Had Enough

Published in partnership with devozine and the United Methodist Special Program on Substance Abuse and Related Violence.
A DEVOTIONAL RESOURCE WITH REFLECTIONS ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND VIOLENCE CONCERNS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Had Enough

with devozine Devotions
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Special thanks to:
devozine (www.devozine.org)
General Board of Global Ministries Communications Team
Kelly Quiñones Miller and Chad Bumgardner
How to Use This Book

This book is a collection of devotions and other resources by and for young United Methodists and others. Its purpose is to provide inspiration and a Christian reference for young people on the subject of substance abuse and related violence and their prevention.

• Sunday school teachers and small group leaders can use this book to highlight scripture that pertains to young people’s choices and how these choices affect them in mind, body, and spirit.

• Youth leaders and parents can use this book to open discussions with teens about the role faith can play in the choices they make related to substance use or abuse.

• Young people can use this book for personal devotional time and for encouragement to resist the use of alcohol and other drugs.

We hope this book will inspire and motivate young United Methodists and others to obtain knowledge about substance abuse and related violence, to resist social pressures, and make healthy decisions for themselves when faced with peer pressure and temptation.

HadEnough’s Core Message for Youth

Most young people do not use tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs. You decide what is cool as much as anyone else does. Being drug-free is cool. Most of the people you look up to don’t do drugs.

There are negative consequences to drug use. Drugs can mess up your life in ways you never imagined. They can make you lose control, harm your relationships with family and friends, damage educational and career achievements, and even permanently alter your appearance. Worse, drugs can kill you.

You have resistance skills that are stronger than social pressure. Refusing to do drugs doesn’t make you foolish or “uncool.”

A drug-free lifestyle has clear and positive benefits. Not using drugs gives you the power to shape your identity, achieve your dreams and goals, stay healthy, and earn the respect of peers and adults.
HadEnough's Core Message for Adults

Illegal drugs, misused prescription medications, alcohol, and tobacco are harmful. Alcohol and tobacco are indeed drugs that limit both teens’ and adults’ ability to function appropriately. Prescription drug abuse is on the rise and can lead to health problems, including addiction. Illegal drugs, like marijuana, cocaine, inhalants, and club drugs, can negatively affect every area of one’s life.

Your child is at risk too. Every child is at risk for trying or using drugs, even children from “good” families.

Young people often rebel against authority, but they also see and hear. Your words and actions matter when it comes to keeping teens drug-free, even when you think they’re not listening or paying attention to you.

Parenting is a tough job, but parents can enhance their skills. Simple parenting techniques—such as establishing and enforcing clear rules, praising and rewarding desirable behavior, and staying involved in teenagers’ daily lives—help deter drug abuse.

You do not have to be a professional counselor or experienced teacher or clergy member to build meaningful relationships with youth. You just have to care about them, be honest with them, and listen to them.

Adapted from the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign. www.mediacampaign.org
History

The United Methodist Church and its predecessor denominations have been working on substance abuse issues in a variety of ways since the 18th century. In the 20th century, the United Methodist General Conference established a general church initiative in 1992, entitled the Special Program on Substance Abuse and Related Violence (SPSARV). The General Board of Global Ministries submitted a proposal initiated through efforts of the United Methodist episcopacy and fostered by the General Board of Church and Society. The proposal called for The United Methodist Church to respond to the global crisis “in a cooperative effort,” gathering leadership from across the church.

Reaffirmed as an ongoing initiative at the 1996, 2000, 2004, and 2008 General Conferences, SPSARV’s outreach has grown, providing training, models, financial assistance, and encouragement to United Methodists throughout the United States, Europe, and Africa. SPSARV envisions helping all levels of The United Methodist Church honor its commitment to the journey of hope, healing, and wholeness.

The HadEnough Movement is young people’s component of SPSARV. In December 1997, the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), in Washington, DC, initiated the project in partnership with Cornell University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, focusing on supporting student involvement to reduce binge drinking on college campuses. CSPI turned the movement over to The United Methodist Church in 2003, and the HadEnough movement now supports young people from middle school to early adulthood in making healthy decisions against alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

Rather than focus on influencing individual behaviors or perceptions, the HadEnough movement seeks to empower young people to engage in dialogue on the role of alcohol and other drugs in the social lives of youth and young adults and to support practices and policies that reject and discourage the self-destructive, wasteful, and dangerous abuse of substances.

devozine is a devotional lifestyle magazine designed just for youth and published by The Upper Room in Nashville, Tennessee. It is written by teenagers and by adults who work with and care about teens.

The magazine was started in 1996 after a small group of teens in South Dakota challenged the church to come up with a magazine “just for them.”

devazine’s purpose is to help youth 14-19 years old develop a lifelong practice of spending time with God and of reflecting on what God is doing in their lives. Each issue of the bi-monthly, 64-page, full-color magazine focuses on nine themes, one for each week. Each theme includes weekday meditations and a feature article for the weekend. Meditations may be read in chronological or random order.

The vision for devozine has always included a worldwide community of teens encouraging and challenging each other. The magazine and related website — www.devozine.org — each provide a place for young people to share their faith stories and to listen to the voices of their peers.
HadEnough’s Goals

- To increase awareness of the harmful effects of substance abuse and related violence on individuals and communities

- To improve the quality of life of young people by redefining the role of alcohol and other drugs in young lives, and to create a youth culture that is supportive of growth, fun, and achievement

- To decrease tolerance, acceptance, and accommodation of substance abuse and related behaviors that inconvenience, bother, or injure others

- To build support for policies and programs that can reduce substance abuse and related problems

For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light.
Ephesians 5:8 (NRSV)
Had Enough's Goals

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[CALLOUT:]

For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light. Ephesians 5:8 (NRSV)
GROWING UP WITH ADDICTION

Christina Dotson (North Fairfield, Ohio)

I grew up with a father who was an alcoholic and a drug addict. In an attempt to come to terms with his addiction, I went through many different emotional phases.

As a child, I refused to believe that my father had a problem. When friends heard rumors, I told them that Dad used to drink, but he didn’t anymore. “It’s all in the past,” I said, even though I saw it every day.

During my preteen years, I cried a lot. My heart broke whenever my father came home impaired. I loved my dad, and I was sad because he didn’t love me enough to quit.

As a teenager, I chose anger. I hated my father. I hated him for everything he had done to my family—and for everything he hadn’t done. He was a lousy father, and I wanted him out of my life.

Eventually, I discovered that, by letting my father’s problems dictate my feelings, I was as trapped by his addiction as he was. It took time; but with God’s help, I learned to separate my emotions from my father’s actions. In doing so, I formed a closer relationship with the One who had been with me through all the phases of my life.

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**Ask for Help:** Do you feel trapped by an addiction—either your own or someone else’s?

- Seek professional help.
- Pray and ask the Lord to set you free.

*From devozine (July/Aug 2007).* www.devozine.org
BREACHING THE WALL
Melinda Williams (Box Elder, South Dakota)

I have built walls to hold you out,
   keep me in,
   protect myself.
I have placed defenses stone by stone,
unknowingly creating boundaries
   that trap me,
   imprison me,
   block new growth.
Yet if I could see outside,
there you would be still,
   holding fast
   and climbing with steady progress,
striving to break through the walls,
bringing the beauty of grace
   and the courage to live
   that comes from persistent love.
You never give up.
You bring glorious life colors
   even to the stones I’ve piled high.
My soul is filled with awe
   at your perseverance,
and the wall starts to fall.

Reflect: What walls have you built around yourself?
How have they trapped you? When has God’s stubborn love broken through and given you courage to tear down the walls?

From devozine (July/Aug 2007). www.devozine.org
OBSESSED
Zack Baldwin, 18 (Schoharie, New York)

When people think of addiction, most of them think of alcohol, drugs, or pornography. I, however, developed an overwhelming addiction to a person.

As a seventeen-year-old guy, the idea of having a girlfriend was constantly on my mind. I had a close relationship with a girl; she was the perfect friend. But my feelings for her grew, and she became more to me than an awesome friend who happened to be a girl. Unfortunately, I let myself cross the line from being a good friend to being obsessed with her. I pushed aside all of my guy friends, and I lost interest in everything else—from school, to sleep, to God.

When she rejected my new feelings, I was forced to admit the addiction that was engulfing my life. At first, I was crushed. I didn't know who to blame or what to do. Then a Bible verse I had posted in my room opened my eyes.

Proverbs 18:24b (NIV) says, “There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” I realized that, in my mind, I had substituted the girl's name for the word friend in that verse instead of substituting God's name. In a time when God wasn't getting my undivided attention, looking to God and remembering that God "sticks closer than a brother" gave me strength to overcome my addiction.

Focus Your Attention: God, remind us that no one but you requires our undivided attention. Amen.

I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13 (NRSV)

From devozine (July/Aug 2007). www.devozine.org
WITH GOD’S HELP

*Sudha Khristmukti (Gujarat, India)*

It began as a small temptation, an experiment with friends. Mona thought there would be no harm in smoking pot once or twice. Then it became an evening ritual, a way to escape boredom, fatigue, and loneliness. Within three months, she was hooked on heroin and had dropped out of school. Her once-brilliant mind and eager spirit were robbed by the drug, but she was past caring.

By the time her sister told me about the problem, Mona had attempted suicide and needed to be hospitalized. I took her to see a psychologist in a nearby city, but she ran away to avoid entering a rehabilitation program. After three days, she returned in filthy clothes and reeking of vomit and alcohol. This time she was restrained and kept under strict hospital supervision.

Slowly, detoxification began to work. During a visit, I gave her a Philippians 4:13 poster. To my delight, she displayed it above her bed. Then she showed me her diary, in which she had written these steps to recovery:

- Recognize the problem.
- Admit your loss of control.
- Get help before it is too late.
- Draw on God's strength.
- Surrender to God’s love.
- Fight drugs, not God.

I knew she was on the journey to health and wholeness when she began to depend on God’s unconditional, unwavering, perfect, powerful, healing love.

**Act on It:** If you or a friend has an addiction, get help before it's too late. Talk to an adult you trust and begin to rely on God's unfailing love.

*From devozine (July/Aug 2007). www.devozine.org*
ANXIETY
*Julie Campbell, 19 (Wancheese, North Carolina)*

Alone in a dark place
No one seems to know what I face
Trapped in my fear
Won't someone let me out of here

I want to scream 'til I faint
I want to run 'til I have no strength
To get away from all that drags me down
But more than that I want out of here

Set me free from my captivity
Which grabs me again and again
Let me know that all is well
Hold me in your comfort and peace

Won't someone let me out of here please
Free from the fear, from worries ever pressing me
Let me be in a place of peace like I used to know
Not something from a dream
Won't someone let me out of here

**Feeling Helpless?** Read *Philippians 1:3-30*. When Paul wrote, “If I live, it will be for Christ” (1:21, CEV), he was in prison, chained and guarded by Roman sentinels. However, instead of succumbing to fear or anger, he focused his attention on the Lord and wrote letters to encourage his friends.

Make a list of situations in which you feel trapped. Beside each one, list ways you can use the situation to focus your hope and trust on God; then pray through the list, asking for courage to follow through on your ideas.

*Rebecca Reichl, 22 (Brookline, New Hampshire)*

*From devozine (July/Aug 2007)*. www.devozine.org
FILLING THE HOLE IN MY SOUL
Justin Collett

The solid metal door of the jail cell opened briefly and slammed shut. This was not my first time in jail. Only eighteen years old, I had tried to quit drinking and drugging numerous times. I had lost every last bit of hope. The cold concrete bench seemed a fitting end for my miserable life.

