

# Substance Abuse Essay

High school students are starting to get more involved in drugs and alcohol a lot more than they used to and its becoming a lot more dangerous and a lot more common. There is a lot of reasons students are getting involved in it. Some reasons are that kids are bored, they want to seem older, and they are more worried about their reputation.

In my city, I haven't personally seen or have had experience with anyone I know but I have heard of substance and alcohol abuse in my school. The reason I think high school students above all choose to try drugs or alcohol is kids aren't involved in as much as they used to and are bored. When this happens, they try new things and drugs and alcohol is one of them. For example, when kids are bored that's normally when they get in more trouble just like in school; usually seen by disruption in the classroom.

Another reason students are getting more involved in drugs is that students are wanting to be older than they are. Students don't want to be called kids when they are in high school they want to start seeming older. One way students try to look older is buy drinking. One reason why I think they do this is because adults are able to drink, so if students drink then they would feel like an adult.

Third, drugs and alcohol is a lot more accessible when you are in high school. Students are able to get it a lot easier which is making them want to try it. If alcohol and drugs were harder to get students would be less likely to try. They wouldn't want to take the risk of getting caught or they just wouldn't want to try and find it.

My final reason of why students are more inclined to abuse alcohol and

drugs is they are worried about their reputation. Students don't want to be left out or not feel apart of a group. So when the group they are with or even a close friend is drinking, this results in them wanting to drink. This is because students don't want to feel "uncool" in front of their friends or they don't want to feel outside, so even if they really don't want to drink they will just to belong.

In conclusion, students are more likely to abuse alcohol and drugs more than they used to because it is more accessible, they are not as busy, and they are more worried of what others think of them. Students need to learn that they should find people that accept them for who they are. They also should not do things they know are wrong just to make them look "cool". If we teach kids this and they begin to see how bad doing these can ruin their futures, then hopefully students will be a lot safer and we will have less student deaths from alcohol and drugs.

## **How Can You Make A Difference in Substance Abuse**

Everyone knows that drugs and alcohol are bad for you. So then why do so many people abuse them? Do teens start drinking because they think that it makes them look cooler? Do students believe that drugs will make all their problems go away? In truth students abuse drugs and alcohol for many reasons. The biggest of these I believe is stress. Unlike many people I have been able to witness many of my friends' difficulties with drugs and drinking. One of my really close friends started to drink when his dad got sent to jail. It was devastating for me to watch this because I knew he was doing this simply because he couldn't deal with the stress anymore. So many people were now depending on him, and he had to pretend that this didn't effect him so his siblings would be alright. However, when he started to drink I could tell that overall this was just tearing him down more. I knew I had to do something, I decided to sit down and talk to him about it. Soon after we talked about all of the things that were stressing him out I got him to stop abusing alcohol. He confided to me that the biggest reason that he hadn't started earlier was he knew that many people would be disappointed in him. I believe that this was the most challenging factor in his decision. Later he also told me that he quit using alcohol because we talked things through. Now it is your turn, I believe that it is everyone's responsibility to help out a friend when they are in trouble especially when their life is on the line, like abusing drugs or alcohol. It only takes one person to help save another's life. Just be the person that they can tell anything to, the one that will help them understand that whatever is happening to them isn't worth throwing their life away for. You should always look out for your friends, but don't forget about yourself. The simplest step you can take to avoid alcohol or drugs yourself is to create a group of friends that believe in your same morals. It always helps when you have people to back you up. That is why you should take it as a personal task to spread this message around. My point can be summed up in a matter of words, "Drugs are a waste of time. They destroy your memory and your self-respect and everything that goes along with your self esteem." - Kurt Cobain. Maybe if more people hear this statement they will understand why they need to stand up for what's right. No one wants to be the one person who stands up against their friends, but someone had to start. It would make everyone's lives easier if they never had to stand alone, so help out your friends and fight against substance abuse. If everyone can convince just one person to not use alcohol or drugs in their lifetime then our world would be a much better place.

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What is substance abuse? Substance abuse is when someone is taking drugs and gets addicted to them. Also it can be when someone overdoses on a drug like prescription pills. My focus is on the use of alcohol and substance use by youth, adults, and their families also how people who don't do drugs and alcohol resist doing them.

I live in Tualatin, Oregon I am a freshman a Tualatin high school. The effect of drugs and alcohol on youth in Tualatin is bad because it causes students to not concentrate at school. Another reason is it causes teens to not act how they are supposed to and most of the time parents don't know their kids are doing drugs or alcohol or both. The last reason is these teens doing drugs are the teens that will be adults getting in trouble when they get older and they will be the ones not going to college. The effect of drugs and alcohol on adults in Tualatin is not good because this is causing their kids and family friends to do drugs. Another reason is that the reason teens are doing drugs is because they are getting them from their parents and their parents don't know that they are. The last reason is because adults want to fit in with other people so they follow people doing drugs. One reason teens in high school do drugs is because of all the stress from school and life outside of school with family in general. Another reason is because teens are being pressured by their friends to do drugs and alcohol so they fit in. The last reason is because teens lie around other people who do drugs and they follow other people they don't know and do drugs. The most challenging factor influencing this decision is teens are being pressured by friends to follow along and fit in with others.

The steps to prevent using drugs and alcohol are simple the first step is knowing the people that are your friends. The second step is resisting peer pressure. The third step is not following people that are not good in school that get in trouble a lot. The fourth step is to stay away from people who act like they are on drugs. The last step is to know the other students around you besides your friends and make sure you're not hanging out with people you don't know.

This is just some of the reasons you should not do drugs but the most important way to stay away from substance abuse is having good friends and knowing who they are.

