



DRUGS

Verdadera is a publication created by and for Monta Vista teens for the purpose of **instigating communication concerning the 'real world' of high school within the community**. Each month, an issue on a topic relevant to the lives of our students is sent home for reading by parents and students alike. We encourage you to discuss and explore the issues and stories, as **the publication aims not only to offer an outlet for expression but to improve our lives**. Keep in mind that the emotions that flow through the text and the feelings behind the words could be those of your child, your classmate, or your best friend. While we do not edit submissions, we aim to publish personal experiences, not opinion articles. Please utilize all the resources present in the publication.

Also, feel free to email comments and feedback. The Verdadera staff thanks you for your interest and support.

This issue includes stories about drugs.

Student Submissions

I wasn't originally planning on writing a submission, as these things can be quite personal. Drugs are a hard thing for me; I guess because I don't know what to make of them. My parents, of course, don't want drugs in the house, and would never allow me to have friends who do stuff like that. Me? I have been raised to believe the same.

I was really surprised when I heard that one of my friends tried to smoke or something, and I don't think that I can trust them anymore. They assure me that they will never do it again, and it was a one-time thing. Supposedly it was terrible, I believe that

much. I am torn between my parents' strict philosophy and my friends'. I have a hard time trusting people, and I hate to think that I can't trust my friend.

Drugs can ruin lives, I know that. I don't want it to ruin mine.

I've never used drugs in my life. Sure the occasional Advil or cold medicine but I'm talking cigarettes, ecstasy, weed, that stuff. Truth be told, I don't even know much about it—much about anything beyond my sheltered life. What I have learned from this last year of high

school, though, is that reality is closer than I think.

A year ago, I didn't know that parties really existed on this side of Cupertino. A year ago, I didn't know that some of my friends have sex, smoke, drink, and do drugs.

My first and only encounter with drugs? When a classmate of mine asked me if I wanted to split a happy pill with him. I laughed, refused, and casually shook it off. I am proud of that decision I made. Yes, I wonder what it'd be like to try drugs, to get high, to be away from this place, to get careless. But I also know I don't know myself well enough to trust myself to make those kinds of decisions. And if I don't trust myself enough, there's no way in hell I'm going to put my life in the hands of a classmate not friend, classmate.

There's a lot more too it though. Thinking about this stuff, I really do wonder if I'll ever try drugs, what it's like to get high. If it's better than life like this. But things stop me: parents, expectations—who I am, who people expect me to be, who people see me as. I am a D. A. R. E. graduate. I am above the influence. But sometimes I ask myself for how much longer? and even do I want to be? ”

they led me into a dark tunnel, and as I snapped open my cell phone for light, I caught glimpses of graffiti along the walls, the crunching of gravel under my feet echoing as we walked until we got to the end. he pulled out a thin sheet of paper and rolled a joint as I watched him, unable to believe that I was actually doing this yet somewhat excited at the same time. he took a deep hit and passed it to me, but I was scared and let my friend go first. puff puff pass and it was my turn again. I held it between my thumb and index finger and inhaled. the taste was awkward and foreign, and I felt no change. disappointed, I passed it

along, letting it come and go until it hit me. a wave of freedom and exhilaration that I had only experienced with the closest of friends. I knew I could say whatever I felt and do whatever I desired, the strings that usually reigned me in had been cut. I stared down the tunnel and somehow the darkness was not so ominous.

‘I’ve seen the man use the needle, seen the needle use the man / I’ve seen them crawl from the cradle to the gutter on their hands / They fight a war but it’s fatal, it’s so hard to understand / I’ve seen the man use the needle, seen the needle use the man. ’
- Megadeth, “Use the Man ”

Most people equate doing drugs to an unsurprisingly low point on the moral scale. For those who are morally ambiguous, drugs aren't classified as moral or immoral; it is just a curiosity.

In fact, if people knew half the things I have done in high school, they would be appalled. I am perpetually afraid of what they'll think of me once they find out what I've done, and therefore I've kept it secret from most people. A few friends know, but these friends won't judge me on the fact that I've done drugs before.

It's funny that when your friends start doing drugs early on in high school or even before, you derive this strange curiosity for it. I never thought drugs were necessarily bad or made you a bad person. I hung around people who would constantly do marijuana week after week and get high. One of my good friends offered me alcohol in 8th grade when I was completely innocent to any form of controlled substance. Nevertheless, I'm proud of how hard I worked in high school, and as a senior looking back, I feel like I made the right decisions.

I've drunk multiple times before. I've

smoked marijuana. I'm confessing this all here for fear that someone would judge me based off of that. I'm not a habitual drug user, but I've done it before. People automatically assume that if you've done drugs, you're addicted or that you do it often. Doing drugs is a social thing for me. I watch my friends hotbox, get high, go on ecstasy trips. Shrooms, acid, ecstasy, weed - I've seen it all.