How it All Began
Growing up, I had caring parents, two younger sisters, and everything I needed tucked inside a cozy home. On the outside, my life looked spectacular. On the inside, I was shy and afraid. In a room of friends, I still felt alone. Something was missing from my life—as if there were a hole in my soul.

The hole was filled the first time I smoked marijuana. My fears seemed to vanish; my friends and I laughed; and for the first time, I felt good. I felt OK being me.

At first, the payoffs for using drugs were wonderful and the consequences were minimal. I felt that nothing bad could happen to me. I thought I could quit whenever I wanted. Gradually, the payoffs became smaller and the consequences greater. Still, getting high was the only thing that made me feel comfortable in my own skin.

Consequences
Within three years, I flunked out of public school, completed a two-month wilderness camp for teenage addicts, attended and was expelled from a boarding school, got kicked out of a treatment center, and got in trouble with the law. After every incident, I thought the next time would be different. In retrospect, I was doing the same thing over and over again and, for some reason, expecting different results.

Eventually, drinking and smoking weed weren’t exciting enough. I began to smoke, snort, eat, drink, and drop anything that would keep me from being sober. I stole, lied, and hurt people to support my habit. Getting high was my around-the-clock goal. I was a drug addict and didn’t even know it.

One night, I was snorting cocaine in a little room in the projects. I sat on a bare mattress on the floor. An outside street lamp provided the only light. I felt utterly disgusted with myself. How did my life get to this point? Everything was falling apart.

I knew it was true, but I didn’t know how to stop it.

On June 27, 1999, I passed out while driving my car and hit a telephone pole. I regained consciousness in the wreckage with my airbag deflating and glass all over me. I limped out of my crumpled car. An hour later, I was in jail. I assumed my life was over, and I experienced hopelessness I had never imagined. In that moment, a prayer started within me: “God, I hope you’re up there; and if you can help me, I’ll do whatever you want me to do.”
Recovery
God answers prayers. Upon leaving jail, I entered another treatment center and was finally ready to listen. I did whatever they told me to do. A man named Rick taught me how to pray on my knees in the morning and at night. After treatment, I got involved with a Twelve Step program that changed my life; and today, I am blessed to help other men recover from alcoholism and drug addiction.

It has not been easy. Early on, sobriety was extremely difficult. I counted the minutes and hours, trying not to drink or use drugs. I prayed continuously and tried to put one foot in front of the other, slowly moving in the right direction. When I entered college, I found that my experience could help others. After graduation, life led me into youth ministry; and I will enter Duke Divinity School this fall. Eight years later, I am still sober. And I still pray on my knees morning and night.

Justin Collett is the director of student ministries at Mullins United Methodist Church in Memphis, Tennessee.

Dig Deeper: Addictive behavior “feeds” on the garbage in our lives. One way to fight addiction is to “take out the trash.”

Resentment is old anger. Do you still think about that friend who betrayed you or the parent who doesn’t understand? Write about the people who have hurt you. Pray for them, and ask God to help you forgive them.

Fear is like corrosion that eats away at our lives. Write about your fears. Pray, asking God to take away your fears and to help you trust in God.

Making amends, or putting things right, is a courageous activity that offers us freedom. Who are the people you have harmed? To whom do you need to say “I’m sorry”? Ask God to help you make amends.

From devozine (July/Aug 2007), www.devozine.org
PAYING FOR THE PARTY

Mary Hake (Crooked River Ranch, Oregon)

After our school play, Paula’s three-story house overflowed with teens, refreshments, laughter, and fun. When I noticed that a few students had smuggled alcohol into the party, I quickly confronted them.

“Can’t you enjoy life without drinking? What if you get caught?” They laughed, ignoring my pleas to get rid of the contraband.

A few days later, some parents found out about the underage drinking and complained. Our drama instructor was brought up on charges, even though he had been unaware of the drinking. When the case went to court, several of my friends were called to testify. After much deliberation, our teacher was declared not guilty; but his character and integrity had been compromised. Although we begged him to stay, he decided to move away; and we lost a great drama coach.

The selfishness of a few students had cost this man his reputation and position. Our party had a dire effect on him, his family, his students, the school, and the community.

We often act without considering the consequences, but this experience taught me the importance of weighing possible outcomes before doing something that might cause harm.

Make Wise Choices: The next time you have a choice to make, consider the consequences. What could happen because of your actions? Who could be affected? Then ask God to help you make the right decision.

From devozine (May/June 2006). www.devozine.org
L'CHAIM!*  
_Melinda Williams (Box Elder, South Dakota)_

I celebrate life by living,  
not by dying.  
I don't understand  
how killing brain cells  
and destroying common sense,  
how giving over your self-control—  
even your soul—  
to chemically-induced euphoria  
that always leaves you empty  
and wanting more  
can be called a party.

My high—  
my drink of choice—  
is life.  
I take a walk or sit in silence.  
I ride my bike or gaze at the stars.  
I celebrate the world created for me.  
I celebrate the life breathed into me.  
I celebrate by living life out loud,  
not hiding in a hazy, drunken cloud.  
My party is one that never ends.  
I never wake up without friends  
or with a hangover  
or with a hole in my soul  
that I need to fill again.  
My party keeps me satisfied  
because I celebrate life with life!

_L'chaim!_  
To life!

*a Hebrew toast meaning “To life!”*  

_Journal: _Make a list of life-giving ways to celebrate life. Then celebrate!  
**Need some celebration ideas?** Check out:  
http://dmoz.org/Kids_and_Teens/People_and_Society/Holidays_and_Special_Days

_From devozine (May/June 2006). www.devozine.org_
REMINDERS

Melanie Craig, 20 (St. Ann, Missouri)

My friends and I love to have fun. Our favorite weekends are the ones we spend hanging out and partying. My friends and I party without drugs, alcohol, smoking, and sex. Instead, we watch movies, play games, and talk.

I have been to parties where people were drinking and smoking. Once, some friends tried to get me to drink with them and would not take no for an answer, so I had to explain why I choose not to drink. First, I believe that drinking is immoral in God’s eyes. Second, I am a leader for a small group of eighth-grade girls, and I don’t want to be a bad example for them. When I became a leader, I made a commitment: I would not do anything that I did not want the girls to do, and I would not do anything that I would be ashamed to tell them about.

I have learned to use good judgment about how and with whom I have fun. When I am tempted to stumble, I have Jesus and my girls as reminders to do the right thing.

Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise. Proverbs 20:1 (NRSV)

Be Accountable: Ask a close friend or a mentor to hold you accountable for your actions. When you are tempted, let them be a gentle reminder to do the right thing.

From devozine (May/June 2006). www.devozine.org
ALTERNATIVES TO DRINKING

Paul Connelly, 18 (Lower Waterford, Vermont)

I have never had a drink or been to a party where drinks were served to minors, but I have seen what drinking can do. During my junior year of high school, my father and I were in an auto accident. The other driver had been to a party and had too much to drink. He hit our car head-on. My father was killed instantly.

Throughout my senior year, I worked with the Vermont Teen Leadership Safety Program. The purpose of VTLSP is to make teenagers more aware of the consequences of drinking and to help them find alternatives to drinking at parties. These are some of the alternatives that my friends and I enjoy:

• playing Frisbee™ golf
• going to movies
• dancing
• reading books
• talking on the phone
• reading God’s word

The next time you are tempted to drink or think you can’t have a good time without drinking, try one of these alternatives—or come up with a few of your own.

Christians Are Not Boring! I’m a devoted Christian, and I go to parties. Like many other Christians, I know how to have fun safely and wisely. My friends and I don’t drink, smoke, or use other drugs. We have much more fun without them. And so can you—just be creative!

Stacy Gunito, 16 (Winston-Salem, North Carolina)

From devozine (May/June 2006). www.devozine.org
FOR SINGER/SONGWRITER SHAWN MCDONALD, GOD MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE

Kami Rice

“Sometimes true joy and true fun aren’t what we think they’re going to be.”

Shawn McDonald entered the party scene as a young teenager. Soon, searching for higher highs led him from drinking and partying to using drugs to dealing drugs. He was arrested and served time, but that didn’t change the direction his life had taken.

Then God gave Shawn a Christian friend who was persistent. Eventually, twenty-year-old Shawn prayed to a God he didn’t yet know and asked that God be revealed to him. Since then, Shawn has been running hard after God.

After he invited Christ into his life, Shawn began playing the guitar. First he played the worship songs that he sang in church. Then he began writing his own songs, and people began asking him to play in public. In March 2006, Shawn released his third album, *Ripen*, on Sparrow Records.

A New Season of Life

After a few years of telling concert audiences of his messed-up past and his coming to Christ, Shawn is looking to the future and enjoying a new season in his life. A year ago, Shawn married Kate, the sister of Christian musician Bethany Dillon. When not on tour, Shawn enjoys time at home with his wife and their dog.

Shawn’s unique music style—acoustic-driven with elements of pop, folk, and soul—has been well-received since his debut album *Simply Nothing* was released in 2004. “It’s just really encouraging the response that everyone’s been having toward the music,” says Shawn.

A New Idea of Fun

Shawn says, “When my friends and I hang out, we just hang out. We go bowling, shoot pool, play board games. Sometimes we just sit around and [act like] dorks.”

Shawn has fun surfing and fly fishing. “I like them because I’m out in the middle of nature.” He also enjoys traveling and learning about different cultures.

Christians are sometimes stereotyped as boring; but Shawn says that having fun is about attitude: “I think it is what you make it. You can have no fun, or you can have lots of fun.” When people think that “fun” is what God calls us away from, they think Christians can’t have a good time. But, Shawn explains, “Sometimes true joy and true fun aren’t what we think they’re going to be.”
A New Sense of Freedom

“That whole partying life—it’s appealing, it’s fun; but the end result is tragic. It destroys your personality. It destroys your heart.” The problem, Shawn says, is that when you are caught up in the party life, you can’t see where it’s taking you—“especially when you’re young and everything’s whirling around you and you don’t know who you are.”

For Shawn, God has made all the difference. Although he wishes he had experienced God more personally when he was younger, Shawn doesn’t wish away his past. In fact, his lyrics speak of the truth and freedom he has discovered through his life and his faith:

Hey little brother, oh I know life
has been rough
But I believe in you, cause in God
you are tough
You must stand tall, & leave it all
Never let this old world take away
your soul
You are perfect
You are perfectly
Perfectly done.


Kami Rice lives in Nashville, Tennessee, and works for Starbucks, as Shawn once did.

Dig Deeper: Read John 8:32, a verse that means a lot to Shawn these days.

Reflect: When has “the whole partying life” taken away your soul? How does Shawn’s story encourage you to “stand tall and leave it all”? How does the truth of God’s love set you free?
ONCE UPON A TIME

*India Cable, 22 (Madison, Indiana)*

Once upon a time,
my brother and I played cowboys and Indians—
the Lone Ranger, the cowboy, and Tonto, the Indian,
my brother in the white hat and me in the braid.

Once upon a time,
my brother was my hero,
so smart and fun, so very brave.
Once upon a time, we were a team.

When did it all change?
Why did he allow this awful poison in his life?
When did he decide that he was wise
and wrong was right?
Did he know that he betrayed my trust?
that he’d self-destruct?
When did he stop caring for the truth
and start buying the lie?
When did he decide he’d die before giving real life a try?
Where is he beneath the angry venom and bitter words?
beneath the lust, brutality, and swords?
beneath the spit at authority and enslaving the world?
Once upon a time,
my brother was my hero.

