause the substance abusers to continually consuming these substances in hopes that they can reach the same level of pleasure as before. Unfortunately, it will never be as intense a sensation as the last time. Slowly, the continued use of drugs will grab hold of them and it won't let go. Eventually, the abuser will do just about anything to get that next high.

Family values are an often overlooked factor of substance abuse. When one's parents or siblings abuse substances, it will send a message to the younger generation that will cause them to assume that drugs and alcohol are perfectly acceptable. Of course, there's also a chance that it may cause the opposite effect as well. If a child's family abuses drugs and alcohol, but they are deeply on the decline, it may cause children to avoid drugs after seeing the state their family is in. Either way you look at it, drugs can be a risk, especially if you have children.

Peer pressure seems to be the factor most predominant in our youth and, most likely, the hardest to avoid. Children want to fit in and be like their friends, so it may be difficult for them to refuse their peers. The thought of losing friends is an unappealing one, so it becomes a very difficult decision. But it's not just children who are affected by peer pressure. It can be seen in almost every age group. It's common for people to want to fit in, so peer pressure can become a difficult decision not only for children, but also for adults.

I, myself, resist substance abuse mostly through family values. My family is strongly against drug use. My friends are not drugs users either, which helps me to resist the influence even more. Of course, others may have a harder time resisting. If a person tries to pressure their friends into taking drugs or alcohol, is that really a friend worth having? I think it's a hard question for one subject to peer pressure, but I think that if more people ask themselves that question, they can avoid peer pressure.

To help someone avoid substance abuse, I (or anyone) could try to find some sort of outlet for the individual, such as school clubs or sports. I could then try to acquaint them with other individuals who are against drug use, such as my own friends. I think that by having friends who are against substance abuse, even if the individual is subject to peer pressure, the support of their other friends will prevent them from succumbing to it. If things become very serious (repeated peer pressure, family is using drugs, etc.), I would try to find counseling for the individual, which often seems like an option people are afraid of. Counselors can be a very powerful influence if it's hard for the individual to find support or a positive activity (they are trained professionals, after all). In addition, counselors can direct the individual to resources that can support or treat them.

While substance abuse is a growing problem in our community, it's not impossible to resist. By making friends who support you and finding enjoyable activities, I believe it is completely possible for one to avoid substance abuse altogether. Even if your family is using drugs, as long as one has support, it can be avoided. It is also something that must be avoided, as substance abuse slowly destroys the body. We should never believe that we are "bulletproof" and deny that we can be harmed. Just because you don't think it will happen, doesn't mean it won't. To lead a productive and happy life we must always make good decisions like saying "no" to drugs and alcohol.

What Can I Do To Make A Difference In Substance Abuse

Alcohol and Drug abuse are not only adult problems. They occur in teens between the ages twelve and nineteen; even though the legal drinking age is twenty-one teens still drink. Alcohol is a “gateway” to drugs. When a teenager starts drinking they tend to have risk-taking behaviors and do dangerous things. I live in Troutdale, near Portland, Oregon. Portland is a major city where many parties and fun things happen at night. Sometimes you will see people selling drugs or legal adults that buy underage teens alcohol for parties.

Many high school students go to parties on a Friday or Saturday night to have fun. The word “fun” doesn’t always mean the typical American teenager going to a movie, playing games or going to a park; it means going to a friend’s house and getting drunk or high. Why do teenagers do that, you may ask? The reason is plainly to have “fun.” I honestly don’t think that teens just do it for fun. Seeing people get sick after drinking too much or driving home drinking is not something I would call fun.

There’s a difference between drinking a shot to downing a bottle of alcohol. Teenagers have fun drinking, but I think teenagers drink and use drugs to be more open and outgoing around their friends. They may have social problems, or they may be having problems with their parents. They might feel depressed or want to commit suicide. Parents of teenagers that drink are usually not as close to their parents or they get a lot of freedom.