My opinion of people who do drugs is they are just wasting their life and not making smart choices in life. But to some people who need drugs for medical reasons they are just trying to keep their life going. So for all those people taking drugs you need to stop and turn your life around and start being a good person.

# This is what I have to say!!.

In America today 1.7 million adolescence tried drugs or alcohol between the ages of 13, and 17 years old. Since I am a teenager I can get a good guess on why teens would try something like this. My first reason is they don't know what could happen to them, or there family when trying, or experimenting with these substances. Students don't realize that when intoxicated with marijuana or alcohol that they might have a low chance of "over dosing" but there actions might hurt them or there family. Drugs and alcohol have a big impact on some families in the United States of America. When intoxicated some people get depressed or very angry depending on what kind of mood they are in before consuming, which mean that in some families around the world kids end up hurt, emotionally, or physically. When a person is drunk or high they start to want to commit crimes like fighting, theft, and murder. Alcoholics are costing the economy money by having cops use there gas, to locking them up in jail, or prison. Cannabis makes the mental part of the human brain to think that they are invincible, going from playing chicken with a train to making cops angry then getting arrested.

Maybe if this type of behavior was influenced then America wouldn't be the Great U.S. Our fallow up countries like Europe for example has legalized cannabis or marijuana. Must be 18 years of age to use like a cigarette in the U.S. and hearing that makes me sick, only because what's the point of getting drunk or high, shouldn't you feel good with out it, like just being honest here, even though cannabis is probably but not really as bad for you as alcohol but what's more important beer, marijuana or your family. It is completely unfair coming home and thinking hmmm I wonder were my wife is, then finding out that she was killed by a drunk driver, or your sister riding in the back seat of her friends car after a party killed in a horrible car accident resulting alcohol... You be the judge.

I can not tell a peer "don't smoke pot, or don't drink", because its there is decision, but what I can do is support them by saying, hey your decision but if your doing this to "feel more alive" or look older or feel older then I would think twice about what your doing, because one hit of that bong, or 2 shots of vodka mite leave in the dump of how you acted around your friends when under the influence. Like you wake up finding out you cheated on your girl friend you said something wrong to your friend mite leave you depressed or confused either way no body wants to be there. The last thing I want to see is a student die from alcoholism, because seeing somebody close to me drink just kills me on the inside, and I just can't see what a family of a teenager think when there son passes because of alcohol, and hoping that the don't blame themselves of what happened.

# Substance Abuse

There are a mortifying number of people who get pulled over each night because of driving under the influence of drugs. Drugs and Alcohol are terrible for your health. If taken too much or too often they may kill! So why would anybody want to ever try them in the first place? I think the reason high school students drink or take drugs is because it relieves their stress. Especially when they are finishing up their last years at high school, and testing and work gets in the way of things, they get put under a lot of pressure, and sometimes they just want to get away. Other times, it just might be something they do to get attention. If their parents or guardian is never there for them, and if they feel like they don't have anybody who cares for them, sometimes it could just be a cry out for attention. Another reason is to feel like they "fit in." Some students are still trying to figure out who they are during high school, and they try several different things, just to see where it leads them. What they don't know is that they could be ruining their life forever. The most challenging factor influencing their decision about drugs and alcohol is peer pressure. If one of your friends is doing something and pressuring you to do it, you're more likely to say yes rather than if you were alone. The actions of others around you influence you very much as well. Other factors influencing this decision are parents. What you watch at home and hear at home affects how your behavior and attitude towards drugs and alcohol may be.

Finally, which I think is a big one, are social gatherings. For teenagers, the high school parties tend to have alcohol or drugs, and no parent supervision. This is where they just

want to fit in, so they do what everybody else is doing. So, if everybody is drinking or doing drugs because it's "cool", nobody wants to stand out as the nobody at a party, so they try it, and that's where it starts. For young adults and the older generation, there's the bar. Overly-stressed or alcoholics flock here like a bee to honey. Here, they drink to their heart's desire, and when they're finished and ready to go home, there's nobody to take themselves back besides them. This is how most people get DUIs. Drinking and drugs are problems that somebody can have, but there are a couple of things anybody can do to make sure they never get to the point in their life where they are relying so heavily on a substance or drug. There are many ways to resist this influence and to prevent another peer from ruining their life as well. Firstly, you could always talk to a counselor or somebody you feel comfortable sharing your thoughts with. Secondly, you could decide for yourself that you want to live a health lifestyle and not let others influence you into doing what they want. Lastly, you can say NO. Substances shouldn't be legal, or open to anybody under the age of 21, and if you think about some of the problems caused because of drugs and alcohol, I think you'll agree with me.

When a teenager grabs a beer at a party or gets drugs from a friend, they think about getting drunk or high. What they need to think of is what could happen while under the influence: Death.

Seeing friends while they are intoxicated, teens are sometimes only exposed to the “fun” aspects of drugs, and not their harmful and sometimes deadly effects. They think of having a good time getting drunk, but not of the consequences. For example, when someone uses an inhalant, they might not be aware that they could die after using at any time; whether it’s their first or fourteenth, it can potentially be the last. Since you can’t overdose by smoking marijuana they assume that there isn’t any real chance of death, without thinking of the things they might end up doing because they are under the influence.

While ignorance is a problem, the worse issue is peer pressure. Whether it’s at a party or just hanging out, it’s very hard to stand up to your friends or to be the only one not doing something that everyone else is doing. When peer pressure is present, it makes abstinence a much harder path, however, that path can still be followed. It takes a mentally strong person to stand up to other people or to refrain from doing what others are doing, so often the best thing to do is to avoid places or parties that put you in that position. If you’re invited to a party, ask when it is and who is going, along with whether or not there will be supervision. If you can then try to get your friends to do the same, and if they do then they’re the kind of friends you want to hang out with and trust.

