



I Was Never Told the Consequences

By Katlyne Hytrek

Drug and Alcohol abuse has become an epidemic in the United States. More and more people are misusing drugs and/or alcohol. Among that growing number, teenagers are the worst. Compared to the rest of the population in the United States, teenagers are, statistically, much more rebellious. They are willing to take dangerous or illegal risks, such as trying drinking or drugs. I can personally say these statistics applied to me as well.

During my mid-teenage years, I became rebellious towards my authority figures. Since I never got along with kids my own age, I ended up hanging out with an older crowd. The first time I was pure pressured into drinking by my friends was when I was thirteen. The first time I was peer pressured into smoking marijuana was when I was fifteen. I wasn't caught either time, but I developed a taste for alcohol and a distaste for marijuana.

I continued misusing both alcohol and marijuana until I was sixteen. I was never told the consequences of them. Sure, I had known if I got caught I would be in big trouble. Though, no one told me about the negative side effects to either drug. Today, I have short-term memory loss, occasional panic and anxiety attacks, paranoia, I experience bursts of anger, and I still struggle with my depression that the drugs brought on.

Being at a young, mentally impressionable age, I easily became addicted to both. I wanted them constantly and felt incomplete without them. I had an extremely hard time sleeping or eating unless I was high. I felt depressed unless I had alcohol in my system. Unless I was cross-faded by both, I felt sick and distraught. Alcohol and marijuana was controlling my early life.

When I finally realized I was being controlled by these drugs, I wanted to quit. I was angry at them and at myself because I knew I had become addicted to them. I saw how they were disrupting my life. I knew I was feeling the way I was because of them. The day I quit was the day my depression became a major influence in my life.

I blame the drug withdraws and my depression that led me to my later choices. The summer after having quit, my depression spiked to a new level. I found myself wishing I had someone in my life to help me through it all. I wanted someone in my life who understood me and my choices to quit. My friends either didn't associate with me now that I wasn't using, or tried to get me to start using again. My parents and siblings didn't know about my actions. I had no one to turn to. So, I started looking for attention in the wrong places.

I met a guy late that same summer that seemed nice. He listened to me,

told me he didn't hold my past choices against me, and made me feel like I wasn't a bad person after all. Then, he took advantage of me. I hadn't wanted it, even had said no, but the boy didn't take no for an answer.

Afterwards, he blackmailed me into not telling anyone about what really happened. He said, "No one would believe a worthless druggie like you; especially not over me." Being too scared to let everyone know the things I had done in my past, I didn't tell anyone what had really happened. The boy, on the other hand, told everyone that I willingly did things meant for marriage with him.

During this time, my depression became worse than it ever had. I started to self-harm and think about suicide. On the day I finally decided to take myself out of this world, my parents caught me. They took me to a medical facility where I got help. I learned how to manage my depression and other disorders that were brought on by the drugs. They gave me medication I still take to help my efforts. My situation with the boy was brought to the local polices' attention, even though it was too late for him to get caught for it. Most importantly, I finally understood why those drugs are harmful and how to block my cravings for them.

Everyone can learn from my situation. Marijuana and alcohol are bad and they do harm you if you abuse them. Those that start to abuse them at a young age are more likely to become addicted. There are side effects to both, including depression, suicidal thoughts and actions, sleeping disorders, paranoia, and more. Those that escape their grasp have quite a story to tell. For me, I was inspired to become a mental health therapist by the therapist that helped me overcome all of this. 🙏

ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Katlyne Hytrek is a recent high school graduate from Wyoming. *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.