



# My Personal Experience with Drugs

By Michael Hoover

one of our state colleges and will begin there next fall.

What went right? Enrolling in outpatient treatment was the thing that really helped me learn what I was doing to my body, my future, and my family. In a setting that was free from the emotions and tension that had built up in my family, I was able to learn about the long-lasting impacts that the drugs that I was using could have on my life, as well as the far more scary impacts that harder drugs would have if I moved onto them. I also gained an appreciation for the fact that my parents and family were so concerned about me. I went through treatment with other teenagers who didn't live with both parents, whose parents and other family members were doing drugs at home, or who had been kicked out or had to leave their home. For teenagers struggling with drugs, or even just getting into drugs, I would recommend enrolling in an outpatient treatment program with people your own age and taking it seriously.

What went wrong? At some point, I was scared and realized I needed help, but I didn't turn to my parents or other adults who could have helped me. By then, it felt like my parents and I were in a war against each other, with me plotting on how to get and use drugs, and them plotting on keeping me locked up at home. I wish I could have stopped viewing them as the enemy and just told them what was happening because when I later did that, they didn't yell, lock me up, or get me in trouble. They enrolled me in outpatient treatment, drove me there and back three times a week, and moved to a new city to give me a new start. I realize now that they were as scared as me and didn't know what to do, but when we began to talk candidly about what was going on, we were able to partner together to combat my drug use. 🚫

Drugs almost caused me to lose everything I cared about, until I opened my eyes and began to fight back. For most of my life I was a normal kid. Most days I spent meeting friends, doing homework, practicing viola, and spending time with my family. School was my priority, until sophomore year. I began smoking marijuana and my life forever changed. Old friends were replaced with new ones who, to say the least, were not on the college track. School became a tedious chore, and my parents just a barrier to drugs. It was as if my life was engulfed in flames, quickly burning away everything I had once cared about and leaving nothing behind but ash.

My grades and spirit plummeted. For months, I fought with my parents, insisting they were overreacting" because I was "just" using marijuana. I began lying to them and sneaking out of the house to smoke. One evening, I hit my rock bottom. I punched my dad and left home, spending the next few nights partying. But a nagging voice told me everything was falling apart. I returned home and was placed in juvenile detention for several days. I began to reflect on my decisions in a sober state of mind and questioned what I was doing to my family and my

own life. For the first time I asked, "Is this really who I want to be?"

I decided to reclaim my life. I enrolled in outpatient treatment, meeting kids from dramatically different backgrounds, brought together by a shared commitment to sobriety. After treatment, I enrolled in a three-month conflict resolution class. With a few months left in the school year, I worked on raising my grades. I avoided my old "party" friends, but saw them in the hall. I craved a fresh start, which my parents supported. They sold our house and we moved 35 miles south to a new school district.

I began junior year of high school knowing no one. But, I soon met new friends — the type of friends I grew up with, who valued education and family. I met teachers who were passionate about what they taught and who cared about every student. I completed junior year with a fresh, sober, appreciative mindset and an eagerness to excel. I achieved a perfect score on the AP Calculus AB Exam and earned a 1470 on the new SAT. In my senior year I am taking calculus, was an independent study, acted as a teacher's assistant for a freshman algebra class, and was chosen as a peer mentor to coach and lead other students. I have been accepted into the Honors program at

## ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Michael Hoover is a recent high school graduate from Washington. *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.