Although teens don’t fully understand the truth about what can happen as a result of substance abuse, there are many who use or are pressured by peers to use drugs and alcohol. The only way to keep away from the consequences of using is to refrain from using yourself. It’s impossible to die from abusing a substance without using it, so if you aren’t sure then say no.



## Essay

Unfortunately, there are thousands of people in Tualatin that drink and do drugs; that's just Tualatin alone. People young and old, teen and adult, are dying everyday because drugs or alcohol are taking over their bodies. Sadly, that person is choosing to hurt themselves this way. Everyone has the choice but some people can't control their choice. Drugs and alcohol don't just have an effect on that person either; they have an effect on that person's family and friends.

No one wants to find out that their son died because he went to a party and drove under the influence. When someone thinks about the party tonight, they don't stop and think, will I be putting myself in danger, and if I do, who will I hurt in the process? That is the question that unfortunately, isn't on every teenagers mind. In high school there is this thing called competition, one kid wants to be cooler than another kid. But sometimes, being cool means that you're going to have to put yourself in danger.

There are a lot of kids that don't even want to be close to that stuff, but they go to the party and see that everyone is walking around with a beer, so they say they will just have one to look normal like everybody else. After that first one, they'll want more, and more, and more, and that's how it gets started. All because everyone wants to be like everyone else. The only way you'll ever be able to stay away from drugs or alcohol is to stay away from the people that want you to use it. You can't give into peer pressure. The only way people even get addicted to this stuff in the first place is competition and peer pressure. Drugs don't let you get away from anything. From what I've heard drugs and alcohol are pretty good at throwing your life away. You will never hear anybody say that drugs were the reason they made it into Harvard.

Everyone that thinks drugs and alcohol will never enter their life, or think that drugs are ruining their lives, or think that drugs are fun, are all wrong. For one, drugs and alcohol will be around you in some form some day. Whether it's being asked of you or you stare down dad's alcohol when he's gone. But the decision will be up to you, either say yes and get addicted so you can ruin your life, or say no and continue your life, drugs or alcohol will never solve your problems for you. Secondly, if you think that drugs or alcohol are ruining your life, your wrong, you're ruining your life. You put yourself in that position and you can get yourself out. Getting out will definitely not be as easy as getting in, but anyone can do it if they really wanted to. Lastly, anyone that reads this, if you can find someone that can tell me that after they were done smoking, sniffing, drinking, whatever, if they can tell me that it was totally worth damaging their selves, so they couldn't remember anything the next day, then I will completely change the way I think. That person could have got in a car accident, hurt someone, killed someone, and even killed themselves.

Unfortunately, the government can't magically make everyone go sober or drug-free. But if I could, I would let one stay the way they were and put him in a cage. So then everyone could see how great drugs and alcohol really are. So then people will look at themselves and think, is that what I looked like? Did those things happen to me? Before you decide to say yes or no to drugs and alcohol, think about you and all those innocent people you can hurt in the process.

It's the cause of over 44,000 deaths in car crashes in the United States, yet people still drink and drive. Why? For many different reasons. Two of the main reasons teens or/and adults drink is because of peer pressure (teens) and to relax (adults). The same reasons pertain to drugs and why teens do it. Sometimes it's just to get away from problems, but in the end it only causes more problems, so there's no point in doing it unless it's prescribed or recommended by a doctor.

Trust when I say resistance is NOT futile.  
In order to stop from being part of 130,000 injured teen drivers or the 50% of fatal crashes, caused by alcohol, don't drink! It's so easy if you think about these things first before deciding to get drunk.

1. Your future - (what'll happen, or what could happen if you start drinking, or taking drugs?)
2. Do you really think the friends who pressure you to do something are really your friends?
3. Who said taking drugs and drinking was cool? or fun?

Hopefully these will help.

One of the most challenging factors in drinking is seeing someone who you look up to, do it and think it's OK. You think, "oh, that's cool," because they're doing it.

and once you start thinking that you get more interested which leads you to actually drink or do drugs.

## What Can I do to make a Difference in Substance Abuse?

In my town of Tualatin I'll admit there are drugs and there is alcohol. Now days it's hard to find a town that doesn't have this. The worst part about it is in the high schools, and some middles schools all over Oregon that's a hard fact to get over isn't it? Would you like you kids going to school there? I'm sure you wouldn't, I know I don't like it one bit knowing that it goes on in our schools, I have to go to school with these people to me the most challenging thing about it is how can I get them to stop. Do I have to explain to them how much it would hurt their families and friends how much it affects them selves, how it affects everything around them. Do they do the drugs or drink just because they want to? Just because it's the cool to do? Just because it's what other people are doing? Just because its gives you some rush? Did you for get about the little fact that well maybe this could kill you, this could be your last drink, your last time getting high, your last time you smoke pot? Not everyone things of that maybe that's why it's so popular in high schools because people don't think before they act.

"My kid doing drugs... nooo they would never do that!" Is it that hard for a parent not to know their own son or daughter? Parents just don't know what really goes on in our schools or maybe they just don't want to. It's hard in our schools knowing that maybe a person you went to middle school with has a substance abuse, that's not something that I would like to find out about a friend. For me it's easy to resist doing drugs or alcohol because I listened in health class, I've seen the videos, I've heard the speeches, I've talked to the guest speakers. Some people blow off health class thinking that they over exaggerate about things, my question to them is why would a teacher over exaggerate about something that kills thousands of people a year. I guess what my biggest reason to why I don't want to do drugs or drink is because some one very close to me drinks, it's not like I can just throe this person out of my life because he's family. I don't like coming home to this person who drinks at least 4 beers a day or more, and has been doing this since before I was born. That is my one reason why I don't want to drink or do drugs, ive seen it happen to people I love and no way do I want to end up like them when they are supposed to be a role model.