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**Decide for Yourself:** At 12 years old, I was drinking. It was popular, so I did it. I never cared about my health. I drank when I was sad or angry. Now I see that drinking didn’t solve my problems, and I know that it isn’t for me.

*Terrell Wiggins, 16 (Williamston, North Carolina)*

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*From devozine (July/Aug 2004). www.devozine.org*
One Monday morning, I wandered into my high school’s enrichment classroom just in time to catch part of an interesting conversation. The class was for gifted students. Involved in the conversation were kids who would graduate with honors and become merit scholars, kids who would ace their AP tests. But on this day, they were just plain stupid.

“Yeah, I was at that party Saturday night,” said one.
“Was I there?” asked another.
“Yeah, don’t you remember? You stood up on the pool table and sang to us! That was cool. Then you puked.”

I had not been invited to the party and actually had been feeling left out. Now I realized what I had missed: A genius had forgotten he was even at the party. Another student had driven home in a stupor. Young women had no idea what they had done—or with whom.

“Cool” meant losing your memory and puking in public. Gaining the respect of peers meant totally disrespecting yourself.

Would I have gone to that party if I had been invited? In a heartbeat! But thinking about it later, I thank God that I wasn’t invited. Hearing my classmates’ memories of the party was bad enough. I would hate to have had memories of my own—or, even worse, no memories at all.

They are confused with wine, they stagger with strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in giving judgment. Isaiah 28:7b (NRSV)

Reflect: I wish people could see what they look like when they’re drinking. Maybe then they’d realize they don’t look sophisticated, just stupid.
Gina Lee (Burbank, California)
DADDY DEAREST
A. P., 17 (Ohio)

Alcohol is a drug. It can eat away at a person’s life and soul.

My father is an alcoholic. Yes, he works hard. Yes, he supports the family. But that does not give him the right to consume massive amounts of alcohol every weekend. I understand that he’s an adult; but as an adult, he should know the harmful effects of alcohol. Instead, he seeks comfort in an aluminum can.

I pray for my father, and I continue to hold on to God’s hope. Drinking affects not only the drinker but also the people he or she loves. I’ve chosen to stay away from alcohol because I’ve seen the damage it can do.

Pray: Ask God to watch over alcoholics and their families.

From devozine (July/Aug 2004). www.devozine.org

DRINKING
Leslie Curtis, 18 (Huntington, West Virginia)

Instead of drinking alcohol, my friends and I drink from the Holy Spirit. While others are out partying, we spend time together worshiping God. On Wednesday nights, we participate in random acts of kindness, delivering cookies and coffee to those waiting for God’s healing in the emergency room of a local hospital. One Sunday a month, we serve dinner at our city’s mission.

My friends and I are different from most of our peers because we recognize that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. We don’t need to drink to have fun. We have fun serving God, helping God’s children, and even discussing questions about our religious beliefs.

Act on It: Fill up with the Holy Spirit, and find something to do for God.

From devozine (July/Aug 2004). www.devozine.org
FRIENDLY ADVICE

Jasmine Meggison, 20 (Georgetown, Texas)

Drinking problems are scary. If you know young people who are abusing alcohol:

- Express your concerns. Tell them how worried you are, and let them know that you will be there for them.

- Ask them to get counseling. And encourage them to talk with an adult they trust.

- Bear in mind that you can’t help them change their habits until they are ready to change.

Pray for them; be there for them, but don’t forget to live your own life. You don’t need to build your life around the problems of others.

- Don’t promise to keep it a secret. If their drinking seems out of control, talk to a trusted adult about what to do next.

Prayer: God, show me how to be a friend to people I know who are “weighed down with drunkenness.”

Amen.

From devozine (July/Aug 2004). www.devozine.org

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Ephesians 5:18 (NIV)
POUR A GLASS OF CONCERN

Bob Roth

All youth have a daily choice: Will I drink, or will I find other ways to have fun and be cool?

Everyone was excited about the late summer gathering of high school friends at Brad's house in the country. Brad was opening his doors. His parents, it seemed, were gone for the weekend.

Some youth drank that night, and others didn't. Everyone was aware that Brad and Leah were drinking rum in their sodas, which was out of character for them; they usually seemed so innocent, almost naïve. In fact, Leah had never even dated. Sometime after midnight, their friends noticed that this new couple had left for a room that was off-limits. Everyone felt uncomfortable about this.

Perceptions and Choices

Does everyone drink alcohol these days? At your school, are teenagers who drink considered cool? Are you pressured, playfully or aggressively, to drink if you don't want to?

Perceptions of what's cool vary. Levels of drinking vary too, though drinking—even binge drinking of five or more drinks on one occasion—is widespread among teens today. All youth have a daily choice: Will I drink, or will I find other ways to have fun and be cool—ways that will not lead to drunk driving, teenage alcoholism, or sexual activity?

A Good Word

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says, “Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit” and calls each person to “glorify God in your body.” It sure is hard to glorify God with bodies that are stumbling, mouths that are mumbling, and actions that are bumbling.

In Matthew 7:9, right before the Golden Rule, Jesus says that God loves us more than a parent loves a child: “Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks you for bread, will give a stone?” What a great question to ask about how we treat our friends! When friends need someone to listen (bread), do we offer to dull their pain with a drink (stone)? When friends need to find direction in their lives (bread), do we pass them a bottle (stone)? Give your friends the good stuff—pour them a glass of concern!

Reach Out

SAMHSA is the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. If you want to know more about the effects of alcohol or about the signs of a drinking problem, check out www.samhsa.gov. Or call SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at 1-800-729-6686.

Alateen (www.al-anon.alateen.org) is for young people “whose lives have been affected by someone else’s drinking.” You may have been affected by a friend’s drinking, but you also may be concerned about a parent or grandparent—or yourself. Alateen is there...
for you at 1-888-4AL-ANON (1-888-425-2666) from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. EST, Monday through Friday.

SAMSHA, Alateen, school counselors, parents, pastors, and youth counselors are all available to help. What's the coolest thing to do? Care enough to say something, to do something, to reach out now.

*Bob Roth* is a writer and activist in East Lansing, Michigan.

**Dig Deeper:** Read 1 Corinthians 12:13. How are our bodies part of “one body”? If we put alcohol into our bodies, how do we affect the one body? How would you describe the taste when we “drink of one Spirit”? What a party!

*From devozine (July/Aug 2004). www.devozine.org*

**Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.**

*Psalm 55:22 (NIV)*
DEAD-END STREETS
Jimmie Davis (Moore, South Carolina)

One reason some teenagers drink or use drugs is because they feel empty inside. They try to fill that emptiness with anything that comes along. But the truth is that when the drugs or alcohol wear off, the emptiness is still there.

As a teenager, I looked for peace and purpose in all the wrong places. No matter how many friends I had, no matter who I was dating, no matter how many drinks I took, I still knew that there must be more to life. I was tired of dead-end streets.

One day I met a man who changed that. He has never disappointed me or broken my heart. He gives me a high that never wears off and a peace that drugs and alcohol can’t touch. I have a relationship with him that meets my deepest needs, that fills my emptiness. His name is Jesus. He is my comforter, friend, protector, and savior. He will sustain me; he will never let me fall.

Do It: Are you or is someone you know hooked on alcohol or other drugs?

1. Face your problem squarely and honestly. There is hope!
2. Find a trustworthy Christian adult who can help you.
3. Put your trust in Jesus Christ. Talk to Jesus as you would to a friend.
4. Read God’s love letters (the Bible) every day. Fill your mind with God’s love for you.
5. Keep asking for God’s help, even if you need to ask over and over.
6. Picture yourself as a winner, not a victim.
7. Don’t look for an easy way out. It will take time.
8. Set goals and find someone to hold you accountable.
9. Don’t be afraid. Stay with God, for God will stay with you.
10. Never, never, never give up!

People are slaves to whatever masters them.
2 Peter 2:19b (NRSV)

From devozine (May/June 2000). www.devozine.org
SURRENDER
Ranae, 17 (Graham, North Carolina)

There was a time when this would drag me under.
Now I wonder.
If there were a better way, you know this wouldn't
take place today.
But this is it; I'm pulling out.
Dear God, please take away my doubt.

I'm giving up.
Unconditional surrender.
So long, non-committing pretender.

Yet I stand, like a veteran of war, forevermore.
I'm not giving up; I've had enough.

Lord, lift me up when withdrawal sets in.
What a hypocrite I've been.

Say a Prayer: Unless you've been addicted to
something, it can be difficult to understand the
process of withdrawal. Pray for a teenager you know
and/or teenagers throughout the world who are going
through withdrawal. Pray that God will be the strength
these people need to give up their addictions.

From devozine (May/June 2000). www.devozine.org

There they
gave Jesus
some wine
mixed with a
drug to ease
the pain. But
when Jesus
tasted what it
was, he refused
to drink it.
Matthew 27:34
(CEV)
WHOLE AGAIN

Danielle Garcia, 17 (Carson City, Nevada)

A good friend of mine—I'll call her Emily—smoked marijuana, and at 16 she had already been a user for a while. Emily went to parties and didn't hesitate to smoke pot. One night, she was expecting to party as usual, but that night turned into one that she would never forget.

Emily and her best friend were smoking marijuana. Then, her friend and others at the party started doing other drugs. Suddenly, everyone noticed that Emily's friend was having trouble. Helpless to do anything, Emily watched her friend die of a drug overdose.

Emily stopped using drugs that night. Soon after, a friend brought her to a youth group meeting, where Emily found Christ. Emily grew up and went to college and has since gone to seminary. She is now a youth pastor who has and will continue to change the lives of teenagers throughout the country.

God had something amazing planned for Emily. And with God's help, she was able to give up that which could destroy her life and to open herself to God's transforming love. Emily's story has inspired me to see what God will do in my life. No matter what you've done or where you've been, God can change you and make you whole again.

Journal: Write about something amazing that God has done in your life. How is God leading you and forming you through the things that have happened in your life?

From devozine (May/June 2000). www.devozine.org
FULLFILLMENT
Karen Whiting (Miami, Florida)

People often use drugs to relieve boredom, to feel connected to friends, and to relieve pain. But drugs do not bring fulfillment—they don’t relieve the reason for boredom; drugs don’t connect you to a covenant community grounded in anything more than shared drug use; and they can cause greater pain. True fulfillment comes from God.

Seek God’s plans for you; discover the passion of a life lived as a companion of Christ.

How can you seek God’s plan? Stay connected to God and other people through prayer, Bible reading, becoming part of a church community, and reaching out to those who feel isolated. Take time to be with people who will encourage you.

These are all things that take time, but true fulfillment doesn’t happen in an instant. It’s a lifelong process.

**Pray the Scripture:** Read aloud **Psalm 138:8** as a prayer. Ask for God’s fulfillment, for God to bring you contentment and happiness, for help in seeking God’s plan.

*From devozine (May/June 2000). www.devozine.org*
ELI: A NEW CREATION IN CHRIST

Amy Bremers

Eli knows firsthand what alcohol and other drugs can do to a person, but thanks to God's great love, mercy, and grace, he has found new life.

He's a popular Christian singer and musician who has two albums out (*Things I Prayed For* and *Second Hand Clothing*)—both with solid singles. But Eli's faith story—his testimony—is not so well known.

Eli struggled throughout his life with rocky family relationships; he was homeless as a teen; he dropped out of high school; he almost died from overdosing on pills; and he was addicted to alcohol and other drugs for years. But now, Eli (full name: Elijah Stone), 29, is living proof that God’s saving grace can transform anyone into “a new creation in Christ.”

