

{by N.H. male aged 16}

During this short probation period I have learned a lot of things that I will use throughout the remainder of the rest of my life. The APT classes at the beginning of my probation helped me and my parents talk more and communication overall with my peers and other family members has just been relatively easier. I would almost say I am glad I got caught because my life was slowly spiraling downhill.

As you know, I have attended these classes the past two weeks and I feel that they have really helped. I have learned a lot of information about marijuana and plenty of other harmful drugs that I didn't know to begin with.

First off, I learned that marijuana produces over 360 chemicals other than THC that harms your body. When THC enters the body your body actually tries to break it down and during this process your body actually produces 60 extra chemicals. That's over 400 active, harmful chemicals entering your body at a time. That doesn't sound like something that I want any part of.

Second, marijuana affects your memory in more ways than I ever imagined. Weed has many short term memory hazards including anxiety, paranoia, difficulty in thinking, learning difficulties, lack of attention and focus and your driving skills are greatly affected. You are hyper focused on the things around you rather than paying attention to your speed, the cars in front and behind you and the road most importantly. This could kill not only you but other people in the car and people in other cars. Marijuana also has many long term hazards as well, including respiratory problems, heightened risk of infections (especially in the lungs), poor short term recall, inability to shift attention normally, inability to understand complex information, increased chances of catching lung, head and neck cancers, lack of motivation and even lower sperm count in men. I, myself, don't want any part of any one of these hazards. I had no idea marijuana at one point in my life could kill me of cancer. The teachings of this whole class has taught me that marijuana just makes you stupid and that's about it. There are no benefits from smoking weed at all. I don't want to end up some washed up stupid weed head when I become an adult.

Not only did we learn about marijuana but we learned about all sorts of drugs including the pills. In my case, Xanax abuse is extremely harmful to the body as well as many other benzodiazepines. Xanax abuse can go as far as putting you in a coma. Long term abuse

of benzodiazepines can include anything from a constant headache to extreme cases of insomnia and even anorexia. I don't want to become addicted to prescription medication and not be able to sleep or even eat and I definitely don't want to be put into a coma by some stupid little pills. Dying is not very high on my list of things to do.

We also learned about mixing drugs. Our instructor used the saying, "1+1=10" when it comes to drugs. The affects of mixing drugs multiplies each other and will most likely kill you rather than give you that amazing high you are looking for. She used the examples of Heath Ledger and Anna Nicole Smith. Both of these people mixed "uppers" and sleeping pills and look how they are doing... They are both dead. Once again, I do not want to get taken out by some stupid little pills. Life is too short to be doing drugs. I need to be doing everything I can to live longer rather than shaving years off my life by making these stupid little mistakes.

Cocaine we took a good two hours just to focus on the fact that cocaine could possibly be one of the most addictive drugs. I have always thought cocaine was essentially the dumbest drug out there and I do the best I can to stay away from it completely. Before the classes, I knew that cocaine was an addictive white powder. Well, I was half-right. Not only is it addictive, it is deadly. You can become addicted off of only one line of cocaine. It can cause heart problems including heart attacks and respiratory failure and nervous system problems including stroke. The drug can come in powder form and rock form known as crack cocaine. Crack cocaine can make a person extremely aggressive, paranoid and delusional. The big issue with cocaine and crack use is that when it is mixed with alcohol it is almost always deadly. The liver mixed with alcohol and crack cocaine produces a chemical called cocaethylene. This chemical is extremely toxic and is almost always fatal. This chemical sky rockets your blood pressure and your heart rate and that is why the mixture is so fatal. In this case, "1+1=100". I will never do cocaine or crack in my lifetime.

One of the worst drugs we learned about, by far, is methamphetamine. Meth is a very addictive stimulant drug that affects the central nervous system. It is a Schedule II stimulant so it has a high potential for abuse. Methamphetamine is usually made in small illegal laboratories where the production of it cannot only kill the producer, but the neighbors of the producer as well as the environment. Methamphetamine is a white, odorless, bitter-tasting powder that dissolves in water or alcohol and is taken orally, by

snorting, by needle injection or you can smoke it. Chronic methamphetamine abuse changes how the brain functions. It can reduce your motor skills and impair your basic verbal learning. Studies in chronic methamphetamine abusers have revealed severe changes in areas of the brain associated with emotion and memory. Long term meth abuse has many negative consequences including extreme weight loss, severe dental problems, anxiety, confusion, insomnia, mood disturbances and violent behavior. Some chronic methamphetamine abusers also show many psychotic issues including paranoia, hallucinations and delusions. One of the most common is the sensation of insects. Meth can also be a good way to transmit HIV and Hepatitis B and C. Since methamphetamine can be injected, HIV and other infectious diseases can be spread through contaminated needles, syringes and other injection equipment that is used by more than one person. I will never ever try meth. I just thought it was interesting to learn about.