At this school, the drug users have a certain reputation. I don't want that reputation because I worked hard to get where I am right now and that would totally ruin it. I'm not, however, afraid of doing drugs. I don't think it's wrong. It's a personal choice everyone makes. There were times when I thought of doing weed daily; drugs were a permanent fixture in my mind that I couldn't remove for a while.

It's odd that just a few days ago a junior friend of mine told me to stop smoking. I haven't smoked in two months and I don't think I will. I've seen enough of drugs. I've seen a friend on methamphetamine. I've seen people do stupid things and that isn't what I want to end up doing. I think there are so many other things I could do with my life instead of spending my money buying marijuana. I don't need to do drugs to have fun. I possibly will do it occasionally in the future, but even then, it won't become a way of life.

I'd like to think I'm better than that.

"The more people smoke herb, the more Babylon fall."
- Bob Marley

I'm an Asian girl who does drugs. I know it's hard to believe but all this pressure to be perfect really started to get annoying. My first encounter was when I completely failed my chemistry

test. I felt so depressed inside, like I was worthless. My parents, especially my mother, knew everything about all the tests that I take so there was no way to get out of it. After telling my parents (who are typically Chinese) and having my mom scream at my stupidity, my friend called me. She sensed I was depressed so she picked me up and we went to a place. Some guy had some weed and he told me to try it.

Although I was reluctant, I realized I don't get out too much, no parties, no aim, no Myspace, nothing! I needed something interesting, and so I tried it. I was only planning on trying it once, but I did it a couple more times. I don't think I'm addicted, but now that option is always open to me when I fail a test.

"Drugs are a bet with the mind."
- Jim Morrison

I've always wanted to try drugs. I'm not quite sure why. Yes I listen to my parents, I took the DARE course in 5th grade, I've heard the lectures over and over. But that's not enough. Something in me really wants to try getting high at least once in my life.

It might just be because I've never been exposed to drugs. The closest I've ever come to drugs was watching a couple of girls try to sell pot in my 10th grade lit class or walking in on kids getting high in the school bathrooms. I have a good reputation and I guess because of that no one's really thought of offering me any drugs, not even a cigarette. In a way, that's flattering and insulting at the same time.

I don't believe drugs are that bad. They have the capacity to be but that is based on the person who uses them. Similar to it's the hand that holds the gun that kills, not the gun. Still, there are some drugs that are just too dangerous and risky and I wouldn't try even if offered.

Those two statements seem contradictory, but it doesn't matter; I mean both of them.

Eventually, I will try some drugs. I have no doubt about that. Maybe it'll be all that it's cracked up to be, maybe it won't. Still, I have to try.

"You can turn back on a person, but you can never turn your back on a drug, especially when it's waving a razor sharp hunting knife in your eye. "

- [Hunter S. Thompson](#)

I didn't know what I was thinking my first time doing ecstasy. I didn't even know what it was really. All I knew was that you swallow it and it will make you feel good. My first time doing ecstasy I was at one of our football games. I took it towards the end of the JV game and was really nervous. All of my friends were telling me I was going to die, so I was pretty freaked out. I walked around with my friends for a while, nothing happened. Then all of a sudden my legs began to tingle. I have never felt anything like it. My heart was racing like something exciting just happened. I felt very alert and all of my senses were exaggerated. I was sort of feeling paranoid as well as thinking everybody was talking about me. I was scared I was going to get caught. I was feeling so many different emotions at once. I flirted with guys I would never have had the courage to talk to, and I would be brutally honest with everyone. At first I was really happy and I felt invincible, then moments later I would be crying for some ridiculous reason. The game was over in what felt like ten minutes. I went home and did not know what I was going to do with myself. I stayed up for hours then I finally fell asleep. I then had to play at a volleyball tournament early in the morning. I woke up and had the worst feeling. My tongue and cheek was torn on the inside, I guess from

clenching my jaw so much. I had the worst headache ever, and I had absolutely no energy or feeling left in my body. I played the worst I have ever played, regretting ever taking the drug.