The teens that get more freedom tend to experience more with different things

such as drugs and alcohol. One of the most challenging things that influences people's decisions are peer pressure. Everyone says that people don't pressure others into anything these days, that's not always true. Everyone wants to fit in with the "in-crowd" so they drink and do drugs with their friends. Friends and Parents are the ones that have the most influence on your life. If they choose the wrong crowd to hang with then everything changes your decisions through their life.

To resist this influence, is hard when you want to stay in with the "in-crowd." To stay out of drugs and alcohol I stay active with cheerleading and volunteer activities. By staying involved with school and extra-curricular activities is a way to prevent students from using drugs and alcohol because they are part of a team and don't want to let their team down by disappointing them. Students should have fun when not in school, but don't do things to the point that get people in trouble. If someone is at a party and is under the influence take their keys to their car and watch over them. Most of all just stay involved with school and stay in contact with your parents.

In conclusion, many high school students want to have fun, like Laura Mersereau. Live your life to the fullest without hurting your body. If students are unhappy with their life help them talk to a therapist or even a friend. Losing someone over an addiction is painful to the family and friends that knew Laura. Don't lose your friend to overdosing. High school students are young and have many years to live, why throw your life away now?

What I Can Do to Make A Difference In Substance Abuse

Living in Portland many people including myself have experienced the devastating effects of alcohol and substance abuse up close and personal. Not only does this seem to be a growing trend in adults, it is also becoming more and more popular within the student population. There are numerous reasons why students drink and take drugs, yet on the other side there are several more reasons why students should stray away from the various controlled substances.

The responses I repeatedly hear when I ask students why they drink or take drugs is “It’s fun,” or “Why not? Everyone else is doing it.” Not only do students think its fun, even those who do not are still willing to experiment with various controlled substances just to fit in or be cool. The response I usually give once I hear an answer like that usually consists of not everyone is doing it, what is fun about consuming toxins that could harm you body, or why would you want to be like everyone else anyways. So here are a few of my ideas about drugs and alcohol.

So yes, it’s true many teens have consumed some sort of drugs are alcohol through out their life but not everyone is doing it. There are many more ways to go out and have a good time that do not include using any sort of substance. For example join a sports team, go out to eat with your friends, or have a karaoke party there is no need for mind altering anything to make you have a good time. You may think it is fun until something drastic happens because of a not smart decision you made. Think about all the

people that have lost their lives due to drugs and alcohol, and think about how they affect not only your body, but also everyone else around you.

Drugs and alcohol directly affect your body in more ways than it appears at the time of drinking. Drinking alcohol leads to poor judgment, distorted vision, slowed judgment time and even black outs. Many results of using different substances can be categorized as short term, yet there are also many things that can harm you and your body long term. A dependency of drugs or alcohol can be established which can cause many more problems. If students and anyone for that matter can be introduced to all the harm drugs and alcohol can cause maybe they will think twice when they are put in that situation.

Abusing and even using these substances is not the cool thing to do and is not fun. There are many reasons why students should stay away from them. A big part of high school is not going around and yelling at the top of your lungs to not take part, but to educate students when they have questions but also lead by example. If students see that the athletes, musicians, leadership students, and everyone else is not doing it then, no one will want to. So students need to take that first step like I have and vow to not use any controlled substances, and step back and help others make the choice to do so as well, make the choice to help or hurt your chances to succeed in the future.

Parties, drugs, alcohol, dancing, and food are all part of a teenager's life; or so many people think. A very popular and often heard sentence within a high school setting is "well, everyone else is doing it." Who "everyone else" is, still remains a mystery, but it is still believed. If someone has not had alcohol and or tried drugs by the end of their senior year, they are considered odd, or lying. Many did not believe that I had never had alcohol or participated in drugs in the middle of my freshman year. Peer pressure and expectations weigh heavy on peoples minds. Everyone just wants to fit in, and I think because of this desire, a majority of kids turn to drugs or alcohol.