We also learned about heroin. Heroin is a highly addictive drug and its use is becoming more and more widespread throughout the United States. Studies suggest a shift from injection of heroin to smoking and snorting it because it is thought to be more pure and less addictive when it is not injected. It is processed from morphine and comes from the same plant as opium and like most other drugs it attacks the central nervous system. Heroin in its purest form is usually a white powder. Less pure forms have varied colors ranging from white to brown. Black tar heroin is dark brown or black and has a tar-like sticky feel to it. Users who inject heroin will feel a euphoric rush. Common effects of heroin is dry mouth, shaking back and forth and arms and legs will become extremely heavy and have dulled emotions. Each dose of heroin lasts around three to four hours after it is taken. Short-term hazards include collapsed veins, infection of the heart lining and veins, liver disease, pulmonary complications including various types of pneumonia and fatal overdose. When chronic users try to stop "cold turkey" they have withdrawals. Some of the withdrawal symptoms include restlessness, insomnia, diarrhea, vomiting, cold flashes with goose bumps, kicking movements and even muscle and bone pain. All the negatives of passing dirty needles are possible with heroin as well. Just like methamphetamines, HIV and Hepatitis B and C are easily transmittable. I don't want to die of an overdose and I most definitely do not want to lose the ability to have sex. If I was to get HIV, my sex life would just be over because I don't want to pass that on to anyone that doesn't already have it.

Not many people think alcohol is a drug because it is legal but it is. It is the most commonly abused and widely psychoactive drug in the world. Alcohol even at low doses significantly impairs the judgment and coordination required to drive a car or operate machinery safely. Low to moderate doses of alcohol can also increase the incidence of a variety of aggressive activity including domestic violence and child abuse. As you continue drinking, symptoms worsen. You become dizzy and are very open with your thoughts. As you keep poundin' those beers, your speech begins to slur, you can have disturbed sleep, nausea and vomiting. Once you have drank enough to experience these symptoms you will most likely wake up the next morning with a "hangover". The hangover is a whole entire different issue the next morning. You can be nauseated, thirsty, dizzy and fatigued. Over time if you continue using alcohol heavily it can lead to addiction, better known as alcoholism. Alcoholism is a disease that can include many problems such as permanent damage to your vital organs, several different types of cancer, nausea, diarrhea and ulcers, malnutrition and nutritional deficiencies, sexual dysfunctions, high blood pressure and even lowered resistance to other diseases. Alcohol can affect children that haven't even been born yet. Mothers who drink alcohol during pregnancy may give birth to infants with fetal alcohol syndrome. Most babies that have mental retardation and other untreatable physical abnormalities usually suffer from fetal alcohol syndrome. When parents are alcoholics their children are more likely to become alcoholics as well. More than 100,000 people a year are killed by excessive alcohol intake. You drink yourself to death? That is just pathetic. Youths and teenagers who use alcohol are 50 times more likely to become cocaine users than those who don't drink a drop of alcohol. I had no idea that alcohol can lead to other drug use, especially a drug as hard as cocaine. I am most definitely not drinking when I get older. Traffic crashes are the greatest cause of death for U.S. people. 50% of all these crashes have alcohol involved in some way. People from ages 6-33 are most commonly killed by other drunk drivers. That is sad.

Many teenagers that drink don't understand the risks they are actually taking. When teens drink alcohol they can blackout. Now with women that is not a very good thing. Women are raped due to excessive drinking and the brain doesn't have the ability to make good decisions so therefore, sleeping with that guy over there may seem like a good idea at the time. When you wake up the next morning, you will have no idea what happened. Also as a teenager, it is illegal to possess alcohol so if you are caught with it you will be receiving an MIP. If you are caught driving even after one drink you can fail a

breath test. This will cause you to lose your license for a period of time and you will most likely be paying a hefty fine. Teenagers are emotional basket cases and drinking plus emotions don't mix. If you drink while you're depressed you are going to become more and more depressed. Drinking while you are mad is going to lead to acts of rage and violence.

To conclude this huge paper pretty much what I want you to get out of this is that I am done making stupid childish mistakes. I will be seventeen in 7 months and fun time is over. I need to grow up and decide what I want to do with my life. I will admit that smoking pot on the weekends was kind of fun but I don't have time for that anymore. My junior and senior years of high school, I am striving for excellence. My grades haven't been amazing the past few years but I feel like the Platte County Juvenile Court system saved me. If I wouldn't have gotten caught I might be doing something dumb right now. I guess what I really want to say is, "Thank you for helping me get my life going in the direction I want it to."