**In the beginning**

Eli started drinking when he was very young and began doing drugs later, but he doesn't remember exactly when he began or what drugs he did. He used drugs and alcohol to try to dull his pain, but they ended up dulling his life. “I look back on my life,” Eli says, “and there are years I don't remember, people I know I knew for years but don't remember. That's wrong; that's sad.”

Many teens who try alcohol or other drugs do so because of peer pressure, but that's not why Eli started. So why did he start? Eli wanted to identify with his father, who had abused substances as a kid; he wanted to be a “bad kid”; and the alcohol and other drugs “felt good.” Once in a while, Eli felt convicted that he was sinning; and he sometimes struggled with doing the right thing. “But when you have no understanding of God’s goodness,” Eli says, “when all you understand about God is fear and condemnation, it's not enough to make you seek God.”

To truly want to do the right thing, Eli says, “you need to experience God's mercy and love. God's love supercedes feelings or fears or whatever struggles you're going through.”

“I want to go home.”

Eli ran away from his broken family “to be a full-time drug addict.” Although he knew he was a sinner, “the threat of hell was no big deal” because he felt as if he was already living in hell. While homeless, Eli slept in garages and closets and under trees in parks; and sometimes he just stayed up all night rather than try to find a place to sleep. After living on the streets, throwing up in the gutter, and making “closet deals” with God (“If you'll do this, I'll do that”), the 15-year-old Eli gave up. He prayed a simple prayer, straight from his heart: “I'm tired; I want to go home.”

Eli went to a group home and then to a Christian-based drug rehab center for three months. Here he felt safe, like he had a real family. At the rehab center, Eli learned to confront his problems, not dull them with alcohol and other drugs. “I realized I needed to decide, ‘Am I going to kill myself or find out what else is out there?’”

Ironically, it was his dad who led Eli, at age 17, to become a Christian. After rehab, Eli lived with his dad, who was going to church and brought Eli along. In church, Eli realized the power of God's love and saving grace and that God can take anything and make it beautiful. “I get
choked up when I think of God’s grace,” Eli says. Ephesians 2:8 means a lot to him; it’s one scripture that he takes personally. He even wrote about it in his song “Unqualified.”

God’s grace helped him to get clean. “The more I fell in love with Jesus, the more I focused on him. God molded me. I had been on drugs or drunk every day at school. I thought I was invincible.” But Eli found a greater source of power: “The Spirit of God is the ultimate. There’s no drop-off.”

**Miracles**

Eli found that when he opened up to what God wanted to give him, miracles began to happen. When he was 20, a woman came up to Eli in church and told him that he should play the guitar and sing. She gave him a guitar. He wasn’t sure about it, but he took the guitar home anyway. There, Eli told God that although the idea seemed crazy, he would give it a try. He prayed, “I’ll never try to be a star; I’ll worship you.” So he taught himself to play, and he’s been worshipping God through playing the guitar and singing ever since.

**Fall in love with Jesus**

Eli always understood the draw of drugs and alcohol; but since becoming a Christian, he’s realized that a hard life is no excuse to use them. Life is hard sometimes, he admits, but that’s not a reason to try to dull it. “You have to trust God when you encounter a valley or storm,” Eli says. “When you get to the other side, you understand. Those hard times are there for a reason.”

If you’re struggling with an addiction, Eli’s advice is to fall in love with Jesus. Jesus will help you through the hard times in life. “Your environment dictates your actions,” he says, “but you have the ability to change your environment. Put yourself in an environment that will offer you encouragement.” He suggests attending church and finding friends who will encourage you.

And if you want to help someone else who has a drug problem, Eli says that you have to be tough. A person has to want to get out of his or her situation, but you can tell a person that when he or she wants to get it together, you will be there and will help. The most important thing is to “show that person God’s love, that there’s more out there.”

Nobody is worthy of God’s grace—certainly not Eli. But that’s what God’s grace and love are all about. “You’ve never been worthy,” Eli says. “God loves you anyway.”

**Amy Bremers**, a huge fan of Eli’s, lives in Nashville, Tennessee, and works at The Upper Room. Thanks also to Erin Phillips, 16, and Jeremiah Carmichael, 15, from Mt. Juliet, Tennessee, for their great interview questions and their willingness to miss a couple of hours of school to help interview Eli.

**Dig Deeper:** Read Ephesians 2:8, Ezekiel 36:25-27, and Psalm 113:7-8. How do you feel knowing that, no matter what kind of life you have led, God can transform you into the person you were created to be? What part of Eli’s story touched you the most?
FROM THE HEART OF A CHILD
Elizabeth Campbell, 17 (Spencer, New York)

I wish I could see your face—
your real face, I mean.
I wish you would be who you were,
if only for one moment.
But it has control over you,
so I'll hide my tears away.
I can't tell you what I'm feeling
because I'm afraid; and I'm scared
that you don't care anymore
about me, about life, about yourself.
They say you're sick;
then why won't you go to a doctor?
You don't have to be afraid—
doctors always give lollipops.
And if you're afraid of shots,
I'll hold your hand like you used to hold mine.
People say you're blind
and like a walking zombie,
but I don't understand.
I just want to tell you how I feel,
but they say I ask too many questions
and that I must learn to be quiet.
But I know something is wrong,
so I'll pray that God will make you better again.

Think About It: It is not only the addicted person who suffers. In many instances, children will suffer! Thankfully, there are support groups available. If you or someone you know is a child suffering from a parent's abuse of alcohol or other drugs, get help. (See page 76 for a list of helping agencies.)

From devozine (May/June 2000). www.devozine.org
TELL ME

Matt Benchener, 17 (Newton, Pennsylvania)

Tell me: How can I free myself?
    Let me know how I can break the chains.
Tell me: Why can't I get off this cross?
    Let me know how I can stop the pain.
Tell me: Why can't I reach you?
    Let me know how I can destroy this darkness.
This burden is crushing my soul;
    I can't rise.
A void is emptying my heart;
    I can't be filled.
This pain is devastating my spirit;
    I can't find hope.
This death is destroying my life;
    I can't see the light.
“Follow me,” you say?
    You'll break my chains and carry my burden.
“Seek me,” you say?
    You'll walk with me.
“I died for you,” you say?
    You'll take the cross and bear my pain.
“Believe fully,” you say?
    I'll be saved.

Journal: Write about how faith has eased your burdens and set you free.

Have pity, Lord! Help!”
Psalm 30:10
(CEV)
ABOUT FACE
Carrie Ferguson

“I can tell you this: Drugs will take everything good in your life and make it bad, and everything bad in your life and make it worse.”

— Eric Renegar

As Eric Renegar speaks with hilarious description to the high school assembly about the first time he got high, the audience begins to expect a “punch line.” And of course there is a punch line, but it’s not what they might expect.

“The worst punch line is when there seems to be no punch line at all,” Renegar says. “You experiment with drugs over and over again, every time thinking you are different, only to learn the same truth: Drugs will take everything good in your life and make it bad, and everything bad in your life and make it worse. That’s the worst punch line of all; because by then, it’s too late—you’re hooked.”

Renegar, at 30, is the founder of AboutFace Assemblies and makes his living traveling around the United States telling his story. It’s not a typical “Just Say No” program. He doesn’t offer statistics. He doesn’t lecture. He doesn’t just tell kids to stay away from drugs. He shows his face. And he describes his spiral downward. Neither is pretty.

Scars
Renegar bears disfiguring scars on his face, scars that he caused himself. The “good times” of alcohol and other drugs sunk him further and further into depression and despair until he attempted suicide. When he was a high school senior, he placed a gun under his chin and pulled the trigger.

“I used to ask God to take away my scars,” Renegar says. “But now I don’t. They are evidence that at one time I was hurt, but now I’ve healed.”

Renegar has had five surgeries to correct his disfigurement. His new jaw was made with bone grafts from his hip, an excruciating procedure. “I didn’t know they could make your face out of your butt,” he says, laughing.

He also wears dental partials because the gun blast blew out his teeth. And consider this: Renegar is one of the lucky ones. People with disfigurements far worse than his survive gunshot suicide attempts.

Drowning
Renegar is honest about his drug use because he knows that when he speaks to people, many in the audience have tried drugs or are using drugs. Plenty would say that they don’t have a problem, that they are doing drugs just for fun, that they’ve got it under control. Eric used to feel the same way, but he realized where it took him. “[As] I was drowning in my own blood, I realized I didn’t want to die,” he says.

As he lay on the ground, all alone, he had to take little, tiny breaths to sneak air past the blood in his throat. He was trying to keep from drowning.
Renegar was already in a state of depression when he started drinking and smoking pot with his buddies. His dad, whom he loved dearly, died when Renegar was in the tenth grade; and within a year, his mom remarried. Getting high was his escape.

It didn’t work.

“Instead of dealing with an obstacle and overcoming it, I would change direction; I used alcohol and other drugs. So then other obstacles would come up, and I kept getting lost and changing direction,” he says. “The pressure got stronger and I felt as though I was in a downward spiral.”

Eventually suicide seemed his only way out because he wasn’t thinking straight and wasn’t dealing with his problems constructively.

Drowning is a disturbing but appropriate image that he offers to people who feel as if they’re drowning in their own lives: “You have so much junk coming in; the pressure may be so great that you feel as if you are about to suffocate. But if you sneak a little bit of good past the bad that’s flooding your life, one day it will be easier to breathe again. But you’ve got to fight.”

Gifts of God
Renegar fought—and won. He is off the hook—free of drugs. The gifts of his fight are a loving wife, Robin; a young son, Lewis; and a deep faith in and love of God.

Because there is a separation of church and state, he cannot speak about his faith at public school assemblies. But his faith, which he discovered after his suicide attempt, guides him as he talks about his personal story.

“I cannot help but look back at my experience and believe there is a God who was there for me that night and saved my life,” Renegar says. “And I believe that God can save yours too, if you will allow him and other people to help you. If I can make it, you can make it too.”

Carrie Ferguson is a features writer for The Tennessean.

Dig Deeper: Reflect on Job 3:20-21a, 23a (NRSV):
“Why is light given to one in misery, and life to the bitter in soul, who long for death, but it does not come?
Why is light given to one who cannot see the way?”

Prayer: God, you breathe new life into bitter souls and light the way for people lost in darkness. Give me hope and strength to greet each new day in your love. Amen.
UN-ADDICTED

*Emily Bair, 16 (Ansonia, Connecticut)*

People get addicted to so many things. Getting addicted is easy; overcoming an addiction isn’t as easy. For people to be truly free from addictions, they must have the desire to get unhooked and the willingness to accept help and strength from God. I’ve seen this happen. A friend of mine used drugs for four years before he quit. He decided that he wanted to stop using drugs because they were messing up his head. In the process, he became a Christian, and God helped him overcome his addiction.

I have also broken an addiction with God’s help. About two years ago, I became addicted to a TV show. I would watch the show and would also tape it so that I could watch the tapes all week long. I spent most of my free time online, reading about the show; and I plastered my room with pictures of the stars. Finally, I realized how consumed I was. I also realized that I could do much more with my life for God than be obsessed with a TV show. I decided to get unhooked. I took down the pictures; then I stopped taping the show and looking at the websites. Eventually, I stopped watching the show altogether. I used my own willpower and God’s help to kick the addiction. God can set us free from our addictions, but first we must desire to be free from them.

Pray Psalm 30:10 (RSV). Ask God’s help for people you know who are hooked.