Health and Wellness are required classes for every schools student's. Within these classes, we are taught about the danger of alcohol, the devastating effects of drugs, and the life changing events that can come from getting involved in sexual activities. Every graduate has been taught about these, and everyone understands the dangers, but many ignore the facts. There are many reasons for this. To enjoy the sensations, to feel better, fit in, feel accepted, and to be considered cool are just a few reasons. Many of the drug users and alcoholics have or had parents who used as well. The influence from them can and does have a say in whether or not the child gets involved with them.

Resisting the call of friends, fun, and enjoyment sounds hard, but really, it is easy. I grew up with parents and family who did not smoke or drink any kind of alcohol. Therefore, I learned at an early age that both were bad for me. When I got older and came to better understand the reasons why is was bad for me, my resolve hardened. Not only was I taught to not participate, but I can not stand the smell of either. Wine is often described as sweet and good tasting, but it has a revolting smell of my nose. Along with my parents teaching, it also part of my religion to not partake of either substance, for they are both harmful and addictive.

Refraining from drug use and alcohol consumption will not only help that person choice, but others as well. Statistics say that hundreds, if not thousands of people die each year from drinking and driving accidents, or under the influence of drugs. Choosing to put yourself and others in a position to be part of that statistic is never a good idea. If the person in question chooses not to enter a car whenever under the influence and not to get into a car with anyone who is, there is still a risk.

The risk of influencing another to join in is as bad, if not worse than getting into that car. If an innocent bystander joins in the festivities, which increases the chance of a person getting hurt. Also, children are watching those older than themselves, and they emulate those actions, and the cycle starts over again. Therefore, the best choice of action is to never even participate one time; for one time will lead to another, and soon, you are just another percent to the statistic.

Everywhere you look alcohol and substance abuse surrounds our community and plays a negative role in the lives of teens, adults and families. From the TV screen to the pages of magazines, alcohol, sex and drugs are promoted in a lackadaisical manner giving teens the wrong ideas and impression on how to act. It is influenced by musicians, actors and actresses, along with comedians and the everyday verbal abuse that may be conducted through peer pressure.

“Because I got high, because I got high..” This lyric is the main chorus to the song, Colt 45, rapped by the Afro man, a well known rapper. In his next lyric he sends the message to teens that getting high is an excuse for lack of responsibility, “I was going to clean my room, before I got high..” There are many Artists just like Afro man, who use vulgar language and lyrics to promote and influence drugs and alcohol. We are at a zeitgeist where Hip hop and R&B are quite popular to the young generation. It is common now to find this type of verbal behavior around schools, home settings, and the work force. However, restrictions are coming into affect in hopes of eliminating alcohol, substance and verbal abuse. Schools have laid down guidelines such as limiting ipod use in the class room, turning off cell-phones, and not allowing I-Tunes to be used on school computers. The affect that music lyrics have on the youth of our communities is very powerful and has a huge impression on they’re actions.

From the Cosmopolitan, Rolling Stone, US weekly, to People magazine, teens are inundated with sex, and alcohol exposure that is issued in the most popular and notorious magazine articles founded daily on the local supermarket shelves. They promote alcoholic beverages and products such as cigarettes and tobacco. But who are these marketers prime targets? They’re seductive appeal and intrigued images only trigger the impressionable minds of teen consumers. There is no tv channel you cant turn, no billboard you can’t see and no magazine you cant read that doesn’t have the abuse or promotion of alcohol and drugs.

It is inevitable that teens will be exposed to peer-pressure at a young age. The burden that comes along with peer pressure affects teens on both a mental and emotional level. They either feel that if “I don’t smoke I am not cool”, or if “I don’t show enough skin I am not attractive.” What ever it be, peer-pressure affects teens on a daily basis and the number one influence is drugs and alcohol. Once parties and social gathering come into play, teens feel more pressure and are likely to give in to the powerful effect others may have on them.

There is only one solution to this epidemic, to educate. Provide knowledge, facts and figures, along with discussing what consequences will be enforced if the young generation chooses to take part in drugs or alcohol. The abuse of alcohol and drugs is something you cannot erase, it is there and will forever be a challenge for teens to overcome. However it is how you promote and educate these abusive substances to teens that will determine the extent of which they are used.