What is one little girl in high school supposed to do about all the other kids who drink and do drugs? Most people would say nothing it's their choice, but I don't believe that. If I can get one person to stop then they most likely can get another person to stop and that just keeps going. Let's say there is a party someone brings alcohol they tell me to drink some, my response would be why, what's so cool about it, there's nothing special about alcohol, so save it either put the drinks away or I leave, ill see no reason to be your friend when all you do is presser me in to doing something that I don't want to do, that's not what a friend dose. I just hope that before the next time that you're about to put that beer bottle to your lips, about to smoke pot with your friends, when you're about to have that shot of vodka, what ever it is think what if my mother saw me doing this, what if my girlfriend who I didn't tell that I do drugs walks up and sees me, what if my football coach saw. How would that affect you? How would that affect your parents, how about your friends? Well it affects them all the same they feel guilt, they think they where the reason for it, or maybe they will look down on you. So no matter what it will affect your life forever so come on its one little drink it's not going to hurt? Well I know what my response would be do you know yours?

I attend Tualatin High school, drugs and alcohol are things that should not be part of high school but they are. Alcohol and drugs can easily be abused by people using them too much or using them at a young age. By not having parents who set a good example, drinking in moderation and not using drugs, a child may learn that abusing alcohol and drugs are ok.

When things get hard at home high school students may abuse the use of alcohol or the intake of drugs. Being in high school can cause a lot of stress for some students and by not having anywhere to let it out they drink or take drugs thinking that they will help their problems. Not only high school students abuse drugs and alcohol adults can too. After coming home from a hard day at work they drink, making it a habit, to help relieve stress. If high school students who take drugs or drink are aware and may want to stop before they go too far should talk to a teacher or counselor if they aren't able to communicate with a parent\ guardian.

There are many challenging factors that can influence teens decisions to drink or consume drugs. One main challenge for a student at parties would be the peer pressure to take drugs or get drunk like their friends. Another factor could be the powerful influences around students like T.V., books, parents or siblings who aren't responsible in their drug intake or drinking. Depending on where a student is and who they are around can influence their decision.

To resist the influence or take drugs I avoid situations where they will be present. To prevent another student from drinking alcohol I would tell them about Alcohol Anonymous. I would also hang out with them more so they could have a positive influence in their life that could help them when they feel the need to take drugs or drink. If a student felt they were heading down the wrong path I would be there for them to talk to and to offer any assistance they might need. Another step I might take would be to introduce them to their counselor. It is important to help prevent students from taking drugs and drinking alcohol before the age of 21.

Even though many high school students have been taught that too much alcohol and drugs are harmful to their bodies they still take it; hoping it may improve their life, make them popular, or numb any emotional pain they may feel. By hanging out with positive influences (students who don't take drugs and do not drink) and good friends, who are able to get you through your hard times, can improve a student's chances to make the right decision to not drink or use drugs. When you are feeling peer pressure somewhere to take drugs or drink it is a lot easier to stand up for yourself and say no if you have a friend right next to you saying no also.

Tualatin has a pot problem; I'm not going to lie. I suppose that kids think that it will give them some sort of ultimate relaxation. Also, pot doesn't seem as bad as alcohol, or cigarettes, for example. Those just seem stupid, while, to most kids (not including me) think that pot is alright. To them, the idea is quite intriguing: putting something into your system that lets you calm down, and not worry, to them, seems like magic.

I avoid pot because, well, it seems idiotic to me. It is illegal, first and most important. Secondly, it's smoke; it sucks for your lungs. And, over time, it destroys two specific areas of your brain. Granted, they aren't "important," but I enjoy all of my brain, thanks.

The drug that annoys me the most, though, has to be cigarettes. Smoking is revolting. Something that smells that bad cannot taste good. No, it doesn't make you look cool, it makes you look like an idiot. It's dreadful for your lungs; it turns them black like you've been working in the mines. This is easy for me to avoid, because people don't tend to be around things that annoy them. Plus, my lungs are bad enough (asthma) without I add tar-laden smoke. Ew.

I guess for kids, it's the idea of something new that gets them hooked. Curiosity killed the cat, indeed. The important word here? Killed. That cat wasn't simply wounded, it died. Think about that if someone passes you a joint.

Every year, more money is spent promoting the use of alcohol than any other product. Perhaps through its elaborate and creative marketing, the most basic, yet important fact about alcohol is often overlooked "alcohol is a drug" the most commonly used and widely abused psychoactive drug in the world. Kids in High School drink and smoke for many different reasons. They think its cool for them to do it and they think they will get more popular if they do it. A lot of teens are peer pressured into doing drugs and alcohol because people tell them its cool. Some young adults do them because they might have problems at home or with family so they do them to get away from everything. Although alcohol appears to have a distorting influence on the ways in which people perceive their situations, perception is but one part of the overall interaction process. Outcomes of interactions also depend on people's ability to create messages that are effective in helping them reach their goals. Yet, the question of how alcohol influences the ways in which people encode messages to drink. The most challenging factor influencing teens to drink is peer pressure. People always say stuff like "you will be cool if you do it" or "just have a taste and see if you like it" or "their doing it". Drinking is dangerous and can be deadly if you overdose on it. Teens should know what alcohol can do to you. It damages your liver, brain, and heart. You only get one of those so you better treat it well. There are many ways to resist drinking, you can always just say no. If someone is pressuring you to do anything that's not right or good for you, you have the right to resist. You have the right to say no, the right not to

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give a reason why, and the right to just walk away from a situation. If you are at a party and someone asks you to drink you can always say no and walk out. To make another student not drink you can just sit down and have a talk with them and just be like drinking isn't cool why are you thinking of doing it, or you could tell them some facts about it. Friends have a big influence on our lives, but sometimes they push us to do things that we may not want to do. Resisting pressure can be hard for some people because they are afraid of being rejected by others, want to be liked and don't want to lose a friend, don't want to be made fun of, don't want to hurt someone's feelings, aren't sure of what they really want, and don't know how to get out of the situation. You can always stand up for yourself and if your having a hard time do these tips: stand up straight, make eye contact, say how you feel, don't make excuses, and last stick up for yourself.



