



# A Deeper Reason Behind Substance Abuse

By Ashley Andrews

As a senior in high school, I've been introduced to an environment of curiosity and exploration. The natural teenage rebellion and excitement at the root of it all. While it's natural for young adults to experiment with drugs and alcohol, there are times it is taken too far. We all hear stories of this curiosity increasing into dangerous and problematic outcomes. I am one of those stories.

My senior year of high school I was involved in a relationship with a boy who I cared for deeply. When things abruptly ended it sent shock waves through my veins, my heart was shattered. It's common knowledge that breaking up with your first love is heart wrenching, but it is not the end of the world, unless you allow it to be. It was this reason that I explored my curiosity of alcohol and turned it into an act of abuse against myself. On the night of my school's homecoming dance, I replaced my ghost of a date with a bottle of Vodka. As I ate dinner with friends before the dance, I began my path of destruction. I watched couples bathe in the moment of pure young love and romanticized the idea of the fancy night which I was not having. With each pang of sadness that washed over me, I took a shot. Tipsy

me made my way to the dance with my friends, trying to drink my emotions away. Finally putting the bottle down, I stumbled into the dance. I danced and jumped, while I couldn't stop laughing, deep down I was sad and I wasn't able to actually enjoy it.

The next thing I remember was lifting my head above the toilet seat, my sweating body, cold against the bathroom floor. I heard music in the background accompanied with the sounds of everlasting memories being created by my sober peers. A few hours later I woke up in the hospital after the ambulance picked me up from my school. It was then I realized, I had drank myself sick and drowned myself in embarrassment all for a boy who didn't want me. That was my encounter with alcohol abuse. The situation scared me. To know I could lose that much control to a point I couldn't remember anything and all for a person, is terrifying. Not only was it horrifying to me, but everyone else around me. It was this fear that led the course of my punishment. I was suspended from school, but instead of a yelling lecture, I received a session of therapy. Instead of chores, my parents had me read a book on mental strength and instead of juvenile detention, I participated

in an alcohol class with other teens to learn and explore alcohol and all of its effects.

The way my community nurtured my situation and dealt with it through an act of concern instead of anger was extremely beneficial to not only my healing process but to my future. Usually, a kid would be subjected to hours of lecturing, grounded forever, and scolded. I was lucky. It would be easy to have been yelled at and criticized, I was already so embarrassed and disappointed in myself. But instead I was forced to look deep down inside myself and ask myself "why?" There is a deeper reason behind alcohol and drug abuse and the only way to stop it is to address that reason.

The way my community helped me look into my mental health and forced me to learn about being brave has changed my entire world perspective. I've learned through therapy and mental health teaching that I am a strong woman. No man or person will ever have that control over me. And no person is worth drinking myself into a blackout, because you always wake up and that pain never leaves after the alcohol leaves. I've learned how to deal with my situations in the hardest way possible, confronting them head on. It's easy to pick up a bottle but it's a lot harder to be mentally strong and get drunk on the fact that you have the power to control your life. I believe the way my situation was dealt with should be procedure. I was forced to decide my values and my decisions in a way I never would have had I been lectured or sitting in juvenile detention. While getting drunk at my school dance and being taken away by an ambulance followed by a three day suspension and teasing, was torturous, I wouldn't take it back. I've learned how strong I can be and I've also learned alcohol is a weak man's game. 🚫

## ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Ashley Andrews is a recent high school graduate from Colorado. *Alert Magazine* congratulates her for winning the Alert Scholarship and we encourage her in the pursuit of her academic goals. We would also like to encourage future seniors to participate in our scholarship program.