

A Living Miracle

I have seen many students and adults struggle to overcome addiction. I am one of those students. There are many ideas and reasons as to why students in high school drink or do drugs including peer pressure, curiosity, popularity, or a lifestyle learned from family members. I think in the end it's ultimately because of the effect the drug or drink gives them. Most of the people I know who take drugs or drink do so because they feel as if once under the influence they are in control of their life. Of course, this is a lie. From what I've observed and experienced, most of the people who feel this strong need to be in control of their lives, come from difficult family backgrounds/households. These are the people who I have seen struggle with a drug addiction throughout my adolescent years.

Addiction is devastating not only to the person who suffers the illness, but to their friends and family who endure the suffering as well. It's a horrible thing to see someone try to battle his or her addiction. There isn't much you can do until that person is willing to help him or herself and are willing to make changes before you can put your heart and energy out to help them. Using drugs or alcohol as a means of escape from reality, or to feel in control of one's life is a terrible decision for a person to make. This method of coping and self-medicating is sometimes the only way someone knows how to deal with stress, pressure, or grief. I have yet to meet a person who can use drugs or alcohol to really solve their problems.

I would have to say one of the most challenging factors influencing a decision to be clean and sober is a person's environment. School, family, and friends shape the way a student perceives their environment. If the student has a tough home life, or a hard time fitting in with a certain crowd at school, drugs and alcohol look like a great way to escape or fit in. It only takes one try to be hooked to the euphoric effect the drug/drink gives a person. Anytime the student feels stressed or troubled, drugs/alcohol become the way of escape and the illusion of being in control again. This is where addiction begins. Alcohol

is a silent but effective killer. Because alcohol is sold legally in grocery or liquor stores, most people think it's harmless, that's where they are misled.

When under the influence, most people are in a happy or relaxed state of mind. This creates the illusion that the problem or stress has gone away. That is the feeling that most people find comforting. Then, as soon as the effect of the drug or the drink wears off, the stress/problem returns and the person once more has to find a way to escape or solve it. It's kind of a never-ending, sick cycle that begins to form within the person's mind. How am I going to deal with this stress? How am I going to find my next bag? Who can buy me my next bottle? The thought of having to deal with pain and stress sober no longer sounds possible.

These feeling and thoughts complicate decision making about using. Most students will hear, see, and/or talk about drugs and how they really feel about it. Sadly, it's become common for me to hear casual conversations between students about how "wasted" students were that weekend or how they did something crazy on a drug and want to do it again. When I tell them they're in denial, they look at me as if I have no clue. It is frustrating to know that those types of students refuse to learn from someone else's experiences, mistakes, and stories.

Countless times have I tried to resist the temptations of a drink, a hit, or a smoke. I have lied countless time to friends, teachers, and family members about my drug and alcohol use only for them to find out the truth in the end. Countless times have I relapsed and let my addiction take over my life. I have made many disappointing attempts to quit using drugs and alcohol throughout my entire high school career. My senior year has been my longest and most successful year of staying sober. I have seven months clean with the help of a motivated and inspiring Drug & Alcohol counselor, three tireless teachers, two high school administrators, and a hopeful mother, I was given a third chance and opportunity to turn my life around. I would have to say the realization of my drug use and how it impacted not only myself, but also so many other people is what keeps me from giving in to my addiction. That other people give me their time and effort to help me overcome my addiction is a humbling experience; it motivates me to resist the temptations.

I participate in a support group in my high school, which helps to alleviate the stress of fighting this illness. Being in a room full of students who deal with the same addiction and honestly talking about how they are overcoming their issues with addiction helps. It let's me know like I am not the only teenager trying to figure out how to resolve my problems and deal with obstacles as they come, all the while being sober.

I think talking about drugs and alcohol and their consequences from a student's perspective to their peers is an effective way of making it known what drugs and alcohol can really do to someone's life. Sometimes the true example of another person's life, isn't enough to prevent a person from using drugs. I know that no matter what I say, it is ultimately up to him or her to choose to use for the first time or continue to use drugs/alcohol. Yet, I keep talking. Talking from my heart and telling students of the consequences of drug & alcohol use had for me is a valuable thing to me. Just by reaching out and offering a helping hand can make a big difference or a first step.

It's willpower and rigorous honesty that most addicts lack. The road to recovery never ends and constantly needs repaving. We addicts are forever sick people who need to remind each other of why we stay clean. I do so because the changes I have made in my life have resulted in many positive outcomes I never thought I would be able to have.

Encourage and Lead

If I sat in a classroom with thirty of my fellow peers, I could almost guarantee that at least ten, if not more, have tried either alcohol or drugs. I believe they use these substances based on peer pressure and the thought that they will loosen them up in social situations. I myself have tried alcohol for the latter reason, although I do not approve of or condone its use.

The most challenging factor influencing the use of alcohol or drugs is the pressure put on individuals by their friends and peers. A lot of times at social events, your friends don't even ask you to use these substances, but you still feel the need to use them because everyone else is. It is a sad thought, but it is human nature. If you don't, you feel very uncomfortable, and if you do you feel guilty. It's a lose lose situation.

In order to resist this influence, I try to stay away from those types of situations and events, and try to involve myself in more fulfilling activities that get me more involved, such as key club and music. I personally do not feel that there are many ways to prevent others from using these substances, because people will do what they do, and you can't run their lives for them no matter how much you would like to. All you can do is encourage them to get involved in more constructive and fulfilling activities.

If I sat in a classroom with thirty of my fellow peers, I could almost guarantee that at least ten, if not more, have tried either alcohol or drugs. I now know that there is nothing I can do but live my life not as a follower who does these things to fit in, but as a leader who will not do these things. And should my actions encourage people to stop the things they are doing, than I can live knowing I possibly saved a life. All I can do is encourage and lead, and that is what I will continue to do.