

Substance abuse and america's youth essay

[Life](#), [Friendship](#)



The use of drugs and alcohol -for some - begin at a young age when that happens; the rate of drug and alcohol abuse increases. " Recent research has focused on the association between the age at which a person first uses alcohol and alcohol problems later on in life. Persons reporting first use of alcohol before age 15 were more than 5 times more likely to report past year alcohol dependency or abuse than persons who first used alcohol at age 21 or older.

" (Grant, B. F. ; Dawson, D. A, 1997) Drug and alcohol abuse is a serious matter and could have lasting effect of a person's life and their families as well. Young people believe that getting hooked on drugs could never happen to them, what they fail to realize is that all it takes is a one-time use to become dependent. The start of drug use may begin as a recreational use and as they continue using it becomes more of a dependency. Over time their life begins to unravel and spiral out of control, the only important reality to them will become that drug. " Problematic substance use is when drug use dominates a person's life at the expense of other activities and has adverse consequences for their mental and/or physical health.

" (Daley, K. ; Chamberlin, C. 2009) What may start out as just having fun quickly becomes a way of life and a lifelong battle to overcome. There are many organizations that try to get their messages about drug and alcohol use and its affects out to young people. These organizations such as D.

A. R. E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) and The Meth Project - to name a couple - target young people because they (young people) truly believe that they are immune to the adverse affects drugs have on people. That

mentality comes from a I'm young and can bounce back attitude, the truth is most of them won't bounce back and will probably end up dead from an overdose. The number of teenage deaths associated with methamphetamine alone are outrageous, the number is somewhere between the hundreds of thousands. " A site that the state's attorneys general produced last year called ' Meth is Death' claimed: one in seven high school students will try meth, 99% of first-time users will be hooked after the first try, only 5% of meth addicts are able to kick it and stay away, and the life expectancy of a habitual meth user if only five years.

" (Sullum, J. 2006) When viewing these television ads one may think they are a bit too much or too obsessive, that it isn't a true reality. The truth is not only is it a reality, it is a sad one.

As in the case of the ad on The Meth Project entitled ' Just Once', this young girl believed that trying a drug " just once" won't lead to another " just once" incident but that isn't the case. She begins by snorting cocaine, then goes into smoking meth, then she is stealing from her mother, then the viewer see's she is willing to sleep with a strange man to support her habit and lastly the viewer see's the girl's younger sister saying she is going to smoke meth " just once" while she is taking the drug out of her older sister's pants pocket. Why did the younger sister do that? Because she was privy to her older sister's behavior from the beginning, when an individual comes from a background where substance abuse is seen on a daily basis or is accepted, they too begin to use drugs. " Structural or contextual factors help explain why young people make the transition from recreational drug use to

substance abuse. First, most of the young people had been involved in the state care and protection system; others came from families where violence and neglect were evident. These young people were raised in families where substance abuse was either acceptable or encouraged, finally most young people became homeless after leaving school, when recreational substance use turned into substance abuse. " (Daley, K. , ; Chamberlin, C.

2009) When it comes to drug use it is apparent it is never " just once" stronger drugs such as heroine, crystal meth, crack/cocaine and the like grip and individual after the first use making it harder not to do it again. There are many reasons why young people use and abuse drugs and alcohol. Dr. Johnston, Ph. D. from the Institute for Social Research conducted a study of drug use on American adolescents and concluded that the reasons most young people provided for using drugs are as follows: " to experiment, to feel good/get high, have a good time with friends, get more energy, relieve tension, boredom, get away from problems, to fit in with a specific group/acceptance, out of anger or frustration, to get through the day and because they are hooked. Johnston, L.

D. , 1998) Psychologically the reason why most young people are abusing drugs is to escape, they are escaping negative behaviors, a negative family life, child hood trauma and they believe they have no other means of escape except drugs. Reaching these young individuals would be challenging but not impossible, simply because most of them want to feel loved, accepted and appreciated. There is still hope for the youth in America.