From *devozine* (May/June 2003). www.devozine.org
PARTY POOPER

Elisabeth Sweatt, 17 (Asheville, North Carolina)

I go to a school where everybody parties. Alcohol and other drugs are in abundance, as is the foolishness of people under their influence. Alcohol and other drugs, in and of themselves, are not temptations for me. I am tempted by my desire to belong; and in my school, the only way to belong is to use alcohol and other drugs. I know that if I go to parties, I will not have the strength to be the only person there who is not drinking. So I avoid parties. Now, my peers call me the “Party Pooper.”

Many of my Christian friends encourage me to go to parties to confront the temptation, but I don’t believe it is necessary to fight that battle. I’d rather follow the advice of 2 Timothy 2:22 (see pg. 38). Although running away is often considered cowardly, I feel that physically removing myself from temptation is the best way to resist it.

Get Real: Be honest with God about who you are and about what tempts you away from a close relationship with God. Be intentional about avoiding these temptations.

Don’t destroy yourself by getting drunk, but let the Spirit fill your life.

Ephesians 5:18 (CEV)

THE REAL DEAL

Nicki Figley, 16 (East Palestine, Ohio)

Partying is a big thing at my school. Most people party because of peer pressure, but I partied because of pressure from my relatives. I have always associated partying with drinking. One of my cousins encouraged me to start drinking before any of my friends at school had given it a thought. For a summer, I made some big mistakes; but God was with me when I needed God the most. God didn’t get mad at me but loved me; and when I was willing, God pulled me out of the mindset I was in and gave me a whole new concept of partying.

Many people think that I gave up partying to serve God more faithfully. But I didn’t really give up anything. I traded in alcohol, which I thought was the means to happiness and a good time, for never-ending joy and a life of adventure following God. I traded in alcohol for the power of God’s Holy Spirit.

God is not boring. Everything I used to view as fun was counterfeit. True joy is in Jesus Christ.

Reflect: How do you party? What does it mean to find true joy in Jesus Christ and to “let the Spirit fill your life?”

For I have kept the ways of the Lord; I have not done evil by turning from my God.
2 Samuel 22:22 (NIV)

FOR GOD
Amanda Southall, 23 (Boones Mill, Virginia)

I didn’t know what to expect when Ben asked if I wanted to hang out after school. I definitely didn’t expect to spend the afternoon sitting in the school parking lot, while Ben and his friends passed around cigarettes and pot.

They offered me a smoke to make me feel included, but I felt painfully out of place. I declined their offer and mumbled something about not smoking during cross-country season. Even as I spoke the words, I regretted them.

*Tell them you don’t want to smoke because you are a Christian!* I told myself. I knew that using cross country as an excuse was the easy way out, and I felt guilty. Just a few days earlier, my pastor had said that God gives us opportunities to witness and that we should fearlessly take advantage of them. I had been inspired by his sermon, yet I chose to advertise my membership on the cross-country team rather than to proclaim my allegiance to God.

I walked away from the parking lot that afternoon feeling like a failure for being afraid to admit that I was a Christian. But I hadn’t failed. Succumbing to peer pressure would have been a failure. Even though I didn’t tell Ben, God is the reason I don’t do drugs—and that alone is a pretty big victory.

Journal: Write about a time when you acted on your faith.


*Romans 16:17-18 (NRSV)* warns us to stay away from smooth talkers who tempt us to do wrong.
DRUGS KILL
Ena Ampy, 14 (Richmond, Virginia)

I knew a girl who had no friends. She met a guy who liked her, or so she thought. His name was Charles; her name was Asia. People tried to tell Asia that Charles was no good, but she wouldn’t listen. She said she was in love. Charles introduced her to his no-good friends. Asia thought that they were cool, but she said she would never join them in doing drugs because it was stupid. Then Charles introduced her to the places he hung out. I tried to tell Asia that this guy was horrible for her. She said I was a liar, that I should support her friendships. Soon Charles introduced Asia to his bad habits. She started missing school, her grades dropped, and she got hooked on drugs. I called Asia and took her shopping a couple of times to get her away from Charles; but then we lost touch. The day before graduation, the police were in Charles’ apartment, searching for drugs. What they found was Asia’s dead body—the result of drug abuse. She was right; drugs are stupid—and deadly.

Reflect: Our bodies represent the time and love God has put into them; they should be temples where God dwells peacefully. I will never consider doing drugs because their long-lasting effects on my body would look like graffiti on God’s temple walls. I respect myself, and I choose to maintain the splendor of God’s temple.
Hannah Miller, 14 (Atlanta, Georgia)

DRUGS AT SCHOOL
Lauren Hardman, 14 (Marietta, Georgia)

At my old school, students were always getting arrested for having or dealing drugs. Often I watched as police officers came into the school with search dogs. The situation was so bad that I had to leave.

Christians need to get involved to help kids with drug problems and to help schools where drugs are used and sold. We need to pray daily for teenagers who use drugs; for their parents; and for schools, teachers, and administrators. We also need to pray for ourselves, asking God for the wisdom and courage to help.

Take Cameron’s Challenge: I think people turn to drugs because they are trying to fill a void in their lives. We need to tell these people about Jesus and that they don’t have to turn to earthly things to find hope or meaning. I challenge you not to use drugs—not even once.
Cameron Idol, 14 (Marietta, Georgia)

Don’t go to wild parties or get drunk or be vulgar or indecent. Romans 13:13b (CEV)

IF I HAD JUST SAID “NO,”
MY LIFE WOULD HAVE TURNED OUT MUCH DIFFERENTLY.
Bryan Rodecker, 20 (Houston, Texas)
I’m getting ready to leave for the Navy, to get my life back together and to show everyone that I have it in me. This time last year, if you had asked me what I wanted to do with my life, I wouldn’t have been able to tell you.

How It Began
When I was in the seventh grade, I smoked my first joint. After that, I smoked a joint once every couple months because pot was hard to find. Within two years, this had turned into “blunts” every two hours, because all of my friends were smoking.

My sophomore year in high school, I went to a boarding school that practiced both religious and military discipline; but that didn’t make a difference. I did become involved in theater and was the lead actor in the school play. Everyone at the performance was proud of me. My dad was so proud he cried. Yet two weeks later, my dad cried again, this time for a different reason—I had been expelled from school for selling drugs.

From there, I went to another military school where I had no access to drugs; but as soon as I graduated, I fell back into my old habits—and I started using other drugs. I didn't do drugs to fill a void in my life. I just liked getting high.

Turning Point
I went to college, but I flunked out because of my everyday drug use. I am smart and could have made good grades, but I made drug use my first priority. My life bottomed out. I wasn’t keeping in touch with friends who loved me. I wasn’t talking to my parents who supported me. Then I moved back home and started hanging out with friends I had known my whole life. With their support and my determination, I broke my drug habit.

A Little Advice
If you smoke weed or use other drugs and think you have it under control, then you probably don’t have responsibilities that conflict with your drug use—yet. When I lived at home and everything was paid for, doing drugs seemed like it would never get in the way. However, drug use carried with it addiction, which eventually got in the way of being able to provide for myself and of fulfilling the goals I had set for my life.

If you’re using drugs, stop now. Make new friends; you cannot quit when you hang out with people who use drugs. A youth group is an excellent place to find new friends. Of course, if you and the friends in your youth group are using drugs together, stop together. It is easier than quitting by yourself. Stay away from anything that makes drug use appear
glamorous or that triggers the desire to use drugs. Take it from me: If I had just said “No” years ago, my life would have turned out much differently.

Bryan Rodecker, 20, is a former devozine Teen Advisory Board member from Houston, Texas.

Dig Deeper: What do you want for your life? What does God want? Make a list. Will you be able to live as God intends if you are using drugs? Read Proverbs 19:21 as a prayer: “The human mind may devise many plans, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will be established.”

10 WAYS TO SAY NO
Doug Rose (Grand Prairie, Texas)

1. Walk away.
2. Ignore the person who tempts you.
3. Say “No” calmly but firmly.
4. Say “No,” and give a good reason: “Cigarette smoke makes me sick.”
5. Say “No,” and state a value that’s important to you: “Being healthy is important to me.”
6. Say “No,” and warn about possible consequences: “We could all be expelled from school for doing drugs!”
7. Say “No” with humor: “I would rather go play on the freeway—it’s safer.”
8. Express your feelings: “I don’t like being around people when they are drinking.”
9. Stick up for yourself: “I can’t believe you’d ask me to do that.”
10. State an alternate plan: “Sorry, I’m taking my little sister to the mall.” Then take her and have fun!

Prayer: Thank you, God, for the courage and imagination to say “no” to drugs. Amen.
ALCOHOL
Joshua Conway, 22 (Altoona, Pennsylvania)

What do you think of when you hear the word drugs? Maybe you picture a dirty man, skin-and-bones, hunched over, injecting a needle into his vein. After being in college for a while, I conjure up the image of a clean-cut, intelligent student, tapping a keg and getting wasted. I hear him coming down the hall of the dorm, yelling, cursing, and slamming doors. The next time you hear the word drugs, be sure to include alcohol—a drug widely used by all kinds of people to fill the void in their lives.

Say YES to Life: Why do so many people risk using alcohol or other drugs? Is it for the short-term high? To try to forget a dreadful experience? To fit in with their friends? Compare the risks of doing drugs with the freedom of having Jesus at the center of your life—the freedom to enjoy life with all your senses, to serve and enjoy other people, and to do your work. Saying “no” to drugs is saying “yes” to life.
Richard Lawton (Oakden, Australia)

AN ADDICT’S PRAYER
Ira Pyrch (Ukraine)

Morning
God, you know me. You know what I do when I feel sad, scared or excited. Please help me to
do what you want me to do, but please do not leave me alone in the tight grip of my addiction,
I am afraid it will…
Why God? Why do I abuse this drug? I don’t want to be addicted. I hate myself and feel
disgusted. I want to cry, but I have no more tears. God, do not leave me; change me, heal me,
free me, please.

Afternoon
God, I know now that you love me, but I feel so unloved, so unworthy. I know the problem
is not in this drug, but in my belief that there is no other way out and that there is nothing
I can do. God, I am lost and this demon drug has so much power on me; it takes away my
understanding and replaces it with evil thoughts. Whose fault is it? What wrong did I do?
What matters? I cannot handle it. I do not want to try anymore, because I always lose. It is
stronger than I am. It humiliates me, makes me hate myself. God, please, save me!

Evening
God, I am tired. If only I did not do the things I don’t want to do, how pleasant this evening might
be. I could see the joy you have brought into my life, I could feel the love you have poured on
me, I could enjoy people wanting to talk to me. I could… but I didn’t. The demon drug reared its
ugly head as a weapon to kill myself with and I used it. I killed my dignity today.
God, I give up. Tomorrow my fight against addiction belongs to you. I have no more
strength. I want to rest in you. Good night, God. I love you.

Activity: Take some time to write your prayers to God. Be honest about the things that tempt you and about
your need for God’s strength.
  “I call to God, and the Lord saves me. Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress and he hear’s
  my voice.”
Psalm 55:16-17 (NIV)
To God be the glory, great things he has done.

Being a participant of the 2001 Special Program on Substance Abuse and Related Violence (SPSARV) conference in Norway was one of the many blessings God has given me, and I am grateful.

In 2005, I was appointed chairperson of the SPSARV Task Force in the Sierra Leone Annual Conference. I was excited about the position because it was a dream come true in my work with young people to address some of the issues they are facing today.

Substance abuse is destroying young people in many countries around the world. Sierra Leone is no exception; yet, in one of our school training programs, I was surprised to hear and see school children between the ages of 12-16 identifying, describing, and above all, admitting that they have used one or more dangerous drugs. The church youth and young adults are no exception. We hear their stories as we share together with them in training sessions empowering them to reach out to other youth who are trapped by substance abuse.