Every year, alcohol is a factor in 70% of all murders, 65% of all cases of domestic violence, and nearly 50% of all fatal crashes involving young people. Why, then, is it so hard for teens to say no to alcohol when victims of these incidences could so easily be a family member, a friend, or themselves?

I don't know how many videos I've seen at both school and at camp that have touched upon the subject of alcohol. About how dangerous it can be. My classmates and I have seen enough on this subject to turn us away from drugs and alcohol for the rest of our lives.

But then, of course, there's human nature. Some teenagers, like me, have made the decision to stay away from drugs. But what happens when we are the only ones out of a ton of our peers without a beer? Will we want one too? This is called peer pressure, and it plays a huge part in the younger generation's alcohol intake.

There are other reasons why teenagers, and anyone for that matter, drink beer and other forms of alcohol. Remember the phrase, 'curiosity killed the cat'? This is the same situation. Young people are curious about how alcohol tastes...why is beer such a big deal to their parents and family friends? So they take a sip. "Mmmm...interesting. I think I'll have another". So they have another. And another. And another. This is how alcoholism starts. How the murders, and the violence, and the accidents begin. With one sip. Curiosity killed the cat. You'd better hope it didn't take your family and friends too.

Humans need to break this cycle. They need to rise above their own human nature...rid of peer pressure and curiosity when they can't afford to have it. It doesn't matter that it's hard to say no. It doesn't matter that everyone around you is doing it. What matters is how you want to live your life, and what you're willing to do for yourself. The best way to avoid being involved in a tragedy like a murder or a car accident is to completely avoid drinking alcohol, and to stay out of cars with people who have been drinking. Unfortunately, I can't guarantee that alcohol-related accidents will never come into play in your life again. You could be in a car, and get hit by someone who is drunk. Your sister could be drinking, and drive herself off the road. Your friend's father could be murdered by someone under the influence. There is no known way to rid these situations of the world, for as long as alcohol is around, alcohol-related accidents will be too.

So how can we, at least, allow a little comfort for ourselves and those around us? The answer is as simple as you allow it to be. If curiosity killed the cat, how can we save other cats from being killed? We can take precautions. Tell your friends never to get in a car with a drunk driver, never drive while drunk, and watch out for drunk drivers on the road, if you have to be out on the road late at night at all. Don't drink just to get drunk. Don't drink alcohol often, and when drinking, do so in small doses. Maybe, just choose not to drink at all. Just because you say no to a beer does not mean you are not "cool" to your friends. If anything, you will be an inspiration to them; a healthy, smart individual who thinks for themselves.

Who knows? Maybe, just maybe, your friends will stop drinking because of you. Then their friends will follow. And then their friends. On and on it could go until the yearly rate of alcohol-related accidents could go down. With the one word "no", you could save a mother, a father, a daughter or son, a teacher, a student...you could save a life.

## **Substance Abuse**

Drugs and alcohol overshadow and destroy the lives of many, yet people still make the decision to abuse them every day. No matter what people's reasons are for why they make this ruinous decision, there is always a way to avoid and stay free of drugs and alcohol.

No matter where you live, drugs and alcohol are around you. Sadly, many people, including high schoolers, who take drugs know the risks of their actions, yet they ignore the health of themselves and others for personal satisfaction. I think that there are many reasons for why kids in high school take drugs and drink alcohol; one reason is because they fall into the depths of peer pressure and attempt to please others. Many kids know that taking drugs is the wrong thing to do, but they feel that if they resist they are disappointing friends and risking relations with them. Secondly, I think that kids become curious about drugs and alcohol and decide to "try" the drug or drink just once to see what it is like. Over time, that one "try" results in another "try" and then another and slowly the person develops an addiction and there is no looking back from there. It only takes once to become addicted.

Out of all the factors influencing the decision of taking drugs and drinking alcohol, I believe the most challenging factor is fitting in. Many people make the decision to avoid drugs, but many betray their decision due to fear of being criticized and ridiculed. Avoiding drugs has its downsides, but the end result is much more pleasing.

There are an endless amount of ways to avoid drugs and alcohol. In my opinion, one of the best methods to doing this is to become educated about the substances and the effects they can have on you, physically and mentally. Unfortunately, many kids who aren't able to resist the influence have no knowledge about what they are doing to themselves until reality hits them and they feel the real effects. Another great way to stay drug and alcohol free is to surround yourselves by positive people who support and want what is best for you.

In conclusion, drugs and alcohol will only harm you if you allow them to. The choice will always be yours when it comes to drugs and alcohol, the decision you make is up to you.

## Substance Abuse Essay:

Just moving to Tualatin I have not seen a lot of devastating events happen. Although I use to live in Aloha and there were a lot of car crashes caused by alcohol. I can remember when I was in 2nd grade, a guy crashed into my backyard because he was drunk driving.

Now being in high school I am more exposed to alcohol and drugs more than I have been in the past. Almost everyday you can walk down the halls and hear someone talking about a party they have been to. Or you can hear about someone getting high or abusing alcohol.

I think one of the reasons teenagers or high school kids drink is to cover up their feelings.

Another reason is because teens are so stressed with school and their busy lives that they turn to drinking to help relax them. Also because they are surrounded by images and people who influence them that it's okay to get drunk.

