



High in Life, Not Drugs

By Brian Thanh

“Whether you think you can or you think you can't, you're right." (Henry Ford). Self-confidence is a powerful thing. As human beings, we are wired to follow in what we think and what we believe. Drug addiction is a problem that has been increasing immensely among society today. People mistakenly use drugs as a way to escape reality as well as to ease pain, and the consequences can hinder and restrain people from accomplishing goals, dreams, or even their way of living. There is more to life than taking drugs and alcohol and having one person recover from drug abuse can be an inspiration to others.


My friend, (confidential name), whom I've known since childhood, had always believed that drugs and alcohol would make life more interesting. He was a hard-working guy, who loved socializing, spending time with his girlfriend, and playing video games. Although I'd always thought he was a positive guy with a great personality, he had a story that proves one can change their life for the better. His mother and father got divorced when he was ten, and not too long afterwards, his father met another woman who soon became my friend's stepmom. The couple had a kid together, a son named Kyle. Everyone was happy and life for my friend was slowly getting back on track after the emotional impact from the divorce. Everything was

getting better, until he'd discovered that his stepmom has anger issues and often threatened to hurt his family. He had asked his father multiple times to leave her, but his response was always, "I can't, it's for Kyle." His stepmom believed everything can be fixed with violence and because his father won't do anything about it, he often thought about leaving home until his stepmom departs from his life.

One night he called me while I was asleep. At first I didn't recognize his voice nor his tone, so I asked whom I was speaking to. He responded, "It's me, your best friend." I asked, "Are you okay? You sound different." I wasn't sure if it was me being tired, but I could've sworn I heard him crying on the other side. I was too naive to realize he was intoxicated for he kept slurring his words and cutting off mid-sentence. Eventually, he admitted that he had been drinking ever since he'd gotten into a fight with his stepmom. We talked the whole night, and I listened to him telling me what had happened that caused tension between him and his stepmom. His stepmom doesn't trust him with her son and she's very judgmental towards him. They both have a totally different outlook on life, and their disagreement has led them to develop hatred for each other. Whenever his stepmom is causing trouble for him, he would resort to drinking and smoking marijuana as a way to escape his prob-

lems and make them disappear when his stepmom wouldn't. Life was becoming more stressful and all he wanted was for her to leave and never come back. I didn't want to lecture him on substance abuse, so instead I told him, "Hey, let's hang out tomorrow."

I went over to his house the next morning and asked him to go jogging with me. He never liked doing any sort of physical activity, but he'll do anything to get away from his stepmom. We jogged around a nearby lake, and the whole time we were jogging, we never spoke once. After we finished jogging, we met up with a group of friends at a small restaurant for lunch and watched a movie later that night. I drove him home after the movies and instead of dropping him off and saying goodbye, we sat and stayed in the car talking about life. The whole time we were talking, I couldn't stop thinking about how many times I wasn't there for my best friend. His parents were divorced when he was young and he was abused by his stepmother who never loved or accepted him. I know he didn't ask for that chapter, but it's a part of his story. I never knew that someone who had always been positive and cheerful would go to such great lengths to hide their feelings for such a long period of time. Especially from his best friend.

I don't remember how long we talked, but I do remember it was hours past midnight by the time we finished. We were both tired, so he got out of the car and before he closed the door he said to me, "Hey, thanks for listening." He smiled as he closed the door and walked towards the steps of his front porch. He was ready to face life with confidence. I learned that it is important to look out for one another and understand that everyone has a story. We all get addicted to something that takes away the pain and helps us forget those who hurt. I wished that I could've been there for my friend sooner so he never had to put himself in the position of taking drugs. "One of the most valuable things we can do to heal one another is listen to each other's stories." (Rebecca Falls) 

ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Brian Thanh is a recent high school graduate from Minnesota. *Alert Magazine* congratulates him for winning the Alert Scholarship and we encourage him in the pursuit of his academic goals. We would also like to encourage future seniors to participate in our scholarship program.