

Drugs and alcohol

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“Paris Hilton arrested for DUI.” “Lindsay Lohan in rehab.” “Britney Spears loses custody of kids because of drugs.” These are all familiar headlines on newspapers, television, and the Internet. Even more so, these cases are not only limited to these three women. In fact, they are fairly common among young Hollywood stars. Often times, young men and women in the spotlight are heroic figures for young people in America. We are dazed by their stardom, beauty, and luxurious lifestyle. In addition, most of these Hollywood stars reach their fame at extraordinarily young ages. Therefore, they are prime examples for young people all over the country. However, these sweet young stars often get caught up in the Hollywood party scene and get involved in drugs and alcohol. Because our culture places so much emphasis on these kids in the spotlight, teenagers all over the world follow their examples and give in to the same temptations. Throughout the years, teenage drug and alcohol abuse rates have skyrocketed. Personally, I believe our culture is the reason for it.

Drugs and alcohol are often considered “cool,” partly because our so loved Hollywood stars use them. The majority of teens in our country desire to be popular at their high schools and thus are often pressured to experiment with various drugs and alcohol so they would be considered part of the in crowd. It seems silly, but high school is actually a vicious environment. It’s a struggle everyday to be noticed or to be accepted. Teens often seek approval from their peers and thus even resort to drinking or using drugs to be cool.

In addition, teens these days deal with so much pressure that they turn to drugs or alcohol for relaxation. Nowadays, teens have so much pressure in education, athletics, familial issues, and reality. For example, a lot of teens feel as if they have to live up to their parents’ expectations or society’s expectations, and thus put so much pressure on themselves to do well.

In addition, many teens have been abused, raped, or hurt. Society has pulled teens by so many different strings to choose this or decide that concerning moral issues, like gays/lesbians or abstinence. In reality, teenage years are the hardest years of life, as teenagers are not children, but aren't adults either. They're torn between two worlds—a world of innocence and a world of problems. Therefore, teens often turn to drugs or alcohol as an escape from all the pressure.

It's part of our culture now. Drugs and alcohol are considered normal. According to a survey conducted by the centers for disease control, 81% of students have had more than one drink of alcohol during their lifetime. Even more so, 31.5% of students have had more than five drinks on more than one occasion during the thirty preceding days of the survey. Furthermore, the survey shows that 47.2% of students have used marijuana during their lifetime. 30.2% of students have been offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property during the 12 months preceding the survey (www.adolescent-substance-abuse.com). This just goes to show how accessible these illegal substances are to the children of America. Drugs and alcohol are considered a normal part of life for teens. Evidently, four out of five high school students have tried alcohol and nearly one out of two high school students have smoked marijuana. Evidently, American teenagers endanger their bodies and their minds by being in school!

Alcohol abuse causes over 100,000 deaths in the United States and Canada each year (www.peacehealth.org). Alcohol is a factor in more than half of the country's homicides, suicides, and traffic accidents. Alcohol abuse also plays a role in many social and domestic problems, from job absenteeism and crimes against property to spousal and child abuse. Alcoholism can lead to a number of physical ailments, including hypoglycemia, high blood pressure, brain and heart damage, end-stage liver damage, enlarged blood vessels in the skin, chronic gastritis, and pancreatitis (www.webmd.com). Alcoholism also elevates the risk of

cancer of the larynx, esophagus, liver, breast, stomach, pancreas and upper gastrointestinal tract. In addition, alcohol problems can result in personality changes and blackouts. People with alcohol problems often have family, school, or work problems or get in trouble with the law because of drinking. Drugs also cause countless deaths all over the nation. Drug addiction can also lead to personality changes and rage. People addicted to drugs or alcohol would often do anything to get their hands on it. Not only do addiction victims endanger their lives, but they also sacrifice their dreams and ambitions for the temporary high.

