

In 2006, the National Survey on Drug Use and Health conducted a survey to be filled out by high school students. It concluded that 26% of teenagers aged 12- 20 drank routinely. Of that 26%, 19% admitted that they binge drank. The next year, 2007, the National Survey on Drug Use and Health put out another survey, that concluded 45% had drunk some amount of alcohol, 26% had done binge drinking.

In the same 2007 survey, conducted by The National Survey on Drug Use and Health, it concluded that 11% of high school students admitted that they had driven after they had been drinking, and 29% admitted to riding in a vehicle with a driver who had been drinking.

In November of 2007, two well known West Linn teenagers got into a car accident, near Klamath Falls. They had collided head on with a semi-truck. Neither of the teens survived. The cause of the accident was not because they were drunk driving, but because they were going the wrong direction in the opposite lane as a semi- truck was coming towards them. The teenage driver corrected their car, but at the same time, the semi driver moved himself into the same lane as the teenagers. The two cars collided head on, leaving the semi driver with minor injuries, and the two teenagers dead. Both teenagers left behind their families and jobs at Mary's Woods Retirement Center.

This tragedy left the city of West Linn in shock. My family wasn't very close to either of their families, although I had been friends with the younger brother of one of the teenagers.

Since this event happened the winter of 2007; it will be almost one year to the

date when this essay is read. To the surprise of many people in the city, a lot of the teenagers at West Linn High School, Rosemont Ridge Middle School and Athey Creek Middle School, still decide to drink and abuse other dangerous substances.

Part of the reason most teenagers start drinking and experimenting with drugs, is because they fall into peer pressure. In middle school and high school there are many stresses and a lot of pressure to fit in. Teens don't want to be "the odd one out" at the party because they won't drink or take drugs like the other kids there. Many of the teenagers I know of, that drink or do drugs, were either influenced by their older siblings, an older person they look up to (their role model), or get high and drunk because it has a numbing effect on their pain. When asked the question "Why did you start drinking and doing drugs?" I have been told by teenagers it is because they didn't have a very good life while growing up.

Most of the teenagers who try drugs or alcohol either get addicted, or they try it and that's the end of their use. Their first time was also their last time.

Personally, I have chosen to not take drugs or drink, because I have seen first hand what problems they can cause in life. I have left friends who experimented with substances, because they were careless, and didn't think of the consequences. Many of the people who I grew up with and thought would end up being my true friends in life, have either gone down the path of drinking or trying every known substance to get high, whether illegal or not. I have been in fights with most of these people because I have told them the words that I knew they wouldn't want to hear, but that they needed to hear:

“(Name of person), I care about you a lot and I wouldn’t ever want anything to happen to you, because I would feel guilty. I truly love and respect you, and I want you to know how important this is to me. I don’t really have a problem with you doing drugs (or drinking), except that if you decide that is what you want to do, you will no longer be able to be a part of my life. I’m not telling you what you should and should not do, I am telling you that if you do choose to participate in those activities, I will not be able to be around you.”

If someone was trying to get their friend to not experiment with dangerous substances or if they were trying to tell someone that it wasn’t a good idea for them to take drugs or drink alcohol, they should tell that person what they really think. Be honest and open with that person, and don’t lie to them and make up stories just because they can’t think of something to say. It is not an easy thing to do, but in the end it will end up being the right thing to do, and you could possibly end up saving someone’s life.

In saying what I have said to people I care about, I have gained friends and lost some as well, but also in doing this, I have learned a little bit about myself and who I am. I choose to not be around people who do these kinds of things, because that is not the kind of person I am, and I don’t want to send the wrong message to people who don’t even know me. I think if anybody is willing to let their feelings be voiced people will listen to what they have to say.