420 is a special holiday that I have never really celebrated. I didn't know what it was until 8th grade and by that time I had never taken any sort of drugs and drank seldom. So I decided that I was going to do my 420 right. I called all of my close friends who I knew associated with drugs and had them meet me at the mall. Everyone I called turned up, but no one brought anything to celebrate with. I guess they assumed that since I called I was the one with the drugs. So we go walking around the mall, trying to find somebody who had anything on them. Finally, we found some cute boys who decided to treat us as long as we did it in the parking lot. We were hanging out there smoking, but I felt a little paranoid. Some people would pass, but no one thought of them as a threat. Moments later, a security guard stated walking up to us talking on his walkie talkie. We all started running away, finding some entrance to the mall. I was scared, thinking of what my parents would think if they found out. We went through all these doors and stairs and we ended up in the back of a restaurant. We left the mall as soon as we could and waited for my mom to pick us up. We get to my house, when I see a car parked in front of my house. It was one of the girl's mom, whom I just thought was there to pick her up. Her mom got out of the car, and went straight to my mom. She had read the messages I sent to her daughter discussing our plans for 420. My mom got real mad at me, and my friend ended up running away. I am not longer allowed to see her or speak to her. She was then sent away to a different school so she could straighten up. My mom told me I ruined that girl's life. I don't think I could ever get my mom to completely trust me again.

I have never done drugs. But that is not what you want to hear. You want a story of someone who has, of someone who made bad decisions and wrecked themselves for good. me? I think I have made good choices and done the right things, mostly. Drugs to me go with sex and alcohol: you don't do them in high school. Period.

I have relative who smoke, which believe me, is bad enough. My own grandmother smoked, even when I was around. Could I take that? Could you? No. I almost hated her for it. I almost despised her, even though it was the smoking that was the perversion. Does this make me a bad person? No, only if I didn't do anything about it.

So I told her. I talked to her; let her know how much it meant to me that she didn't smoke. We discussed it, and changed her perspective. Now she didn't only have to feel bad about herself smoking, but felt bad about hurting those around her. I like to think I gave her hope; let her know that family was supporting her. However, in the end I think the driving force was the feeling that she was hurting herself. She quit and hasn't smoked since, to my knowledge. Somehow, even though she got herself into the mess, I am proud of her.

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Resources

Useful Websites:

<http://www.drugfree.org/> - A website dedicated to making our generation and our nation drug free.

<http://www.theantidrug.com/> - A website geared more towards adults and how they can help keep their children or students drug free.

<http://www.addict-help.com/> - A nationwide website dedicated to giving information on addiction rehabilitation.

Helpful Books:

Buzzed: The Straight Facts about the Most Used and Abused Drugs from Alcohol to Ecstasy, Fully Revised and Updated Second Edition by Cynthia Kuhn. It's divided into different sections dealing with different drugs and addictions, as well as the neurochemistry involved with them. It goes into great detail and is amazingly clear.

From Chocolate to Morphine: Everything You Need to Know About Mind-Altering Drugs by Winifred Rosen. Written with information straight from the doctor's mouth, this guide covers the upsides and downsides of major drugs, both illegal and prescription. It offers an alternative way of looking at drug use.

Go Ask Alice is written by an anonymous author. It tells the story of a girl and her use of drugs and alcohol all from a first person, real point of view. It illustrates the horrors of drug and alcohol addiction from a young girl's point of view.

DRUGS

Kristi Sackett, Marriage and Family Therapist

Drugs.

Should I begin by saying that drugs interfere with how your brain functions? That they alter the chemical makeup of your brain? Or should I begin by talking about some of the effects of using/doing drugs and the negative consequences that arise—school failure, increased risk of more serious drug use when you are older, poor judgment which may put you at risk for accidents, violence, unplanned/unsafe sex, and suicide?

I could cite statistics: there are about 1.8 million cocaine users age 12 and older; approximately 15% of 10th and 12th graders have used amphetamines; 25% of seizures in teenagers were caused by amphetamine use (a study by San Francisco General Hospital); 66% of males, under the age of 18 who were arrested, tested positive for marijuana; 20% of 8th graders say that they have tried marijuana; more than 48% of high school seniors have reported trying illegal drugs; 34% of teenagers think that marijuana is even easier to obtain than cigarettes or alcohol; 28% of teens know a friend or classmate who has used ecstasy; or that alcohol kills 6 ½ times more teenagers than all of the other illegal drugs combined.

It seems that no matter where I want to start, there is no positive way to talk about drug use and teenagers. My head is filled with the negative, scary, heart-in-your-throat kind of thoughts regarding teens and drug use. Is my child at a party where there is alcohol and/or drugs? Will my child drink, smoke pot, snort coke, sniff, inhale, or huff an inhalant, swallow a pill, smoke a cigarette, or have unsafe sex? Will that person my child has sex with have HIV/AIDS? Will my child's friend slip a drug into her/his drink and then have sex with her/him? Will my child know what they are doing?

I think that many teenagers think they know what they are doing when they decide to try a drug. Some have had the D.A.R.E. curriculum (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) in the upper grades of public elementary school so they know about drugs. Or their parents have preached to them the dangers of drug use and how it will affect them. But do they really KNOW about drugs?