Obviously, alcohol is extremely harmful to our bodies and with abuse, can be harmful to those around us as well. Therefore, in order to protect the people of our country, the government must discourage the abuse of alcohol, especially among our young people. Adults of this generation should aim to raise respectable, intelligent, and dignified children. As of now, the government educates teens about the dangers of drug and alcohol addiction in school. Students learn about the forms of these substances and the dangers as well. They are constantly reminded to “say no to drugs.” However, lectures evidently are not enough to keep teenagers from these harmful addictions as a large number of students are given access to drugs on their very own school campus. In addition, the government has paid advertisements on televisions to convince teenagers to say no to drugs. These advertisements use various subjects that teens value such as athletics, family, friends, and arts to relate to all the teenagers in America. As a result, these commercials seem more personal to each teenager and thus can be effective. Personally, the commercials that show one person’s life and describes their anti-drug (a person, activity, or event unique to each person that keeps one from doing drugs) really encourages me to stay away from drugs. Each commercial challenges viewers to find their anti-drug. For me, it’s running. Running cross-country and track is so important to me. Through these sports, I’ve sharpened my

character and have grown so much in my relationship with God. To me, running is not just a sport. It's part of who I am. I train, eat, and sleep so that my body would be in tip-top shape for races. Therefore, I would never risk my health for drugs or alcohol. Running is my anti-drug. Similarly, teens all over the country have discovered their anti-drug and have used it as a reason to say no to drugs. Finding an anti-drug makes it easier to say no. This is because if one were to experiment with drugs, then whatever their anti-drug is would be sacrificed.

The use of media to keep kids away from drugs and alcohol was a smart tactic. Usually, our media today is flooded with stories and rumors of Hollywood stars abusing drugs or alcohol. Therefore, if that is all teens saw on the television, then they would be even more pressured to follow in the stars' footsteps. However, if given a contrasting view, teens would be able to challenge themselves and make a better decision.

The government can only do so much in preventing teenagers from experimenting with drugs and alcohol. Therefore, prevention actually starts in the home. A good relationship with parents can actually discourage teens from using drugs. This is because parents become their anti-drug. Teens would not want to disappoint their parents. Also, they would not want to jeopardize their relationship with their parents. In addition, if parents maintain a trusting relationship with their teen, then their teen could come talk to them when faced with the pressures of society to drink or try drugs. Therefore, parents would be able to better educate their child about the dangers of drugs and alcohol. Parents would also act as a reason not to experiment with a dangerous lifestyle, when it seems that everything else is encouraging it. This would force teenagers to actually consider what is right and wrong. With a better relationship, parents would be able to better guide their teen in making the right decisions because their child would actually trust their judgment.

In addition, parents must raise their children against drugs and alcohol from a young age. Parents should talk about the dangers of drugs and alcohol even when their child is in elementary school. It must be something so ingrained in their minds that saying no to drugs becomes like second nature. If parents made it a priority to prevent drugs and alcohol, then teens would be better prepared to refrain from such things. Even when they were pressured to experiment with it, they would say no because they were raised to believe such substances were just “dumb” to use. There wouldn’t be any appeal in trying drugs and alcohol. Therefore, despite the pressures of society, teenagers would refrain from using these so-called “stress relievers.”

In a Christian household, parents must teach their children the importance of keeping our bodies pure. 1 Corinthians 6:19 says, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own.” Parents must teach their children that our bodies belong to God, and we should keep them as pure as we can. This doesn’t mean that we will never sin. We are sinners. However, we also are given free will. It is our choice to sin. We should abstain from abusing God’s grace and forgiveness. It is important that Christians don’t purposely sin, simply because we know that God will forgive us anyway. Instead, we need to mature into men and women that can follow after God’s own heart. Parents must teach their children to fight temptation. In 1 Corinthians 10:13, Paul goes on to say “no temptation has seized you except what is common to man and God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.” It is important that parents raise their children to fight temptations. No matter how strong the temptation is, if a child has grown up as a Christian and asks God for strength to withhold their temptation, then they are more likely to abstain from giving in to the temptations.

In conclusion, because of our culture, drugs and alcohol are an ever-present temptation for teenagers all over the country. Over the recent years, teens have struggled with addictions that can be prevented in the home. Therefore, it is important that parents know prevention starts in the home. Even if the statistics say that over fifty-percent of teens would experiment with either drugs or alcohol, it doesn't have to stay that way. Parents can make a difference if they only take the time to have a trusting relationship with their teen so that they can better coach them in life's decisions.

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