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Essay: "Drugs and Violence in our Schools and Community"

Every day we read the newspapers, or watch the evening news, and see how drugs and violence are becoming a more common obstacle in our country's small communities. Whether it is the rising heroin consumption among teens, or the in school massacres that have occurred in the mid-west, it is a problem that needs to be stopped.

As I have gone through my high school career, I have come across many different kinds of people, and have had a wide variety of friends. Many of them have made the right decisions regarding drugs and violence, but there are a few who have chosen a different path. When I think of some of the things that have happened, I wonder what could have gone wrong with them. At the beginning of my senior year, I was in a class with a group of people I have known since elementary school. As the class went on, I learned that most of them had spent their summer "experimenting" with drugs such as acid, heroin, ecstasy, and marijuana. Now their "experimenting" has turned into a weekend ritual, and, for some, something they do almost nightly. Just listening to their stories tore me apart. I don't understand how someone can let something like drugs take control of their entire lives. Their whole future is in front of them, but they don't see it because they're too busy thinking about their next high.

Some people think that they won't get addicted, or that their drug use won't affect their normal lives or the lives of people around them. Well, they're wrong. One guy I've known since we were kids started snorting heroin in the 11th grade, when he and his girlfriend of 5 years broke up. I watched this boy transform from an outgoing, athletic

“social butterfly,” into a withdrawn loser who couldn’t hold a job. Now he is in and out of trouble all the time, and he shows no signs of caring about where he’ll end up in the future. Athletic, popular people aren’t the only ones to fall victim to drug or alcohol abuse. One girl I had always seen as a smart, quiet person also turned out to be using. At the beginning of our 10th grade year she began dating a guy from a different school. She would go to parties with him on the weekends, where everyone would encourage her to relax and drink. She began missing school because of her hangovers from all of the drinking, and her grades slipped. When she and her boyfriend broke up, she found a new group of friends to drink with her. Then, one night, while they all were drunk, one of her male friends decided to go beat up her ex-boyfriend, and ended up getting arrested. It is a known fact that drugs and alcohol, or both play a major role in violent acts committed by teenagers today.

Even though most teenagers drink and do drugs to feel better, it seems that most of the time, their actions turn into tragedies. For example, I’ve heard of a girl from Annapolis who seemed like a great person in all aspects. She got good grades, played sports, and had lots of friends. A few nights after her boyfriend dumped her, she went partying with her friends, to cheer herself up. She drank too much, which in the end only depressed her more, and as she was leaving her friend handed her some pills. When she got home, her family was already asleep, so she got a gun and went outside. She shot and killed herself in her front yard. More recently, a boy I knew overdosed on morphine pills. I hadn’t talked to him in years, but he never struck me as what I considered a “druggie.” When I heard the news of his death, it really hit me hard. I realized that it could happen to anyone, even those who seem the least likely to be involved in those

things. Even if you are only planning to do it one time, you never know what can happen. The top three reasons for teenage deaths today are car accidents, suicide, and homicide. Statistics show that the car accidents are almost always related to alcohol, the suicide rate is related to both drugs and alcohol, and teen homicide is mostly related to drug use.

I realize that there is no perfect solution to the drug and violence taking place in our communities, but I do think that there are certain actions that should transpire to help it. First of all, I think that the D.A.R.E. program is a very important one. I feel that it is good to start out talking about the drug issue at a young age. Their parents have never told most of them about the issues discussed, and learning it from a police officer makes it really important to them. It gets the children acquainted with the problems associated with drugs, and teaches them that they have the power to say no to the pressure from their friends. This is good for young children, who most likely, have not been faced with making that choice yet, but you also have to realize that you are teaching a group of ten-year-olds. The D.A.R.E. program would be even more helpful if it held reinforcement classes for middle schools, and then again in the freshman year of high school. Today, in health class, we had a former addict as a guest speaker. He told us that they held the D.A.R.E. program in his high school, but not until the tenth grade. By this time, most of the people who are going to try drugs have already done so. Unfortunately, forcing them to sit through a drug program would only be a waste of time for the officers.

In addition to the D.A.R.E. program, it might be a good idea for schools with a lot of problems to have a permanent officer on duty. They could react quickly to fights and drug use that occur every day in schools. Also, an organization set up by the students

may also help. It would need an adult sponsor present, as all school activities do, but they would not run things. Something like a teen center, only it would take place inside the school, where the students could just hang out and relax. They could also tutor each other, or students from the neighboring middle and elementary schools. Having an organization like this would not cost anything, except time, and most teenagers have plenty of that. As a result, they would have a place to go and do something useful, instead of getting bored and going out only to do something stupid that gets them into trouble.

In conclusion, I know that the drug and violence problem will never completely stop. I do, however, feel that something needs to be done to control it. Right now, it's as if society wants to ignore it, and hope that it will go away. Unfortunately, denial will not work. Drug treatment and stricter laws regarding drugs and violence among teenagers also need to be considered when thinking of a solution. With the help of everyone- students, parents, teachers, and the police- I truly think that something can be done.