The truth is the teenage years are a time of experimenting—with self, with others, and for some, with drugs. This is the time of beginning independence from one's family, the time to assert one's self with friends and others. It is a time of feeling indestructible and immune to the problems of life. And most of all, it is a time of wanting to fit in, to be accepted, to be liked.

Teenagers want to experiment with drug use for many reasons: they are simply curious or it's exciting . . . they want to relax, reduce stress . . . they feel good when using . . . they want to fit in . . . Unfortunately, a teenager doesn't always see the link between their actions and the consequences that naturally follow. With all of the latest research regarding the development of the brain, it has been found that the teenage brain is not fully developed, especially in the prefrontal lobes, until the person is in his/her early 20s' (some studies say by late teen years, 18 or 19). The prefrontal lobes are the part of our brain that aids in organization, executive functioning, judgment and making good decisions. With what we know about certain drugs, and their negative impact on the brain, the teenage years are a particularly dangerous time to be using drugs, especially because doing drugs in these early years can alter the brain chemistry. The impact of drugs on the brain ranges from changes in the molecules/cells of the brain, to mood

changes, to changes in memory processes and thinking/learning, to difficulty with motor skills and coordination.

What causes some teens to experiment a couple of times and then stop? What makes others use to the extent of becoming dependent on the drug, and/or moving on to other, more dangerous drugs? Or others to use occasionally? There are several risk factors at play that may help us understand this a little better. A teenager in a family that has a history of substance abuse (one or more parent(s), aunts, uncles, grandparents, etc. who have or had problems with drugs or alcohol) is more at risk him/herself to becoming addicted to using drugs. This is especially true when looking at alcohol and family history where the potential is higher for a teenager to become addicted.

Other risk factors for teens developing major problems with drugs or alcohol usage include those who are depressed and who may think that the drug will make them feel better or help them escape a problem or make the problem go away. Another risk factor is having low self-esteem, or feeling like you don't belong or fit in. Then the drug becomes a way to be more popular, accepted, liked, or sought after. A drug, like marijuana, can distract or relax the teen who is shy or anxious and they feel more socially at ease.

I think the biggest risk in using any type of drug including the misuse of prescription drugs (i.e., Ritalin, Valium, Vicodin, etc.) is that you don't know how YOUR body will react once the drug is ingested. Some first-time users do report glorious highs and the feeling of being completely free. Others say the drug intensified their senses, or decreased physical pain.

And then, some first-time users die. The toxic levels of many drugs is extremely dangerous for a teen's body and brain. Using drugs can be fatal when taken in high doses cocaine, crack, ecstasy, meth or when mixed with alcohol. When a person is under the influence of a drug, they compromise their good decision-making skills. It's much easier to say yes to things you would normally not do drive a car, have unprotected sex, or be talked into doing even more drugs. The intoxicating effects of drugs on your system alter judgment and inhibitions, leading you to engage in these impulsive and unsafe behaviors.

Maybe the best approach to talking with teenagers about drug use is to first be listening to what they tell us about their lives the pressures they feel in a highly academic environment, the feelings they have of not being trusted/believed, the need they have to be loved by someone, the tragic feelings of loss when a relationship ends. We cannot solve all of their problems, nor fix them. Parents were teenagers once. Remember? Talk about your experiences with your teen, especially if appropriate to your teenager's life right now. Be honest with your son or daughter. Educate yourself and your teenager about the kinds of drugs available. Become familiar with teen culture.

Teenagers, talk to your parents. If you absolutely cannot talk with your parents, talk to somebody. A good friend, an aunt/uncle, a teacher, a pastor. Talk to someone you trust about your feelings. Tell that person you think you are depressed and that you need help, or how you feel about getting that low grade, or what it's like to not have many friends, or what it's like to have too many friends, or that you feel like a failure. Together with someone you trust, you can discuss strategies for helping yourself in ways that are healthy for you.

Many people mistakenly believe that to talk about something leads to that thing

happening. That if we discuss drug use with our teenager, it will lead to their experimenting with drugs. We CAN have these conversations with our youth. We NEED to have these discussions be more open. Ultimately, the teenager will make his/her own decision about whether to use alcohol or other drugs. I hope that they will have the information they need in order to make this decision.

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Upcoming Issues and Submission Deadlines

Issue	Deadline
Acts of Kindness	6pm, Sunday, Oct. 7th

Ways to Submit

1. Visit us at www.verdadera.org. You can submit stories here, learn more about Verdadera, and meet staff members.
2. Stories can be turned in to **any staff member** – hardcopies or emails, anything is welcomed. Staff members are also there to help answer your questions about issues, topics, anything.
3. Email it to verdadera.entries@gmail.com

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Drugs

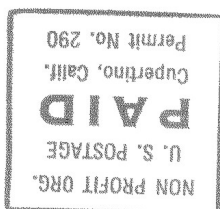
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