

The Fight Against Drugs in High School

by Chandrima Bhadra

In high school, maintaining good grades, a social life, a job, and countless other activities is hard, and many teenagers find themselves turning to drugs as an escape from their troubles. The use of drugs in high school is one of the most distressing problems in society, and seems to be rising in the youth of today. Whether it starts because of peer pressure, negative influences or off-putting situations, drug use can escalate until the individual no longer has control over themselves or the situation. The use of drugs in schools needs to be acknowledged and addressed before it gets to a point of no return.

One of the first actions that should be taken is implementing a better education towards drugs and their effects. Most of the youth of today know that drugs are bad and illegal, but they do not know why. Many teenagers only care about the present, not the future, and not much is being done to fix this ignorance. In my school, Cleveland Heights High School, only 9 weeks of taking a Health course is required to graduate. In this class, only about 2-3 weeks are spent on drugs. This means that of the 144 weeks that a high school student spends in school, only 2-3 are spent on educating them about drugs. I have found that many times this lack of knowledge about the effects of using a drug is what allows a teenager to justify taking the drug. If they are not aware of the negative consequences of the drug, then in their minds, these negative consequences do not exist.

I can recall a time in middle school, when I read an article about the effects of smoking in a text book. The article showed a comparison between a pair of twin sisters, one who smoked, and one who did not. The sister who smoked looked about twenty years older than the one who did not, had yellow teeth, and saggy, discolored skin. Even now that imagery is very vivid in my mind, and it is one of the strongest points that cement my resolve to never smoke. The fact that this impression from my early education stuck with me enough to discourage drug use only strengthens the idea that a greater education about drugs and their consequences will lead to a better informed youth which will have them thinking twice about using drugs.

Another effective action would be to establish strong moral beliefs and values. Acknowledging the difference between right and wrong can be what leads a person to make correct decisions. Good moral character is originally established when a person is young, from the authority of their family, parents or other role models. However, ethics are not set in stone, and a teenager attending high school is still susceptible to outside characters that can influence their moral beliefs or standards. This is why it is important to have teachers, counselors, and other adult figures in the schools maintain a sturdy moral foundation; because it can make a difference in the lives of the students. What a student learns from their teachers, whether it be part of the curriculum or not, stays with them for a very long time.

School security must also be increased and upgraded. In Heights High School, security towards things such as drugs and cigarettes is abysmal. Although there are many security guards in the schools, they do not do much if a student's actions are not an immediate threat to safety. On one occasion, I have observed a security guard tell two students who were exchanging weed outside of their lockers to "put that away while you're in school". The fact that nothing else was done and that the students didn't get in trouble astounded me. Essentially, those students were told that what they were doing was okay, as long as it didn't occur during school.

The possession of drugs and the use of drugs must be strictly banned in schools. Better measures should be implemented, such as random searches or drug tests where the students found using are punished in a way that will have a long term effect. Security guards should be told to patrol the areas inside and outside the school for students who may be using or selling. And something should be done when a

student is caught that will affect the student beneficially. A suspension is essentially a slap on the wrist. If the students who we caught are sent to a class on drugs or to see a drug counselor, then there is a much higher possibility that the individual may be influenced in a positive way.

The years of high school can be some of the most influential years in an individual's life. The school has the chance to change some of the negative choices that a student can make to positive choices. With the right education and guidance, a student can be made aware of the other options that are available to them. If the drug use in high school is recognized and attended to, then there are many individuals whose lives could be affected for the better.