In one session, young people were taught and empowered to discern the difference between what is good and what is bad. They were also taught that all was not lost, that those who are not using drugs should not start, and that those who have started should quit, for they are our future leaders.

I am grateful to God for the opportunity to conduct peer counseling training in two big and prominent schools in the western part of Sierra Leone. Peer counseling is having a great impact not only on the children in these schools, but also on other school-going children, and on two large young adult fellowships, which are well attended by youth, women, men, and children. With peer counseling, I remain hopeful that people struggling with addiction will reach out to others in the entire church and to their peers.

I hope to train pastors so that they can see the need to preach the dangers of substance abuse. Sadly, some pastors abuse drugs themselves. My prayer is that God, in his goodness, will give them the understanding to see the need for a drug-free world.

My thanks and appreciation go to God for helping me realize my dreams and to the General Board of Global Ministries for supporting this kind of work. May God richly bless those who give to the work of his children.

Remain blessed.

Finda Quiwa is the chairperson for the Sierra Leone Annual Conference Task Force on Substance Abuse and its Related Violence at the GBGM Regional Missionary, Sub-Sahara Africa.
Peer Strategies

The “Just Say No” motto may have worked in the 1980s, but life just isn’t that simple anymore. Try these strategies to help the young adults in your life abstain from drugs and alcohol.

1. **Introduce them to drug-free friends.** Young adults are likely to do what their friends are doing. That means your family members and friends are more likely to remain free of addiction if you introduce them to an interesting and influential group of drug-free young adults.

   **Stats:** Training teens to pass on an anti-smoking message to their peers reduced smoking rates by 22 percent, the journal *The Lancet* found in a 2008 study. Researchers found that the most influential people in any age group are those considered popular by their peers.

2. **Equip them to resist peer pressure.** Even the most confident young adult can fall victim to peer pressure. Coach them on how to get out of sticky situations without losing their cool—or their “cred.” Here are 10 fun ways your family members and friends can refuse to consume alcohol or other drugs:

   - “No thanks. I don’t want to take the chance. My mom has a nose like an elephant, and she can smell alcohol on me a mile away.”
   - “My parents drug test me, and if I don’t pass, they’ll take away my car.”
   - “No thanks. I’m driving after I leave here.”
   - “I’m trying out for the team, and if the coach finds out, I’m a goner.”
   - “You’re really cool to share, but, no thanks.”
   - “No thanks; I’ve tried it and all it does is put me to sleep.”
   - “Me, chicken? Do you see any feathers on me?”
   - “Not now. I’m already in enough trouble with my parents.”
   - “No thanks. There must be a good reason why they say you have to be older to drink so I think I’ll just wait.”
   - “Right now, I’m totally hungry, not thirsty, so I think I’ll just grab some munchies.”
   - “No thanks. Right now, a soda would taste really great.”

   **Next step:** Add your own fun ideas to this list. Then share it with those around you who might have a hard time saying “No.”
3. **Open up about your own experiences and worries.** While scare tactics won’t convince a young adult to stay away from alcohol or other drugs, hearing your truthful story about how those substances complicated your life could do the trick.

Many people grew up with an alcoholic or drug-addicted family member or struggled with the consequences of drinking or taking drugs irresponsibly. Share your experiences with young adults. This doesn’t mean you must reveal your darkest secrets or regale your teen with stories of college binge fests. Not everyone feels comfortable sharing their stories or dredging up the hurt or sadness alcoholism and addiction caused. Yet, by being honest, you may help a young adult realize that the consequences of consuming alcohol or other drugs aren’t worth the few minutes or hours of buzzed behavior.

**Better:** Think about how your past behavior—or that of those around you—affect you. What did it keep you from doing? What mistakes did it lead up to? What do you wish you could have done differently? Analyze your emotions and then share them with those who may be thinking about experimenting with addictive substances.

4. **Know where to go for help.** Some young adults will need more advice and strategies than you can provide. In this case, you must know what resources are available to you. Get started by making a list of the substance abuse resource centers or groups in your area. Then note our array of websites that tackle any problem on pg. 76.
Parent Strategies

Parents and other adult family members often feel at a loss about to how to protect the young adults in their families from substance abuse. And they feel even more overwhelmed when a teen seems to be experimenting.

But it’s never too late to get involved in trying to help young adults live a drug-free life. Try these ideas for nurturing a close, open relationship with young adults that will give them the strength and confidence to say “no”:

1. **Start the discussion early.** Preteens as young as nine years old are mature enough for a discussion about the dangers of alcohol or other drugs. Many experts encourage parents to begin the conversation even earlier.

   **Example:** You might point out to a preschooler that too much alcohol could make her do silly things. You could explain to a six-year-old that drugs could make him very sick. These basic conversations help your preteens better understand that alcohol and other drugs carry real consequences and build a foundation for future conversations.

2. **Give teens the facts about alcohol and other drugs.** When teens know why they should remain drug-free, they are more likely to give it a shot. On the other hand, using scare tactics might push young adults to try drugs just to prove they can handle them. Also, when you exaggerate or make up stories about the effects of alcohol or other drugs, you damage your credibility and teens may be less likely to listen to you in the future.

   **Example:** You might explain to your teenager that alcohol and drug use will permanently affect the way his brain develops.

3. **Practice what you preach.** Parents have the greatest influence on the decisions young adults make. Bragging about how much you drink or making light of being high teaches the young adults around you that alcohol and other drugs aren’t a big deal. You must live the life you want your teens to live.

   **Crucial:** The example you set as a responsible adult is one of the most important ways you can communicate with your children about drinking. This means never providing alcohol to minors or hosting a drinking party for your teens and their friends.

4. **Ask about your teen’s friends.** While you can’t always choose who your teen hangs out with, you can encourage her to talk about her friends, as well as how her friends make her feel and whether they influence her behavior.
**Try this:** Ask what your teen’s friends like to do, then plan those activities and include her friends. This way, your teen is having fun with her friends and you are able to supervise and influence them.

5. **Know your opinions and beliefs about alcohol and other drugs.** You can’t hope to influence young adults if you don’t know where you stand. Ask yourself these questions before you go a step further:

- If you are drinking or taking drugs, what are the positive reasons you have for doing so responsibly?
- What are your own family traditions about drinking or taking drugs?
- What are your opinions about drinking or drug use by others?
- What behavior do you feel is appropriate for you concerning drinking or drug use? What is inappropriate?
- What is appropriate behavior for your teenager or preteen?

6. **Learn how to spot the signs of alcohol or drug use.** Teens are horrible at hiding their alcohol or drug use, which means you can steer them in the right direction simply by learning what signs to watch for.

**Next step:** When you notice these signals, take action immediately. You must confront teens about possible drug use and try to help them find better ways to “act out.”
ALCOHOL SIGNS

You must constantly be on the watch for unexplained changes in physical appearance or behavior. If your teen or friend exhibits these signs, talk to him about what’s going on in his life. If you’re really worried, a doctor’s visit may be the best next step.

Here are a few common signs of alcohol use:

**Physical Signs**

- Change in sleeping patterns
- Bloodshot eyes
- Slurred or agitated speech
- Sudden or dramatic weight loss or gain
- Skin abrasions/bruises
- Neglected appearance/poor hygiene
- Sick more frequently
- Accidents or injuries

**Behavioral Signs**

- Hiding use, lying and covering up
- Sense that the person will “do anything” to use again, regardless of consequences
- Loss of control or choice of use (drug-seeking behavior)
- Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities
- Emotional instability
- Hyperactive or hyper-aggressive
- Depression
- Missing school or work
- Failure to fulfill responsibilities at school or work
- Complaints from teachers or co-workers
- Reports of intoxication at school or work
- Furtive or secretive behavior
- Avoiding eye contact
- Locked doors
- Going out every night
- Change in friends or peer group
- Change in clothing or appearance
- Unusual smells on clothing or breath
• Heavy use of over-the-counter preparations to reduce eye reddening, nasal irritation, or bad breath
• Hidden stashes of alcohol
• Alcohol missing from your supply
• Prescription medicine missing
• Money missing
• Valuables missing
• Disappearances for long periods of time
• Running away
• Secretive phone calls
• Unusual containers or wrappers

OTHER DRUG SIGNS

These warning signs are commonly seen in teens and other young adults who are abusing drugs—including prescription or over-the-counter drugs. Yet, even though some of these warning signs of drug abuse may be present, it does not mean that they are definitely abusing drugs.

If six of these signs, not all in the same category, are present for a period of time, you should talk to your teen (or friend) and seek some professional help.

Signs in the Home

• Loss of interest in family activities
• Disrespect for family rules
• Withdrawal from responsibilities
• Verbally or physically abusive
• Sudden increase or decrease in appetite
• Disappearance of valuable items or money
• Not coming home on time
• Not telling you where they are going
• Constant excuses for behavior
• Spending a lot of time in their rooms
• Lies about activities
• Finding the following: cigarette rolling papers, pipes, roach clips, small glass vials, plastic baggies, remnants of drugs (seeds, etc.)
Signs at School

- Sudden drop in grades
- Truancy
- Loss of interest in learning
- Sleeping in class
- Poor work performance
- Not doing homework
- Defiant of authority
- Poor attitude toward sports or other extracurricular activities
- Reduced memory and attention span
- Not informing you of teacher meetings, open houses, etc.

Physical and Emotional Signs

- Changes friends
- Smell of alcohol or marijuana on breath or body
- Unexplainable mood swings and behavior
- Negative, argumentative, paranoid or confused, destructive, anxious
- Over-reacts to criticism, acts rebellious
- Sharing few if any of their personal problems
- Doesn’t seem as happy as they used to be
- Overly tired or hyperactive
- Dramatic weight loss or gain
- Unhappy and depressed
- Cheats, steals
- Always needs money or has excessive amounts of money
- Sloppiness in appearance
MENTAL HEALTH LINK

If you think young adults only abuse drugs or alcohol because their friends are doing it or because it’s fun, you’re not only wrong—your teen could be in more trouble than you know. Studies have shown that teens with depression are more than twice as likely as their peers to abuse or become dependent on drugs. Plus, more than a dozen research studies suggest an increased risk of depression in teens who experiment with drugs than those who remain drug-free. Some studies even link drug use to increased instances of schizophrenia, anxiety, and suicide.

Problem: Millions of American teens are using drugs to medicate feelings of helplessness and loss of interest in normal daily activities. However, the drugs have the opposite effect and wind up making those feelings worse, according to the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy.
Teens “don’t want to go to mom, they don’t want to go to their pastor, so the safer thing to do is to self-medicate with marijuana and other drugs,” says Susan Lydick, coordinator of the Youth Suicide and Depression Initiative at the Fairfax Partnership for Youth in Virginia.

Stats: Weekly or more frequent drug use doubles teens’ risk of depression or anxiety. These other statistics are equally as scary:

- Two million teens report feelings of depression and loss of interest in daily activities during the past year, and that number increases 29 percent for high school students.
- Using drugs can cause depression and other mental illnesses.
- Drug use can worsen depression and lead to more serious mental illnesses such as schizophrenia, anxiety, and even suicide.
- Teens who use drugs at least once a month are three times more likely to have suicidal thoughts than non-users.
- The percentage of depressed teens is equal to the percentage of depressed adults, but depressed teens are more likely than depressed adults to medicate with drugs.
- Teen girls who use drugs daily are more likely to develop depression than girls who do not use drugs.