Encouragement and Alternatives

Students have plenty of access to anti-drug information at any time. That's not saying they even have to spend time searching for it. A lot of information about drugs, the chemical make-up, effects, consequences and real life stories are bombarded to students without any seeking out. It's part of the curriculum in required classes and starts in DARE at young ages. My school even has a program called Every Fifteen Minutes that I was lucky enough to participate in, which happens every other year. In this activity that occurs the week before prom certain students "die" every 15 minutes. This represents the national statistic that people are killed in a drug related car accident every fifteen minutes. The dead students wander the hall in full white make up and black garb. They are not allowed to talk. At the end of the day, the impact of dead students stalking the halls is an uncomfortable reality. The next day there is an assembly for juniors and seniors attending prom. The killed students read letters to their parents from "beyond the grave" saying all they didn't have a chance to say, perform a skit and spokespeople talk about their drug related horror stories. People end up openly bawling, and the rest of the school day is spent in a stupor.

And then, the next night after prom, people crack open their beers and take up.

Why isn't this getting through to students?

Ask any teenager and they can give you drug facts and tell you it's bad for you. Why do they assume they are an exception? How could they possibly think, "That could never happen to me".

Students partake in substance abuse for a variety of reasons, whether it's boredom, curiosity, an escape, or desperation for any attention, even negative. Focusing on why students choose drugs isn't where we'll find the answers. Instead, look at why ~~students choose to abstain.~~

Teens who are driven, who have goals and dreams, or a pathway – these are the same teens that stay drug-free. These are the teenagers who realize that they have the potential to do or be more in this world. How do we instill this in the people who feel they are happier in a drug-induced haze than bettering themselves?

It's a matter of encouragement from peers, teachers and parents. One adult advocating for you, urging on your dreams and living up to you potential honestly does make a difference. In today's school system with no funds, no classroom space, and a small amount of underpaid and underappreciated teachers; this encouragement is hard to come by. As sad as it sounds, it's a lack of funds, time, and energy, all which could be used on keeping students on the field, stage or speech team instead of on the streets.

Because, personally, theatre has been, to coin a phrase, my anti-drug. There's peer support in the setting, and a place to go everyday after school. Running lines, building a set and bouncing ideas off each other is so much more fulfilling then sitting on a couch with a bong. Having a niche and a position where you truly matter in the success of something is what will keep students drug free.

Which is why I'm reluctant to blame poor parenting. Everyone has his or her issues of different degrees at home. Some druggies are pushed into it by stress, but some are upper class kids who are bored and want "a good time". And the kids who say no, some have the added support of involved parents, but a lot of them, the theatre

community at my school for a specific instance, have immature, irresponsible parents who yell, blame and blatantly abuse their kids.

If I were responsible for keeping an individual off of drugs, I'd invite them along to a rehearsal. The drama department life is so busy that sitting down to light a cigarette would be precious seconds wasted. There are so many positions backstage we're always trying to fill. And the environment is (I'll try not to sound too cliché here) very accepting and very family-like. Possibly making up for the chaos at all of our homes. But this isn't just a theatre thing. All the sports and clubs get so close with the amount of time necessary to spend with each other. And why risk your mile time by drinking during track season? So if drama wasn't that person's cup of joe, I'd introduce them to people involved in other activities. Because staying off of drugs is a lot like the rest of life. It's all about who you know.

Alcohol and Substance Abuse in Teens Today

Every father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, child and adult- every human being- is effected by alcohol and substance abuse. Whether it is directly, or indirectly, somehow they are affected. Today in high schools all over, alcohol and illegal substances are socially accepted. I believe that the main factor for teens deciding to give into this new fad is peer pressure. Nowadays, it is as though there are new standards to be “cool” and the youth of today do not know the mechanisms to turn down these destructive substances.

