

Video User's Guide

COMING DOWN

The Aftermath Of Doing Drugs

*Teens Tell Their True Life Stories
Of Dealing With Substance Abuse*



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Introduction

"Once you're down, how are you going to climb back?"

A recent survey suggests that, within the teen population, smoking is up 30 percent, marijuana use has doubled, and two-thirds of teens have tried alcohol. Cocaine and acid are not unfamiliar words in the high school vocabulary. Inhalants such as spray cans, gasoline, and nail polish remover present new dangers especially to younger children. Even over-the-counter herbal stimulants are finding their way to the thrill-seeking teen market.

"How do you heal the heart?"

What's happening? What's going to happen? More and more teens are experimenting with drugs and getting addicted to drugs. Their bodies and hearts are damaged often beyond repair. In other forums, the physical ravages of substance abuse are addressed. In this video, **Coming Down: The Aftermath of Doing Drugs**, we focus on the **emotional** aspects of using and abusing drugs. We open a window to the **feelings** that follow or lead teens down the path of substance abuse.

How do we know what's going on? As educators, parents and teen peers, how do we know what it's going to take to keep adolescents away from alcohol and drugs? In this video, we hear from teens who are trying to come back from serious alcohol and drug problems. We learn why they got involved, why their habit increased, why they crashed and how they are recovering. They may not give us all the answers but they will give teens good reasons to ask themselves:

"Do I want to end up in the same situation?"

Educational Goals

After viewing **Coming Down: The Aftermath of Doing Drugs** and working through the User's Guide, students will have a better understanding of the various aspects of substance abuse. They will be able to:

1. Understand **Addiction**. Alcohol, drugs, and inhalants are addictive substances and a person can become addicted very easily no matter how much willpower they have.
2. Focus on **Emotional Damage**. In addition to causing physical damage to an addict's body, substance abuse can leave deep emotional scars.
3. Spot **Signs of Addiction**. The signs that a person has moved into the drug abuse danger zone include having problems with school, family and the law. Psychological indicators of addiction can be lack of motivation, anger, and depression.
4. Learn about **Recovery**. Although overcoming substance addiction is difficult, time consuming, and requires a permanent commitment, it is an addict's only option for survival.
5. Hear **True Stories**. Teens tell how they became addicted to alcohol, drugs, and inhalants, how their substance use got out of control, how they sought treatment, and how they continue to work at staying "clean and sober."

Video Overview

"Drinking and doing drugs is a lot like a carnival...a carnival in hell."

Through the metaphor of a "carnival in hell," **Coming Down: The Aftermath of Doing Drugs** initiates a discussion of alcohol and drug use by real teenagers. A group of recovering teens explains how they were feeling when they started using drugs.

"I had a lot of depression in my life because as a child I was molested. I had low self-esteem. I wanted to be like everyone else."

"There was so much alcohol in my family. I just think if the family drinks, the kid will drink and possibly become an alcoholic."

"My friends were talking about drugs. I didn't want to be left out."

Fighting back from alcohol, drugs, and inhalants means a person has to go through three stages: **AWARE, DESPAIR, REPAIR.**

AWARE

You need to be aware of when you're in trouble. Drugs can grab you before you have a clue.

"I'd sell CD's or anything to get what I needed."

"The first time I smoked it, it was like my new best friend."

"I'd go out and smoke weed, getting high before high school and hang out with people I shouldn't."

"Science doesn't tell you what happens to your heart."

DESPAIR

Most people have to hit bottom before they seek help. Troubles with family, school and the law are usually apparent in the **Despair** stage.

"I thought about turning my car in the other lane and ending it for me. I almost killed my friend and someone else because I wanted to die. I was more worried about my car than my friend."

"I went on the run. I didn't drink or smoke because I had to think where I'd sleep at night. I felt lonely and depressed. It was hard out there."

"I went to my probation officer loaded. He said you can either go to treatment or jail."

REPAIR

A person serious about recovery may enter a rehabilitation treatment center and learn what it takes to become and stay clean and sober.

"Getting clean is hard work. Staying clean forever is harder work."

Detoxification. The first step in recovery is to go through the detox process which attempts to get all the addictive substances out of a patient's system.

Self-examination. Gaining a complete understanding of why a teen turned to alcohol and drugs is essential to making sure there won't be a return to substance use.

Support System. Sharing feelings and getting feedback from peers in treatment, helps a patient develop and learn the importance of a support system.

Communication Skills. Learning how to say what you mean and express your feelings in an assertive way while respecting the opinions of others helps an addict diffuse much of the frustration that may have led to substance abuse. Going through **Anger Management** training

has helped many recovering teens handle stressful situations without turning to drugs.

New Activities. When a teen stops using alcohol and drugs, there's a vacuum to fill. Participating in new activities such as jobs, sports, extra-curricular groups and religious organizations helps the recovery addict change focus and manage time.

New Friends. One of the most important requirements for getting over drug addiction is for a former user to not go back to hanging out with old friends who are still using. The temptation for relapse is just too great. Going new places and trying new activities in order to make new friends may take time and effort but it is a key element for long-term success.

Aftercare. A teen who "graduates" from a treatment center feels it is a big accomplishment and it is. But a stay in rehab is just the beginning. The pledge to sobriety must be a life-long commitment. That means participating in aftercare programs such as personal and family counseling as well as attending Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous meetings on a regular basis.

**"It takes guts to look the demon in the eye and
escape from the carnival in hell."**

Discussion Starters

1. Why do you think pre-teens and teens start using inhalants, alcohol, and drugs? Do you think there is anyway to prevent a teen from experimenting? Why or why not?
2. If four friends try marijuana, how can you tell which one or ones will become addicted, go on to use other drugs, and eventually have their lives spin out of control?

(Teens may answer the person with the most problems or the one who has the least willpower or the one whose parents drink. The fact is, because addiction to a great extent depends on a person's individual body chemistry, there is no way to know for sure. That's why experimenting can be so dangerous.)

3. How would you convince a friend not to drive if he or she had been drinking or using drugs? What percentage of teens in your school use a designated driver?
4. Do you see a relationship between violence and alcohol and drugs? Between rape and alcohol and drugs?
5. Do you think teens will be using alcohol and drugs as much when your kids go to high school? Why or why not?

Optional Activity - TV Commercial

Divide the class into groups of four or five and ask them to design a 30-second television commercial that would convince teens to stop using alcohol and drugs. Anything goes. They can use words (about 75 words) or images or both. They can write down their idea, draw the design for the commercial on paper, act it out, or record it on a video camera if available. Groups will then share their ideas with the entire class.

Additional Resources

Alcoholics Anonymous
(refer to local white pages)

Narcotics Anonymous
(refer to local white pages)

Hazelden Education Materials
Pleasant Valley Road
P.O. Box 176
Center City, MN 55012-0176
1-800-328-9000

Institute on Black Chemical Abuse
2614 Nicollet Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55408
612-871-7878

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information
P.O. Box 2345
Rockville, MD 20852
1-800-SAY-NOTO

National PTA Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention Project
700 North Rush Street
Chicago, IL 60611
312-577-4500

