

# Strategies for Preventing Substance Abuse

When a person gets caught in the web of drug abuse, it becomes extremely difficult to get out. The best course of action therefore, is to identify the problem before it begins. This is true not only for yourself but for other people in your life whom you care about.

## hot link

**peer pressure** For more information on peer pressure and ways to avoid negative influence, see Chapter 2, page 29.

## HEALTH TERMS

therapeutic communities

Drug-Free School Zones

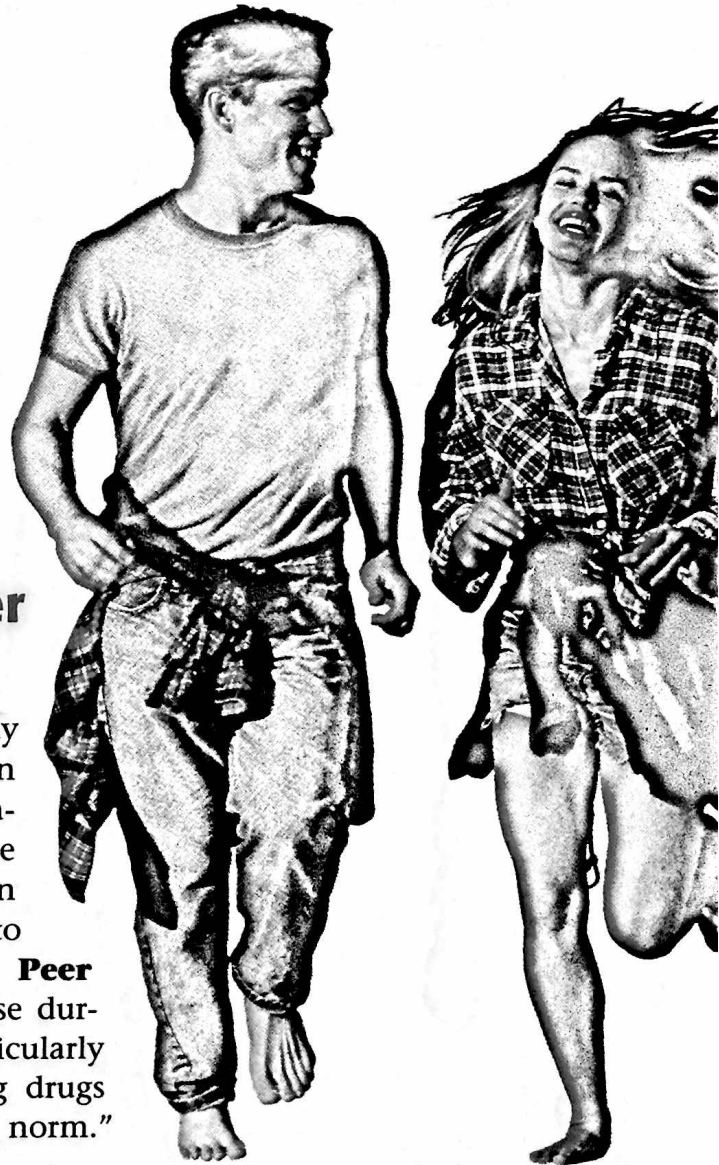
drug watches

## HEALTH CONCEPTS

- The decision to abstain from drug use is one of the most important a person can make.
- Programs and facilities are available nationwide for people who want to become drug-free.
- School and community drug watches help curb substance abuse.

## Drugs and Peer Pressure

As a teenager, you may already have been confronted with situations where drugs were involved. You may even have been pressured to try, buy, or sell drugs. **Peer pressure** can be intense during the teen years, particularly in settings where using drugs and drinking seem "the norm."