Some things I do to prevent drinking or substance abuse is choosing the right friends. By surrounding myself by positive people and good role models I prevent crossing paths with drugs and alcohol.

# Underage Drinking

Underage drinking. It looks like such a thrill; breaking the law and getting a buzz sounds like an amazing package deal. That, of course, is false. Alcohol can be detrimental to anyone's health, even those over twenty-one, but even more so for teenagers'. So why have 75% of teenagers consumed more than a few sips of alcohol before high school is over? I will go into how drinking affects the community, why teenagers can't resist the urge, and some steps to prevent yourself and others from walking down a dangerous path that can lead from drinking to other illegal, illicit substances.

Alcohol has a negative affect on youth, families and adults in communities. Just last night I was in a ballet class and the power went out because a driver that was impaired from alcohol hit a power line. Fortunately, the driver only obtained minor injuries, however the ramifications are very real. What if that had been a young girl and not a power line? It is the sad truth that thousands of people are killed each year due to motor vehicle accidents involving a driver under the influence of alcohol. With every death there is a mourning family and community. The sad part: many of these deaths could have been prevented.

Some might ask, why do high school students drink and do drugs in the first place? Many would reply by saying it is peer pressure, the thought that drinking is a cool thing to do, or just to get drunk and be able to watch their worries disappear. I understand and agree that these are major factors in students choices however I also believe there are many other reasons influencing teens as well. Sure students want to be accepted by peers and if they have friends that drink, they most likely will too. Also, they want to feel like adults. They look up to their older brothers and parents that are drinking and think it must be okay for them to do so as well. A major and challenging factor is the media. Beer commercials boast men surrounded by girls in skimpy clothing, hard liquor commercials involve handsome men with a lady on their arm, and so on. Popular teenage shows like Gossip Girl, 90210, Friday Night Lights, and movies such as Superbad, Coach Carter, and Nick and Norah's Infinite Playlist send the message to viewers that underage drinking is cool and acceptable.

Staying away from drinking can be a task, but it is one worth taking on as it can save your brain, your body, your moral standards, and your life. Before going to a party, grab a friend that doesn't want to drink either. Its easier to stay away from something if you aren't alone in your effort. Just saying "no" is the tried and true way to stay away from alcohol or drugs. As for keeping others away from troubling situations involving drinking, all you can do is talk to them and hope that you get through. If a friend has a drinking problem, you can try an intervention or have someone like a counselor try, but truly, they need to want to stop. You **can** keep them away from the driver's seat of a car. Being supportive and available for a friend trying to stay away from drugs or alcohol is very admirable.

All in all, teenagers are putting themselves and others in danger by drinking and behaving recklessly because of it. Teens need to understand that their drinking does not only affects their lives. Staying away from alcohol allows teens to focus on their goals and to reach for the stars without worrying about alcohol poisoning or getting a DUI. I hope you understand my view on underage drinking better now.

### **Laura Mersereau Essay Contest**

Alcohol is the leading cause of death among young people according to Integrity Business Systems and Solutions. Alcohol has many devastating affects and there are many different reasons teenagers drink. Also there are many steps that can be taken to prevent another student from drinking .

The abuse of drugs and other substances has devastating effects on the people and teenagers. It can affect the people using the substance or their families and friends, and it can harm just about anybody. From my knowledge I would conclude that youth and adolescents take drugs and drink for many different reasons. One of the main reasons would probably be that the students think it will make them cooler or help them fit in with the "in" crowd. Another reason I think that students drink is because they see their parents drinking and getting drunk and they think that its ok and it's the norm so they end up drinking and things escalate to drugs and other substance abuse.

There are several challenging factors that can influence the decision to drink and take drugs. One of the factors could be the regularity of drinking and drug use the person sees at home. Also hardships and depression can lead to alcohol and other substance abuse. If a student faces hardships and has no where to turn I think they can

g.2  
find themselves in a worse situation than before because of what they have done. I think that parents getting divorced can be another cause of substance abuse in teenagers.

Resisting the influence can be hard but is well worth the effort! I usually stay away from places, parties and people I know that are drinking and doing drugs. Also it really helps me to be involved in a sport that I love and want to improve at. To help my peers stay away from drinking and drugs I think that telling them the risks their taking and helping them figure out why they want to and feel the need to drink would also help. Another thing that may help is getting a teacher or other adult/ role model involved if it is necessary. One of the most important things is you can not force someone to stop doing something because they will just do it behind your back or when your not looking. So it has to be someone's choice to stop or not even start at all.

In conclusion alcohol has devastating affects on youth, adults and families. Teenagers have a variety of different reasons to drink and take drugs and an effective way to stay away from drinking and drugs is to get involved in a sport or school activity. Several steps can be taken to help stop and prevent someone from drinking.

## Drugs and Alcohol

Drugs and alcohol have been around for thousands of years and are still affecting Americans today. This shows that most likely drugs and alcohol won't disappear any time soon. I hear of people who do drugs and drink and even know some myself. Not one of these people is glad they do and they regret the decisions they have made.

There are a lot of reasons why people drink, but I think the most reoccurring reason is the influence of others. Of course the biggest influence is from peers because when they drink they try to get you to do it with them. But peers are not the only influence on students today; a lot of influence comes from family or friends of the family. This may be because a student's parents drink and the student wants to be like their parents and they find alcohol in the house.

Another reason someone might drink or do drugs is because they are depressed and just want to forget about everything that's going on in their life. They might think that drugs or alcohol can do this because of what they have heard from others. This could be considered peer pressure too in some ways.

I think the hardest thing to over come is peer pressure because people want to be accepted by others. They feel that if they don't drink or do drugs that they will be rejected. Peer pressure might be the hardest influence to overcome because you are told all the good sides of doing it without being told any of the bad. They also tell you that you won't get caught.

