

Personal Integrity – Drug and Alcohol Refusal Skills

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I believe the initial motivation for high school drug or alcohol experimentation is go-along to get-along peer pressure. There are three affected high school age groups: those who are contemplating potentially addictive substances consumption, those who are presently consuming, and those who are already abusing. The drug and alcohol challenge present on today's high school and college campuses is cataclysmic. Joseph A. Califano Jr in his book, *High Society*, suggests that up to 25 % of our nation's college population is either abusing addictive substances or already considered clinically addicted.

I believe the primary reason for continued drug or alcohol use is escape. It feels good to temporarily alter one's brain chemistry, especially in an accepting environment in which drinking and drugging are encouraged. Thoreau was correct when he said, "The mass of men live lives of quiet desperation." The addictive lifestyle offers a temporary oasis. It is difficult to say "No thanks" to the offer of escape, and yet that is what must be done. Kipling in his poem "If" suggest another way, "If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs, and blaming it on you." I am passionately engaged in my life-path goals so I must in good conscience resist all offers of drugs and/or alcohol. It isn't easy but honoring my mind, body, and spirit makes me feel congruent. By modeling a drug- and alcohol-free lifestyle, I can help others to do the same.

What is my plan and what do I bring to the party? If I can consistently answer these questions by words and deeds, there is no need for escape. I am too committed to my college and eventual music career goals to sacrifice any short-term gratification from any potentially addictive substance. I try to educate myself about any area which could steer me off course. I have a genetic predisposition to physically addicting substances, so experimentation would not be wise. I navigate securely by expressing my thoughts and feelings in real time. Journaling daily all matters of importance and consistently reviewing my short-term and long-term objectives helps. It is as necessary as physical exercise and breathing. I am an affirming action-oriented person and surround myself with like-minded individuals. Mutually supporting friends' passionate aspirations is a must.

There are concrete drug and/or alcohol refusal skills which reduce my inclination to participate with the crowd. I may reject the offer for convivial drinking or drugging behavior, but I never reject the person. When asked, sometimes the best approach is to simply suggest another activity. I have also been known to simply say, "Thanks, but no thanks ... that doesn't work for me." I lead by example and feel good about this approach. Mindfulness and consistency are essential components in my drug- and alcohol-free lifestyle. Participation offers will continue as will my polite refusals. My life is too precious a gift to expect any less from myself.

I believe high school students initially experiment with drugs or alcohol because the mantra is "It's ok – everybody's doing it!" The pressure to be liked is overwhelming. It's hard to resist. Drugs and/or alcohol can grab the mind and body into a downward addictive spiral, so a proactive resistance plan is essential. Mine works quite splendidly. I honor my mind, body, and spirit and live as God would have me, honoring the two Great Commandments. That is my plan, and that is what I bring to the party.