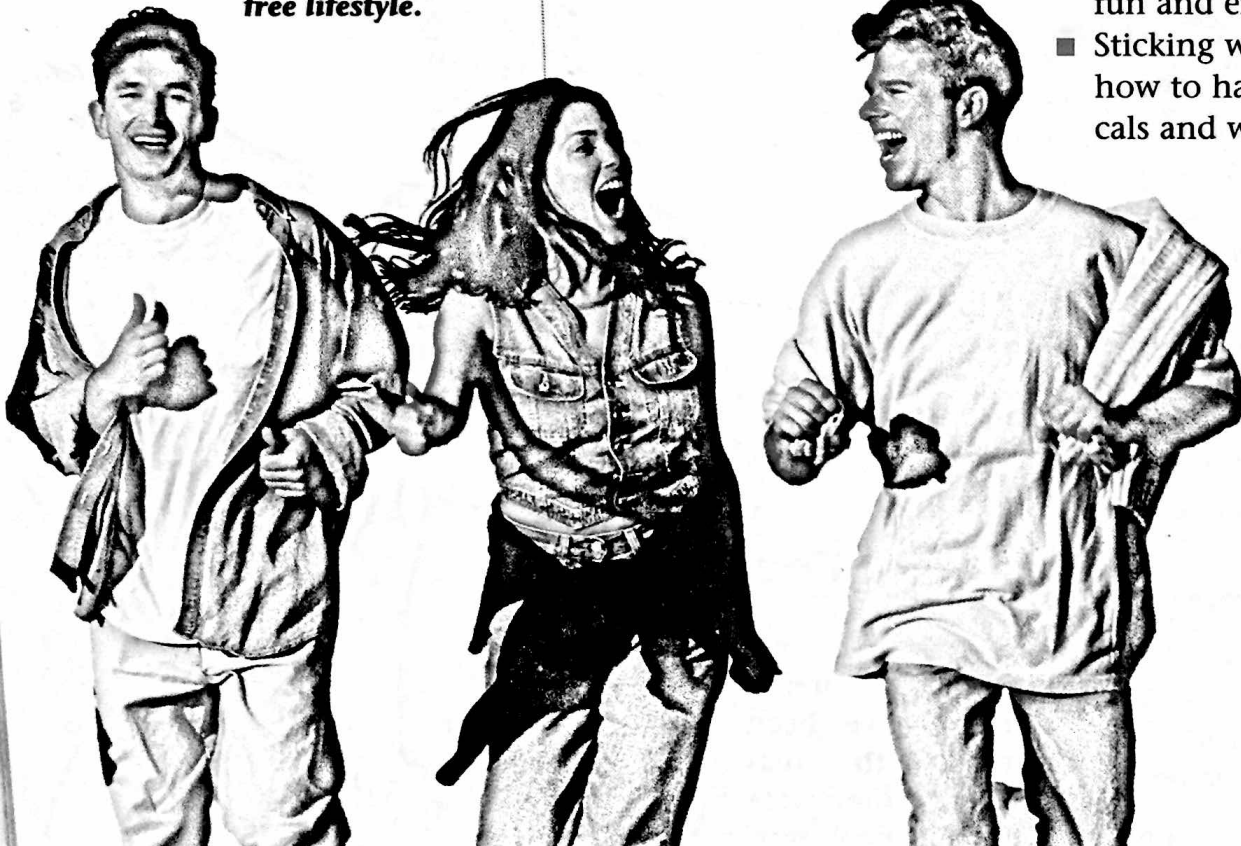
keeping  
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## Where to Turn for Help with Drug Problems

- Talk to a trusted adult.
- Look in the Yellow Pages under "Substance Abuse and Addiction" and "Alcoholism Information and Treatment."
- Write to one of the national drug information organizations and ask for referrals to treatment.

▼ **A healthful lifestyle includes staying drug-free.**

**ACTIVITY** Name ways you show you are committed to a drug-free lifestyle.



You may hear that "everyone's doing it." The fact of the matter is that for most teens, illegal drugs never become a part of their lives. The National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information reports that over 86 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds in this country have never tried marijuana, and over 98 percent have never tried cocaine. So the claim that "everyone's doing it" is simply not true.