Although it is very hard to do, I know it is possible to not fall to peer pressure. I think the most important way to do this is to just stay true to your self. If you think it is wrong to drink or do drugs, then just keep telling yourself this and it will be easier to say "no". Also, keep reminding yourself of the consequences if you choose to take drugs or drink. If your friends don't accept you anymore just because you refuse to conform, then they don't really want you as a friend.

To prevent someone else from doing drugs or drinking is almost easier than saying no yourself. If they see that you don't think drugs are cool, it will be a lot easier for them to say no too. So I think the most important step is to say no first. I also think it is important to warn them of the consequences of drinking or doing drugs.

If some of your friends are already doing drugs or drinking, it is important to approach them in a similar manner. When trying to prevent someone from using drugs, the first thing you should do is tell them you don't think drugs are cool and that you don't think they should use drugs. If they are trying to convince you to do drugs or drink, it might be a good idea to tell them you're not going to hang out with them if they keep doing drugs. This may work in some situations, but sometimes it might just make them mad. If they still continue to do drugs, it might actually be a good idea to drift away because they may eventually influence you to do drugs too.

## Laura Mersereau Essay Contest

Driving under the influence? I'd like to be the responsible one, thanks. Though I'm not saying I won't drink at parties when I'm older, I would like to take it easy and be aware of my surroundings. The biggest reason for why teenagers abuse drugs and alcohol? Not spending enough time with their family; for example: family dinners.

Living in Tualatin, going to Tualatin High School, I know of many people who took the path leading to getting 'acquainted' with drugs and alcohol. They might do this because of emotional problems (divorced parents), psychiatric difficulties, or just for the sheer fun of it. But I can tell you that the biggest reason of all is that they don't have the designated 'dinner time' with the whole family.

In the media, television and papers both, it states that families who don't sit down at a dinner table accumulate more problems among the teenagers such as drinking and using drugs. I am not, however, afflicted with this problem. My family and I sit down to dinner almost every night and just talk. Our conversations can range from college plans to who-likes-who. Talking is key. It's amazing to know that someone is there to talk to and to support you in getting through tough situations and making the correct decisions. One family, a family mine has known for years, I am pinpointing specifically because of their story. The son, about age eighteen, was telling us about how they normally have dinner. I can assure you that sitting down together did not occur. This family just took their dishes into different rooms and ate at different times during the evening. Their specific situation sets up for lack of communication between everyone, and problems with misunderstanding. Yes, that did happen. The kids got in more fights with the parents and visa versa. The son started rebelling against his parents, and that soon lead to substance abuse. Since the family never really talked, they didn't know what was going on with their son and therefore could not help.

Divorce. Divorce bestows the tendency to be frightfully challenging in the aspect of dining together. Families get torn apart, and dinner conversations may cease to exist. Though I know divorces may turn out for the better, for the most part I do not believe that. Divorces really hurt kids and I can see that through eyes of my friends who have divorced parents. Divorces take away from the whole family being together and the whole family discussing things together. Kids get upset from this, and that is another reason for the use of drugs and alcohol. They could possibly be stating through the use that they hate their parents for getting divorced and splitting up the family.

I resist the use of drugs and alcohol by making conversation with my family and not weakening to the depths of peer pressure, which brings me to the next undeniable topic in why high school students drink and use drugs. Peer pressure can be extremely difficult to surpass; especially in young adults. Getting bribed, or making bets with friends are probably two of the biggest factors as to why teenagers abuse substances. You mostly see males betting with alcohol and drugs. They bet on who can drink more and/or smoke more in said amount of time. In my opinion, females party more with alcohol, and take less drugs. Except for some pills having to do with bulimia. Silent peer pressure is everywhere. A girl might see someone else, and she would doubt her looks because she isn't as thin as that other girl. The hardest two-letter word to say is 'no'. It can change so much if you do say it when getting asked a question about taking drugs and drinking. Some people don't like being made fun of, and that is why they give in and say yes, when they know the answer they should have stated was simply 'no'.

Concluding all three topics, I believe that dinner table conversations are at the top of the list. They can be the base to every strong family in that conversations are held and communication is present. Next comes the divorce of parents. It can lead to having emotional and physical defects on the children involved. Communication may get lost because you don't see each parent every day. Peer pressure really does affect young adults. If your best friend was



smoking pot in the corner, wouldn't you want to be there with them? Possibly smoking too..?  
Exactly. You feel obliged to because you know he/she would do the same thing with you. So  
have dinner. But don't just have 'dinner' where you find something random to eat in the fridge.  
Sit down and talk with the other members of your family. Have a *dinner* where you talk with  
your family, sitting down, at the kitchen table; communicating, but with all phones and other  
electronics away. It doesn't matter what your family talks about, just include everyone! I love my  
dinner table conversations with my family because we talk about the most random things, but  
also talk about the most interesting aspects of our lives. Eat, talk; enjoy this time you have with  
your family.

## The Effects of Alcohol and Drugs on Our World

Many people know that alcohol is harmful if you drink too much of it. They know that drugs are supposedly “bad”, but they don’t know why. These people do not have any problem sticking substances such as drugs and alcohol in their mouth, because they do not know the consequences. They are unaware of the effects that alcohol has on our world.

Alcohol doesn’t just affect the person who is under the influence of it, it affects the friends and family of that person, and even the everyday people that just cross paths with that person. A person affected by alcohol directly affects the children of that person and the children could even be taken away from that person. Think of a small town where everyone knows everybody. Let’s say that a person got in a car crash, received a DUI, and killed a child in the car that that person ran into. Not only would that person have to live with that fact for the rest of their life, but the family of that child would be devastated. The whole town would be notified and nothing would ever be the same for that person, and the town, again.