Even worse: Drugs don’t just make depression worse; they can cause certain conditions. “Not only are adolescents at greater risk for drug abuse, but they may suffer more consequences. There is also some evidence that, in vulnerable teens, because of genetic factors, the abuse of marijuana can trigger a schizophreniform disorder,” explains Dr. Nora Volkow, director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse.
If a teen in your life seems to suffer from depression or anxiety, seek help from a professional. You could eradicate their need for drugs by treating their mental illness.
METH FACTS

**Make sure meth is on your radar:** You know that teens are easily influenced to try alcohol or harder drugs, but methamphetamines are just as dangerous and widely available.

**Consider this:** More than half of U.S. teens admit that they have been offered methamphetamines, and many say their friends wouldn’t give them a hard time for experimenting with the drugs. The vast majority of users are female, while Hispanic teens are twice as likely to experiment with methamphetamines than any other ethnicity.

Simply educating yourself and your friends about the dangers and warning signs of methamphetamine use goes a long way in helping to combat the trend. Here’s what you need to know:

**Heard on the street:** Rarely will you hear someone talking about “methamphetamines.” Instead, listen for these key slang terms: meth, speed, chalk, ice, cristy, crystal, zip, go-fast, glass, crank, yaba, fire, tina, and tweak. If you hear someone using these terms, you should probably warn their families or close friends that they may have reason to be concerned.

**Watch for red flags:** There are a few telltale signs of methamphetamine use. They include sudden aggressive behavior, increased sweating and body odor, uncontrollable movements, excessive excitation, anxiousness and nervousness, and lack of interest in food or friends.

**Important:** Meth labs aren’t relegated to the back woods. They have been found in homes, apartments, hotels, and even vehicles in both urban and rural areas. That means they could exist in your neighborhood or near your church and you’d never be the wiser. However, there are some warning signs that could alert you to a meth lab. For instance:

- Strong odors that smell like cat urine, ammonia, vinegar, or rotten eggs
- Residents who exhibit paranoid behavior
- Residents who stay inside, but always smoke outside
- Residents who have frequent visitors at odd hours
- Residents who are active at odd hours (e.g., starting a construction project at 3 a.m.)
- Buildings with blackened or covered windows
- Open windows on cold days or at other inappropriate times

**Caution:** If you suspect a meth lab, your first step is to alert the police. You should never inspect a potential meth lab on your own. However, your next step is to ensure that your family and friends stay clear of the building until police officials are certain it is safe.
PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE

Taking prescription drugs in a way that hasn't been recommended by a doctor can be more dangerous than people think. In fact, it's drug abuse. And it's just as illegal as taking street drugs.

Unfortunately, many people experiment with prescription drugs because they think if a doctor prescribed a medicine, it must be safe. They also think prescription drugs are less addictive than street drugs. But nothing could be further from the truth.

**Epidemic:** Prescription drug abuse is sweeping through the United States in startling numbers. Because prescription drugs are readily available in many homes, teens and other young adults are more likely to grab a handful than they are to score heroin. For instance, a teen could easily abuse her sibling's ADHD medication or swipe a few painkillers left over from her father's back surgery.

While any narcotic is subject to abusive use, these prescription drugs are the ones most commonly abused by teens:

1. **Opioids**
   **Examples:** oxycodone (OxyContin), hydrocodone (Vicodin), and meperidine (Demerol)
   **Medical uses:** Opioids are used to treat pain or relieve coughs or diarrhea.
   **How they work:** Prevent the brain from receiving pain messages.

2. **Central Nervous System (CNS) Depressants**
   **Examples:** pentobarbital sodium (Nembutal), diazepam (Valium), and alprazolam (Xanax)
   **Medical uses:** CNS depressants are used to treat anxiety, tension, panic attacks, and sleep disorders.
   **How they work:** Relax and calm the nervous system.

3. **Stimulants**
   **Examples:** methylphenidate (Ritalin) and amphetamine/dextroamphetamine (Adderall)
   **Medical uses:** Stimulants can be used to treat narcolepsy and ADHD.
   **How they work:** Increase brain activity and provide great alertness and energy.

4. **Over the counter**
   **Example:** dextromethorphan (DXM)
   **Medical uses:** Commonly found in cough medicines
   **How it works:** Suppresses coughs, but, in high doses, can lead to hallucinations.
**Tough spot:** You can quickly become addicted to prescription drugs without meaning to, because the drugs are so powerful. If a doctor prescribes a pain medication, stimulant, or CNS depressant, follow the directions exactly. Here are some other ways to protect you:

Keep all doctors’ appointments. Your doctor will want you to visit often so he or she can monitor how well the medication is working for you and adjust the dose or change the medication as needed. Some medications must be stopped or changed after a while so you don’t become addicted.

Make a note of the effects the drug has on your body and emotions, especially in the first few days, as your body gets used to it. Tell your doctor about these.

Keep any information your pharmacist gives you about any drugs or activities you should steer clear of while taking your prescription. Reread it often to remind yourself of what you should avoid. If the information is too long or complicated, ask a parent or your pharmacist to give you the highlights.

Don’t increase or decrease the dose of your medication without checking with your doctor’s office first—no matter how you’re feeling.

As with another drug, if a young adult seems addicted to a prescription drug, the best first step is to consult an addiction professional.
TOBACCO HARMS TO YOUTH

Everyday, some 80,000-100,000 young people around the world become addicted to tobacco. If current trends continue, 250 million children alive today will die from tobacco-related disease. Tobacco is the single most preventable cause of death in the world today. Unless urgent action is taken to stop a new generation of smokers, there will be more than 8 million deaths every year by 2030.

Global Tobacco Use among Youth
Tobacco use among adolescents is a major public health problem around the world.

- More than 17% of youth aged 13-15 years use some form of tobacco product.
- 9.5% of students currently smoke cigarettes and one in 10 students currently use tobacco products other than cigarettes (e.g., pipes, smokeless tobacco, bidis).
- Cigarette use among students is the highest in the European Region (19.2%), while use of other forms of tobacco products is highest in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (12%).

Global Youth Exposure to Secondhand Smoke (SHS)
Even for youth who do not smoke, exposure to secondhand smoke is high.

- 42.5% of students (13-15 years) are exposed to secondhand smoke in the home.
- More than half (55.1%) of students are exposed to SHS in public places.
- 78.3% of students in all regions think smoking should be banned in all public places.

Harms At or Around Birth
The health of pregnant women and their unborn child are constantly put at risk by exposure to SHS. Studies show that around 20-50 percent of pregnant women smoke or are exposed to passive smoking.

- Smoking and exposure to SHS among pregnant women causes spontaneous abortions, ectopic pregnancies, still-born births, low-birth-weight babies, and other pregnancy and delivery complications needing neonatal intensive care.
- After birth, the effects of exposure still linger, increasing the chances of sudden infant death syndrome, respiratory disorders, ear and eye problems, growth and mental retardation, attention deficit disorder, other learning and developmental problems.

Harms to Youth from Smoking by Family Members
Parental or other household smoking after birth also increases the chances that exposed children will suffer from smoking related coughing and wheezing, bronchitis, asthma, pneumonia, potentially fatal lower respiratory tract infections, eye and ear problems, or injury or death from cigarette-caused fires.
Harms to Youth from Their Own Smoking

**Short-term Effects**
Most people focus on long term risks and believe that harms from smoking do not appear for many years. But many health consequences can occur quite quickly.

- Smoking causes mild airway obstruction, reduced lung function, and slowed growth of lung function among adolescents.\(^{18,19}\)
- The resting heart rates of young adult smokers are two to three beats per minute faster than nonsmokers; and studies have shown that early signs of heart disease and stroke can be found in youth who smoke.\(^{20}\)

**Long-term Effects**
Lifetime addiction to tobacco usually begins before the age of 18.\(^{21}\) Long-term tobacco use causes numerous cancers and chronic diseases including lung cancer, stomach cancer, stroke, and coronary heart disease.\(^{22}\) Half of all long-term smokers will die of tobacco-related diseases.\(^{23}\)

### Actions to Reduce Tobacco’s Deadly Toll
- Monitor tobacco use and assess the impact of tobacco prevention policies.
- Protect people from secondhand smoke.
- Offer help to every tobacco user to quit.
- Warn and effectively educate every person about the dangers of tobacco use through strong, graphic pictorial health warnings and hard hitting, sustained mass media public education campaigns.
- Enact and enforce comprehensive bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship and the use of misleading terms, such as “light” or “low tar.”
- Raise the price of all tobacco products by increasing tobacco taxes.

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MYTHS & TRUTHS

Young adults have millions of sources for information about drugs and alcohol, thanks to friends, television, and the Internet. Share these myths with them to help them cut through any confusion and get the real scoop.

*Myth:* Marijuana is not harmful because it is “all natural” and comes from a plant.
*Truth:* Marijuana smoke contains some of the same cancer-causing compounds as tobacco, sometimes in higher concentrations.

*Myth:* It’s okay to use marijuana as long as you’re not a chronic user or “stoner.”
*Truth:* Occasional use can lead to frequent use.

*Myth:* Because sniffing powdered heroin doesn’t require needles, it isn’t very risky (40% of high school seniors polled do not believe there is a great risk in trying heroin).
*Truth:* Heroin is dangerous no matter how it’s ingested. Once addicted to heroin, users may eventually switch to injecting the drug because it’s cheaper.

*Myth:* Drugs are not that dangerous and I can handle it.
*Truth:* Drug use is extremely unpredictable and affects people differently. Anyone can become addicted to drugs.

*Myth:* Everyone is doing it.
*Truth:* Research shows that more than four out of five eighth graders have not used drugs in the past month. Even among high school seniors (the group with the highest rate of marijuana use), only a quarter of those polled in a national study reported using drugs in the last month. In any given school, most students aren’t doing drugs.

*Myth:* Drug addiction is voluntary.
*Truth:* While, at first, drug use may be a choice, over time, a drug alters the chemistry of the brain and body, resulting in a compulsive need for the drug. Addiction is not a voluntary choice, but rather, a side effect of drug abuse.

*Myth:* Helpful drugs are those that are legal, while harmful drugs are illegal.
*Truth:* It does not matter whether a drug is legal or illegal; all drugs can be abused. Even if a federally regulated drug is considered “safe,” misuse and abuse of this drug can still have harmful effects.

*Myth:* Combining drugs is not harmful.
*Truth:* Mixing drugs can be extremely dangerous. Many times, overdose and death occur as a result of combining drugs. Examples include mixing certain prescription drugs together or combining illegal drugs with alcohol.
**Myth:** Addicts cannot recover.
**Truth:** There have been numerous cases in which individuals have successfully recovered from addiction at a drug treatment facility. Not everyone recovers from drug dependency, but with the proper drug rehab program and abstinence from drugs, successful recovery is possible.

**Myth:** Pregnant women can take drugs without having to worry about harmful side effects.
**Truth:** When a woman is pregnant, any drugs taken can be harmful and dangerous to the fetus. Drugs, including prescription drugs, are able to enter the developing fetus by breaking through the placenta barrier. Breast feeding is also dangerous for the baby if drugs are taken.

**Myth:** All drug abusers are middle-aged men.
**Truth:** Anyone can become a drug addict or abuser. In fact, over the past years, the ratio of men and women drug users has slowly become more even. And more young people are addicted to drugs than ever before.

**Myth:** Driving is not affected by the influence of drugs.
**Truth:** Drugs negatively affect driving ability. Many drugs impair coordination, weaken muscles, and affect attention span and judgment, as well as blur your vision.