According to the Adolescent Substance Abuse Knowledge Base, (www.adolescent-substance-abuse.com), nationwide, 31.5 percent of students have consumed five or more alcohol drinks on one occasion. Also, 30.2 percent of students nationwide have been offered illegal drugs at school. This is overwhelming to think of. If students can get drugs at school, think about what they can get at parties. I believe the hardest decision for youth to make, is to go against what everyone else is doing. In high school, almost everyone is trying to fit in. If everyone is drinking, or smoking, or abusing any other type of drug, teens feel obligated to join. Little do students know, even one drink could ruin everything. Futures, families, jobs, and relationships can be ruined in the one moment someone tries to “fit in” and “be cool”.

As a senior, I have noticed that the partying and substance abuse doesn't start freshman or sophomore year, the years that we are required to take a health class which briefly covers alcohol and illicit drugs, but the binge drinking and substance abuse starts when teens are able to drive which is even more scary and dangerous. Our schools need to make a change and inform students in grades 9-12 about the consequences, physically and mentally, of alcohol and substance abuse. Personally, to avoid making destructive decisions, I stay involved in athletics and school activities. When I get asked to drink, I think about my future and how one decision could ruin my whole future. As captain of my volleyball team, I encourage my teammates to avoid situations where they could get in trouble, and I like to engage my friends with positive activities. We do activities like going shopping and watching movies. I cannot stop every teen from making poor decisions, yet I can do my part by not pressuring them, and making them aware of the consequences.

Drugs and alcohol devastates hearts. They devastate the plan in which you are made to fulfill. They devastate the persons loved ones and devour its victim by lying that it's the only way out. I know this because I lived it. I have seen the beauty within a person die. By telling my story I hope to fulfill the questions in which you have asked of me by showing you more on a personal level.

There were nights that I wish that I wasn't alive. Screams filled our household and thumps vibrated through our floors. Sitting behind my closed bedroom door listening to the chaos birthed a deep cut into my heart. I felt all alone within my small little room wondering why. Why does this happen. Why do they fight and why don't they ever stop. Because of alcohol there were many sleepless nights. Nights when you as an 8 year old feel more mature than the parents in which you rely. Being ripped from my bed to sleep other places vanished all the security I knew. All because of alcohol the wounds that I have carried since I was a little girl are just now starting to mend. It's a lie when people tell you that its ok if its one little sip. Those sips will turn into nights of hell and regret. It devastated our family and ruined the relationship between my father and me. Making me angry inside. I forgave him but my anger is still so rampant inside myself. My relationship with my father was scarred because of alcohol. Feeling like you are not important because of a substance makes you feel like a fool. I remember that my father would drink and drive with me in the car. Alcohol made him selfish and self righteous. It hurt. The feeling of rejection slashed my heart in half. Feeling that he didn't care about my well being was scary. I know that he loved me but how he showed it wasn't the most convincing. Alcohol also ruined his engagement with his fiancé of 5 years. It tore them apart resulting in restriction orders against each other and sending one or the other to jail. The wedding was called off and they separated putting my father and me at my grandma's house.

My father started to drink alcohol when he was in high school. He also partook in smoking marijuana with his friends just like the normal high school teen today. My dad had a lot of hurts in his life. He hurt for acceptance. Somewhere in his life he never really got the love that he thought he deserved. That made him look in all the wrong places. I believe that is the problem with teens now who take drugs and alcohol in high school. They are trying to find acceptance and appreciation by the peers that they commit with. It's a sad affair because all those kids are after one thing that no human can fulfill and yet the search so hard that it takes there life, hopes, future and dreams.

Witnessing all that I have in my life that has to deal with alcohol helps me stay and resist the temptations. My faith has kept me strong in not partaking in those activities. There are no such things as steps to help prevent a friend to not take drugs and abuse alcohol but to do one thing. Love. Love them for who they are and where they are at in life. A quote that Mother Teresa said was:

“ I have found the paradox that if I love until it hurts, then there is no hurt but only more love.” Love is our anti drug as a community. If we all loved there would be no hurt which would not cause people to find acceptance in all the

wrong places such as alcohol and drugs.