Substance abuse and alcohol tears families apart. A family has enough problems to deal with without even introducing drugs and alcohol onto the scene. Many parents and teens use alcohol to calm themselves after a hard day, but alcohol never really solves the problem. Drugs and alcohol are problems unnecessary to our world. We really don’t need the extra complications.

Teen drinking and substance abuse is a problem everywhere. Many teens feel the need to be cool and to follow peer pressure. Studies show that teens who have friends that are drinking are more likely to start drinking themselves. There are also many high school television shows that highlight drinking as a main part of an average teenager’s life. I know for a fact that although this may be true in some places, most teens are not drinking. If you take the right steps it is easy to resist drinking or drugs. The first step to resisting alcohol and drugs is to make sure that you are spending time with the right people. Real friends are people who do not pressure you into doing things you don’t want to do, and who really care about you. It is much easier to stand up if you have someone else standing up right next to you. The next step is to try not to put yourself into situations where alcohol and drugs will be present. If you know that there will be alcohol at the party, then you should not go. It is better to always trust your gut, and to never let others make you feel uncomfortable.

The best way to prevent a student from using alcohol and drugs is to inform them. If a person knows the consequences before hand, then that person is less likely to commit the act if the consequences are negative. Many people do not do drugs because they know that drugs will harm their body and that drugs and alcohol will prevent them from doing things they normally would do. The education programs at our schools are great because they scare the students into refusing drugs. Before people knew that drugs were harmful, many more people used to use them. Now that we know that smoking causes lung cancer, so many less people smoke.

In conclusion, even though drugs and alcohol are present in our world, you take the right steps to refuse drugs. Teens should know that even though many celebrities use drugs and alcohol, they are not safe and cause your body a lot of harm.

Most people wake up in the morning and plan on having a good day, but for some that doesn't happen and that's when some of them turn to drugs and alcohol. They use those substances for a place to escape and get away from the dilemmas and stresses of everyday. There are many reasons for a person to start drinking or doing drugs; just everyday problems can trigger a person to start using.

Alcoholism and addiction effects everyone you know, and sometimes people you don't know. It hurts the people who love you, to know that you're so unhappy that you've turned to a substance to get away. Your actions while on the substance can crucially effect strangers as well. Most crimes including murder, rape, and robbery are committed while under the influence of a drug or alcohol.

High school is a time where most people experiment different things, which include drugs and alcohol. That age of fourteen to eighteen is a vulnerable stage, where people may subside to peer pressure. Teens also may take drugs and drink because of stress from the home. If their parents drink there is a better chance of the child drink. And since the recent stock market and economy crash, many businesses were forced to lay off employees. Which made the unemployment rate go up, which makes the stress of everyone go up, that could make some people drink or use drugs. Something that influences peoples decision to participate in drinking and drugs are the decision of others, also known as peer pressure as I mentioned earlier. If every one is doing something you are more likely to do it to.

Resisting drinking and doing drugs is a challenge everyday for some people. I stay away from them by thinking about how I would be effecting others. Like if I started drinking and got addicted and my result was death, I know my family would be so disappointed in me and would feel so much pain. And that's not what I want for the people I love. I could stop others from drinking by just reminding them of the result, and how it could effect their future. In summation drinking and drug abuse is a serious problem that exists within our community; it can effect everyone in some ways.

## **Think About It!**

**Crash! Boom! Bam! Ambulance sirens are going off. What just happened! All you remember were pretty colors. When really you hung out with some friends got high or got drunk, and thought you could drive safely back home. It's strange to hear people say "it's fun to get drunk!" when there really there saying "it's fun to kill myself." This whole accident started by taking that first sip, or per pressure, or maybe a family habit. All I got to say about that is you have a choice. You chose to take that sip, you chose to get into per pressure, and you chose to get in the family habit. You can say NO!**

**Student in high school are probably drinking or taking drugs right now, that I'm sorry to say is a fact. There are so many accidents caused because of this. A lot of the times they don't know that alcoholism or a drug addiction is not curable. The only thing you could do about them is take classes. Why do I think they take drugs or dink alcohol, to tell you the truth I don't have the slides idea why they would go out and practically kill themselves. What I can tell you is from what I have heard in the past. People always say because I'm upset, I was divorced, my friend, mom, dad, pet died, it feels good, makes me feel happy inside. But the one thing they won't say, " I'm audited". I bet many people do say they are audited, but they don't do anything about it.**

**What is the hardest part of making this decision? Well for me there was no hard part to make this decision. I really don't know the reasons that high school students are audited to drugs and alcohol. I just know that if you do it more then once your hooked. I think there should never be a first time at all. That first time could kill you. My 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher had this best friend good condition, played sports, had all A's, and popular. Then one day a group of his friends said let's try some drugs after school. To bad that he didn't know that would be the last day of school for him. For that bit of drugs he had for the first time he was gone. My old teacher told us this story and made me think real hard do I want to take that first try?**

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**How do I resist not taking drugs or alcohol? Well for me that is real simple my parents would kill me! No that's not the real reason but one of them. The reason is that I don't want to take that first chance to try to kill myself. I mean what is so fun about alcohol or drugs really; ok if I take drugs and get caught I go to jail. If I drink under age I go to jail. Ummmm.... Jail or Jail these are the questions that haunt me. No but really do I want to make jail my decision in life?**

**In Conclusion I would like you to ask yourself these questions. Do I want to go to jail? Do I want to be killing myself in the process? Do I want to ruin the rest of my life? Think about that first time of having that alcohol bottle or drug in your hand. Now think about the future, would you like to go there? These are the questions I can't answer for you. You must ask yourself. Would I like the future that I have created by taking this drug, or by drinking this bottle?**