**Myth:** More than anything else, drug addiction is a character flaw.
**Truth:** Drug addiction is a brain disease. Every type of drug abuse has its own individual mechanism for changing how the brain functions—which changes people’s behaviors.

**Myth:** You have to want drug treatment for it to be effective.
**Truth:** The two primary reasons people seek drug treatment are because the court ordered them to or loved ones urged them to seek treatment. However, once in treatment, addicts tend to get better, regardless of why they asked for help.

**Myth:** Treatment for drug addiction should be a one-shot deal.
**Truth:** Like many other illnesses, drug addiction typically is a chronic disorder. To be sure, some people can quit drug use “cold turkey,” or they can quit after receiving treatment just one time at a rehabilitation facility. But most people who abuse drugs require longer-term treatment and, in many instances, repeat treatments.

**Myth:** We should strive to find a “magic bullet” to treat all forms of drug abuse.
**Truth:** There is no “one size fits all” form of drug treatment, much less a magic bullet that suddenly will cure addiction. Different people have different drug abuse-related problems, and they respond very differently to treatment.
Quizzes

1. Pot Facts

Question 1. Teens who use marijuana weekly have _________ of depression later in life.
   a) No risk
   b) Double the risk
   c) Triple the risk

Question 2. What part of the brain is most influenced by smoking pot?
   a) Prefrontal cortex
   b) Hypothalamus
   c) Limbic system

Question 3. What is NOT a short-term effect of smoking weed?
   a) Problems with memory and learning
   b) Lung cancer
   c) Paranoia and increased heart rate

Bonus Question. A student who smokes pot may do poorly on a test given the next day because of weed's effect on what brain area?
   a) Hippocampus
   b) Hypothalamus
   c) Prefrontal Cortex

2. General Drugs

1. The most commonly abused drug in the United States is:
   a) Marijuana
   b) Alcohol
   c) Cocaine
   d) Heroin

2. Most drug users make their first contact with illicit drugs:
   a) Through drug dealers
   b) Through friends
   c) Accidentally
   d) On their own
3. More people die each year in the U.S. as a result of:
   a) Alcohol
   b) Tobacco
   c) Heroin
   d) Cocaine

4. The majority of inhalant users are:
   a) Men
   b) Children
   c) Women
   d) The elderly

5. Marijuana in small amounts is legal in the United States.
   a) True
   b) False

6. Marijuana is much stronger today than it was 10 years ago.
   a) True
   b) False

7. Marijuana can stay in the body up to:
   a) 2 days
   b) 1 week
   c) 1 month

8. The use of alcohol and other drugs during pregnancy:
   a) Should stop after 12 weeks
   b) Is a risk at any point
   c) In small doses is not a risk

9. LSD is a hallucinogen.
   a) True
   b) False

10. A shot of hard liquor contains the same amount of pure alcohol as a can of beer.
    a) True
    b) False

11. In the U.S., one must be _____ years old to legally purchase cigarettes.
    a) 18
    b) 20
    c) 21
12. In the U.S., one must be _____ years old to legally purchase alcohol.
   a) 20
   b) 21
   c) 19

13. A cold shower or a cup of black coffee will sober up a person that has been drinking.
   a) True
   b) False

   a) True
   b) False

15. The chemical in marijuana that causes the high is:
   a) Nicotine
   b) THC
   c) MDMA

16. A blunt is marijuana in a:
   a) Cigarette
   b) Cigar
   c) Pipe

17. Crack is one of the most addictive drugs available today.
   a) True
   b) False

18. The high from a typical dose of crack lasts:
   a) 1 hour
   b) 30 minutes
   c) 5 minutes

19. PCP is also known as:
   a) Acid
   b) Smack
   c) Angel dust
   d) Ludes

20. Physical dependence can involve painful withdrawal symptoms when the drug is no longer being used.
   a) True
   b) False
ANSWERS

Pot Facts:

1: B. Young people who use marijuana weekly double their chances of developing depression later in life. Also, teens who smoke pot weekly are three times more likely than non-users to have suicidal thoughts.

2: C. They are all affected but, the limbic system is most influenced by pot because of the high number of CB (cannabinoid) receptors. THC, the main active ingredient in marijuana, attaches to and activates the CB receptors and interferes with the normal functioning of the brain.

3: B. All of these risks could be brought on by smoking pot. But lung cancer is a long-term risk of smoking weed since it contains some of the same cancer-causing chemicals found in cigarettes.

Bonus question: A. The hippocampus is an important brain area for processing memory. Pot smokers have trouble remembering things because of the drug’s effect on this area.

General Drugs:

1. B. Alcohol
2. B. Through friends
3. B. Tobacco
4. B. Children
5. B. False
6. A. True
7. C. 1 month
8. B. Is a risk at any point
9. A. True
10. A. True
11. A. 18
12. B. 21
13. B. False
14. A. True
15. B. THC
16. B. Cigar
17. A. True
18. C. 5 minutes
19. C. Angel dust
20. A. True
HadEnough Memberships:
A Global Health Movement of United Methodist Youth & Young Adults

www.umspasrv.org/hadenough

HadEnough members are young people—teens, young adults, youth groups, campus groups, and others—that promote healthy lifestyles and wise decisions by young people and by adults.

The youth and young adults of The United Methodist Church help shape social values and build skills critical for resisting drug use. Just like clergy and other leaders in your church, young United Methodists are in a unique position to help other youth, parents, clergy, and others in your congregations and neighborhoods. Young people of faith know best how to engage youth, parents, schools, and citizens in the United Methodist message that they have "had enough"!

What do HadEnough members do?
Had Enough members participate in a variety of activities, both as individuals and in groups. These are just a few examples:

• Volunteer in their churches and communities
• Connect inter-generationally, helping older adults as well as younger peers, in youth-to-youth mentoring programs
• Participate in Awareness Worship Services and guide Sunday School
• Organize drug-free events for homecoming, after-prom, graduation, and other milestone events
• Convey prevention messages through stickers, t-shirts, buttons, and posters
• Participate in sports, music, arts, clubs, and activities in their churches
• Organize creative campaigns for Red Ribbon Week (commitment to drug free lifestyle) and other national and international dates of note

Activities: Send your stories and ideas about HadEnough activities to share with other groups; email us at spsarp@gbgm-umc.org.
HOW DO I OR MY GROUP JOIN HAD ENOUGH?

Establish a Covenant: A covenant is a commitment between two parties to do or not do something specified. As United Methodists, we are in a covenant with fellow United Methodists, as well as with God. Your agreement is that you will strive to grow in your Christian faith, and your fellow United Methodists will support you in your journey, as you will them. As HadEnough members, you are in a covenant with your fellow members, The United Methodist Church, and SPSARV. You’re agreeing to do your best to live a healthy lifestyle, make wise decisions, support your group and community to do the same, and to make your voice heard on the issues of substance abuse and related violence.

Participate: Participants should be an active member of a United Methodist Church. Seek to be informed, compassionate responders to alcohol and other drug concerns. It is highly recommend that participants work with your youth group in your church and with your community on individual development, retreats, church initiatives, fundraising, and mission trips.

Keep Track: Using your HadEnough activity sheet, you will keep track of your individual and group accomplishments. You and/or your group will earn “points” that get recognition and program materials to go even further with HadEnough.

Get Incentives: When your HadEnough membership takes off and you begin to track your goals and achievements, the points you and your group earn can be used to get recognition around United Methodist Connections on the web and in print, as well as cool opportunities for programs and materials.

Join United Methodists around the globe and get involved with HadEnough email us at: spsarv@gbgm-umc.org
HadEnough Covenant

As a part of the HadEnough movement against substance abuse and related violence, I/we, the signer(s) of this charter, ________________________ make the following commitments to our God, ourselves, our friends, and our families:

1. Our first commitment is to God, whom we thank for the gift of our bodies and minds. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

2. Our second commitment is to ourselves, as individuals made in God's image. (Genesis 1:26-27) We will actively promote our personal health and wholeness.

3. Our third commitment is to our friends and families, for whom we will strive to set a good example with our knowledge and discipline. (Hebrews 12:1-3)

4. Our fourth commitment is to one another and to (if appropriate, the name of your group or organization) ________________________, where we will receive support, love and encouragement for healthy lifestyles and decision making and will provide the same.

   I/We will strive to make healthy choices for myself/ourselves.
   I/We will educate myself/ourselves.
   I/We will educate others who seek the knowledge I/we have.
   I/We will strive to be a role model(s) for those who look up to me/us.

Signed (names of individuals, or members of a group or organization):

______________________________________________  __________________________________________
______________________________________________  __________________________________________
______________________________________________  __________________________________________
______________________________________________  __________________________________________

Return this document to:

Special Program on Substance Abuse and Related Violence
General Board of Global Ministries, The United Methodist Church
475 Riverside Drive, 3rd Floor, New York, New York 10115

You may also download this form from the SPSARV website, http://www.umspsrv.org.
Resources

Want more info or need help? Here are some helpful phone numbers, hotlines, and websites:

**Alcohol**
- Alateen: Look in your local phone book or go to these websites: www.alateen.org, alcoholism.about.com/msubteen.htm, substanceabuse.about.com
- Alcohol Abuse Prevention, http://alcoholfacts.org/
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/
- Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Prevention Global Network, http://www.drugnet.net/
- Leadership to Keep Children Alcohol Free, http://www.alcoholfreechildren.org/
- Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), http://www.madd.org/
- National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, 1-800-622-2255; www.ncadd.org
- The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, http://www.jointogether.org/
- ParentsEmpowered.org, www.parents empowered.org
- Too Smart to Start, http://www.toosmarttostart.samhsa.gov/
- Warning Signs, http://www.warningsigns.info/
Other Drugs
Campaign For Tobacco-Free Kids, www.tobaccofreekids.org
Center for Substance Abuse Treatment hotline, 1-800-662-HELP; www.treatment.org
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America, http://www.cadca.org/
The Community Partnership, http://www.communityprevention.org/
DEA Think Twice, http://www.justthinktwice.com/
Foundation for a Drug-Free World, http://www.drugfreeworld.org/#/home
The Meth Project, http://www.methproject.org/
MethResources.gov, http://www.methresources.gov/
National Families in Action, A Guide to the Drug-Prevention Movement,
http://www.nationalfamilies.org/prevention/index.html
Neo Teenline, 1-800-272-TEEN (8336)
Office of National Drug Control Policy, DrugStory.org,
Partnership for a Drug-Free America, http://www.drugfree.org
Partners for Meth Prevention, http://www.endmeth.info/
Prevention First, Inc., http://www.prevention.org/
Reconnecting Youth Inc., http://www.reconnectingyouth.com/
StopDrugs.org, California Department of Justice, http://www.stopdrugs.org/
U.S. Dept. of Justice Drug Enforcement Administration, Get it Straight!,
http://www.usdoj.gov/dea/pubs/straight/cover.htm
State Links
California Dept. of Alcohol and Drug Programs, http://www.adp.state.ca.us/
Colorado AHEC, http://hschealth.uchsc.edu/ahec/fas/
Faces of Meth, Multnomah County (Oregon) Sheriff’s Office,
    http://www.nothingpretty.org/real.htm
Meth Prevention and Awareness Project of South Dakota, http://www.mappsd.org/
Safe State (California) http://safestate.org/

Suicide
1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433). For licensed and trained counselors call 24/7.
AboutFace Assemblies, aboutfaceassemblies.com, 1-800-491-2550
Covenant House: 1-800-999-9999
HadEnough
A Guidebook and Devotional for United Methodist Young People
with devozine Devotions

www.umspsarv.org

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