What can I do to make a Difference in Substance Abuse

Each drug has had a period of extreme popularity. During the 19th century, America was littered with Opium dens. During the 1960's, we experienced "The Summer of Love", looking back one sees remarkable things churned out from the minds influenced by Psychedelics. For the past decade, it's been Methamphetamines. The war on drugs is a huge issue within America. It almost seems that the country is torn into two opposing sides; Those who benefit from the production, transportation, sell or use of drugs and those who view drugs as having too many negatives to keep, or allow around. The use of illegal substances is often introduced to young adults typically in high school, but can range as young as a child in middle school. Substance Abuse often leads to Addiction which is an excessive psychological or physical dependence on a substance that often leads to abuse.

Pure Pressure influences all teenagers, but it does not influence the experimentation with substances; this has been the experience I have shared with many friends. It's entirely curiosity that fuels this common occurrence. People don't present the opportunity to be 'Cool' but rather the chance to have a new experience. When anyone is not living a happy life, a new experience is very welcomed. Binge drinking and the hard drugs soon present a hole into a happier world; while drinking, cigarettes, and marijuana give a very light and short burst of feeling good. I believe it is part of growing up to experiment with substances but to get pulled into an addiction is unhealthy, as everyone would agree.

I believe support is the key to dodging addiction. Those that are supported by their friends and family are not normally the ones who fall into addiction, short or long term. Those who have not had the same support throughout their lives do seem to fall into addictions that only end when they find people who have unconditional love, and always show support for them, normally this is a loved one or a friend. The Amish view of puberty is very different than the average American. Once a child has reached puberty, they are allowed to leave the Amish community to explore the world. The child has been raised hearing about the evils of the 'outside world' and now it is time for them to explore them. A few won't fall into the evils of the 'outside world' but some will discover the 'Rocker' lifestyle that involves drugs, sex, and lies. They will end up with many problems after experimenting with this lifestyle for a long period of time. When they can't handle it any longer they return sometimes pregnant, sometimes with an addiction, but almost always scared to death and needing the support of their family and community. They appear to always recover, never with the need to return to this life they were taught as being forbidden and the ultimate evil. They except their simple lives, focused on family and religion, as the right path.

The only way to stop others from trying substances is by simply making them unavailable. This can't be done though, because even if there aren't influences inside the house there are plenty of influences outside the house. These outside influences include the media, friends, and even random strangers. The media is constantly promoting taboo things as sexy. This works because all humans want to be wanted. All friends have grown up with different influences and standards. What may not be allowed in a child's household may be allowed in the household of a friend. The opportunity to do

something different is almost always too tempting to turn away. I have been approached by strangers offering me illegal substances for sale. This is not a pretty picture, sheltered life, or safe environment but that is how the world works. I do believe it helps when the parents aren't involved with substances. I know a family where the mother smoked, but wouldn't tolerate any of her children smoking; now they share two common factors their all over twenty, and they all smoke. It's been scientifically proven that alcoholism runs in family lines. These facts mean that we need to be careful with not only our kids, but also with ourselves. I think the best thing to do is to not encourage experimenting, but to show love and support when someone has chooses to explore the opportunity.

I personally couldn't resist the temptation to experiment. I am proud to say I didn't try it right away, nor did I dive head first into a long term addiction. Currently, I am surrounded by friends, a family that is very proud of who I've become and a guy I have a lot of love for. These people all provide the unconditional love and support that is needed for me not to return down that path. Being surrounded by people provides all the happiness I need, so I have no need to go looking for a temporary high. When I am asked if I'd like any hard core substances, I often reply "Why would I need something to get me high when I'm already flying high off life, and enjoying what keeps on coming?" I was insecure for a long time, but now I radiate confidence that others seem to also absorb. On the issue of drugs, I can say I've been there, done that, and I have no need to re-explore something that's already known.