

Affection as Prevention

The media today is influencing most high school students in negative ways. The idea of being “cool” in society is what draws students to participate in the negative activities that the media presents. Drugs and alcohol in the media act as the components in which high school students can fulfill the need to be cool. Some students, although aware of the consequences, still choose to partake in using drugs and alcohol. Both our psychology and our environment are to blame.

High school students are crossing the boundary from childhood to adulthood and often feel the need to branch off from their parents. The desire to become an adult and be an independent plays a huge role in the choices of teenagers. Any person whether a former teenager or a current teenager can somewhat understand the pressures that their parents present. As a result in needing to escape from parental grasps, teenagers often find comfort with their friends. Teenagers rely on their friends for support and often use each other as role models. Thinking back to the idea of longing for adulthood and independence, teenagers will often participate in activities deemed to be for adults; drugs and alcohol are very common options.

Sometimes the need to be an adult isn't always the case. In many circumstances, drug and alcohol use is caused by the very environment in which a high school student exists. Students, for example, growing up in families dealing with marital problems, violence, or even drugs, will lack the family support that all teenagers need. As a result, many teenagers in these highly

dysfunctional families will resort to drugs and alcohol to cope and forget about their problems.

The students of today, as they develop, are dealing with many factors that influence the choices they make. The factors could be psychological or environmental. Nonetheless, it is important to address our teenagers and give them emotional support because both psychology and environment ultimately play a toll on emotions.

Humans in general need other humans; it's that simple. Teenagers undergoing physical and mental changes especially feel the need for human companionship. This longing for human affection is the ultimate factor that influences a teenager's choice to use drugs and alcohol. If the need to belong with others is not met, teenagers will resort to drugs to cope with the feeling of rejection, or teenagers will use drugs as a way to be cool and hopefully attract friendship.

As children, teenagers rely on mainly family support. However, if the family is highly dysfunctional, the child will grow up into a teenager with a feeling of detachment. The dysfunctional family scenario presents itself as a common lack of human affection in our society. So what do teenagers do when they have not received the feeling of affection within their families? Teenagers will then rely on their friends for friendship.

When teenagers attempt to find fulfillment in their friends, they can either feel the joy of companionship, or feel the pain of loneliness. If teenagers truly do find companionship, their likelihood of resorting to drugs and alcohol lessen. However, teenagers will want to keep this closeness and often feel that if their friends are doing drugs and alcohol, they need to participate as well in order to be cool and keep the friendship running. There are also teenagers who attempt to find camaraderie outside of family boundaries, but are unsuccessful. If teenagers cannot find closeness in their family or belonging through friends, then the only option they believe they have is to use drugs and alcohol to simply forget about their desires; their life.

Personally, I resist drugs and alcohol by envisioning my life as a goal. I want to be able to know that I am in control of my mind, not the drug. I want to be a successful individual. Most of all, I want my life to be about the people that I love and not about getting high or wasted. Life is already a difficult journey, so why make it any harder?

Human affection is what we all strive to receive. In order to prevent another student from using drugs and alcohol, I would first befriend the person and create a strong bond. Making the person feel that they have a close connection is the principle in preventing drug use. Secondly, I myself will have to be a positive role model for my friend and abstain from drugs and alcohol. With these two steps, I could hopefully prevent a student from using alcohol and drugs. However, if my friend still feels the need for drugs and alcohol use, I will educate my friend on the consequences of drug use, and talk about the future he wants to envision just as I have.

The goal is love; once you can show love, the need for drugs and alcohol use will cease to exist. Our world could use a little dose of love; let us taste and see the powerful effects that love can offer.