## The Commitment to Be Drug-Free

The first step in staying free of drugs is to make a clear and deliberate decision to stay drug-free. The only way to avoid the pitfalls and dangers of substance abuse and addiction is to be firmly committed to the idea of not using them *before* they are offered. In many cases, that also means steering clear of people who use drugs and of where drugs are likely to be used or offered.

Making the commitment to abstain from drugs is a positive, life-enhancing decision. It does not mean, as some teens fear, that you will be deprived of friends or fun. Quite the opposite, being drug-free means being able to savor life's true pleasures and deal with its problems. Living a drug-free life means:

- Finding healthful ways to have fun and enjoy your life.
- Sticking with people who know how to have fun without chemicals and who make you feel good about yourself.
- Figuring out what else makes you feel good about yourself and doing more of it.
- Thinking about your true purpose and how you can put your life and talents to good use.
- Tapping into your creativity.

- Learning healthful ways to relax and to manage stress.
- Staying connected socially and reaching out to others.
- Learning new skills, hobbies, and crafts, developing your talents, and expanding your mind.
- Connecting to the world and its many needs and issues.
- Getting lots of physical exercise.
- Caring for your body in other ways, including healthful nutrition and adequate rest.

Remember that no one's life is completely problem-free or full of natural "highs." Accept the ups and downs of life without chemicals, and live your life with kindness, attention, and a clear head. You won't be sorry.

## How to Become Drug-Free

For those teens already in trouble with drugs, it is never too late to get help. The first thing to do is to talk with a trusted adult. Self-help programs, support groups, and treatment facilities exist across the country that can help a teen in trouble with drugs to get and stay drug-free. There are facilities that provide medical supervision while a person goes through withdrawal and detoxification, getting the drug out of his or her system. These include both **therapeutic communities**, or *residential treatment centers*, and outpatient programs. In addition, there are support groups such as Cocaine Anonymous, Marijuana Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and Alcoholics Anonymous. With the increase in public awareness that addiction is indeed a disease, more and more people are willing to admit to and get help for their drug-related problems and chemical dependencies.

## School Efforts to Stop Drugs

All over America there are now **Drug-Free School Zones**. These are *areas within 1,000 feet of schools and designated by signs, within which people caught selling drugs receive especially tough penalties.* Sometimes the penalties are even double what they might otherwise be for the same drug offense elsewhere. Among other efforts in and around schools to cut down on drugs are classes in drug education,



▲ ***Taking a wrong turn at any moment can derail your plans for the future.***

**ACTIVITY** *List three places a teen can turn to for help with a drug problem.*

suspensions and expulsions for drug use, police or security guards in halls, drug and alcohol counselors on the premises, locker searches, school uniforms, the banning of beepers and certain kinds of clothing, and more. Of course, the best way to keep any school drug-free is for each person attending the school to make a personal pledge to be drug-abstinent. Have you done your part?

## Community Efforts to Stop Drugs

**C**ommunities across the nation are taking positive action. *Drug watches, organized community efforts by neighborhood residents to patrol, monitor, report, and otherwise help try to stop drug deals and drug use, utilize volunteers with noisemakers, megaphones, civilian street patrols, and cellular phones to report drug deals and drug-related problems.* Taking an interest in the welfare of your environment is both an indicator of a health-literate person and a **developmental task** of adolescence. Becoming involved in stopping drug use by instituting a drug watch in your community is one way to meet both these goals. Making and keeping your own personal commitment to staying drug-free is a healthful place to start.



### hot link

**developmental task** For more information on meeting the developmental tasks of adolescence, see Chapter 21, page 482.

▼ *There are many ways to get involved in your school or community's efforts to stop substance abuse.*

**ACTIVITY** *With a partner, make a list of five ways teens can help to promote and build drug-free environments.*