

A Young Addict's Perspective

by Evan Hodge

I would like to tell you about my experience, what happened to me, and the way I looked at things. Hopefully, it will be encouraging to you no matter where you are. As I was listening to my parents talk about what each was like, I realized I have a little bit of both of them because I am a driven-procrastinator. I went to Sunday School. I knew every flannel board story. I knew it all. One thing I must say is that I had loving, loving parents. I look back on that now and I know they were always there for me, period. They didn't always understand what I was going through, but that wasn't their fault. It was mine because of my lack of communication. The openness and the willingness from them were always there. I just didn't know about all these fights and struggles my parents went through behind closed doors. Listening to them today made me aware of that for the first time. I think it was wise that they chose to do handle the situation the way they did.

In fifth grade, while at a Christian School, I went through D.A.R.E., the drug abuse program. They kept saying that drugs are bad and you should never do them. In sixth grade I was with my friends, especially my best friend, whom I hung around with all the time. He came from a good family, had a great mom and dad, and was in a loving Christian family. We did everything together. One night, although there were many of these nights, we decided to sneak out just to meet some other kids. We ended up at one of the schools and some of the older kids in the 7th and 8th grades were smoking weed. I had never really been exposed to it before. It was the first time I had ever seen it or heard of it apart from the D.A.R.E. program. At this time, the stuff I had heard the year before in the D.A.R.E. program meant nothing to me. I would have never tried it if my friend had not done it first. I looked up to the other kids that were there. If my best friend had said, "NO," right there, I probably would have done the same. When I saw him go ahead and take that first hit, I felt compelled. "Shoot! He did it," I figured, "It can't be that bad!" The stuff they taught us in the D.A.R.E. program was that drugs would make your teeth fall out and other horrible things would happen to you. Yet, every day at school, I would see my friends high, going to class, getting straight A's, doing all the things they wanted to do – at least at the beginning. Many were excelling in sports and academics. I just didn't see any consequences at that time. I could not relate what the D.A.R.E. program had taught me with what I saw happening around me. So 6th grade was when I started. I was with my friends. That was one of the key things, being with my friends. I am not blaming it on my friends, not at all. It was completely my responsibility of choosing to do this.

Throughout the next few years, I kept on doing my own thing. I did not realize what this was beginning to do to my family. However, it was about when I was in the 8th grade that my Dad told me he was seriously considering quitting the ministry. In the Bible it says that if you can't take care of your own household, how can you be a shepherd to a flock. It made me so angry; it ticked me off because this was my life, my decision. It had nothing to do with him; but yet, it was affecting him. That he was going to be screwed over because of something I was doing just didn't make any sense to me. It just made me angrier. Still, I did not realize at any time the effect I had on them, ever. It was Me getting high. It was Me with my friends. It was Me hanging out and playing. I had not a clue; I was just oblivious, mostly because I was selfish. That is the biggest thing about getting high; it is all about you, pure selfishness. A lot of kids don't have a clue that they are being so selfish and hurting their family, for they do not understand this is about family. To me, it was about just hanging out, just doing my thing. It is no different from playing

soccer or football. That was the level it was on. Let's just relax. Let's just hang out. It is just another thing, something to do.

I went on doing a lot of other stuff. It would take a few Jerry Springer episodes to explain all that I went through. All the time I was doing this, I knew it was wrong. The desire in my heart to continue getting high was there, not the desire to do what God wanted. It wasn't until much later when I was around 21 years old that it hit me. I had been going through a lot of stuff. It was God who brought me back. As I said before, my parents were always there for me, always. Like my mom said, she used to take me to the beach all the time. I was heavy into skateboarding and really loved it. Skateboarding was one of the key things that kept me from doing drugs. I realize that a lot of people look at it differently. But when I was active and determined, my mind had to be clear. My body had to be in good shape and I didn't want to do drugs when I was skating. My parents were always accepting and loving. I would always get arrested for skating in the wrong spot. I remember when I got arrested where my mom worked. The university had just built a multi-million-dollar complex. There were great skateboarding places and brand new cement everywhere. When the security guards called my home, Dad came down with his motor home, picked up about ten of us, took care of us and took us to a place where it was legal to skate and he stuck with us. Those kinds of things are what I remember about my folks, being there for me. But it was the Lord that brought me back. I always had knowledge of Him. I was raised as I should have been raised. I was loved; I was accepted; but it was the Lord who brought me back. My parents were really naive, or so I thought, since both were raised in good homes. Neither one had been exposed to the culture in which I was living. They had no idea that I could be high right in front of them, because they didn't know what to look for. I was high in front of my parents all the time; but I covered it up with my eye drops, breath mints, etc. I had everything under control, or so I thought. I thought that they had no idea, until the abuse was out of control and was clearly visible.

I would encourage you to understand the culture and the lifestyle your child is in because that is what it is all about. Weed was my choice of drug, but I did all sorts of stuff. It is a whole culture; it is a lifestyle. Everybody that I ended up being friends with did it; all they did was get high. I liked people that didn't smoke. That wasn't an issue. It was just that I liked to be high and I would be with people who liked to be high, to share with me and I would share with them.

Again, this is a whole culture and lifestyle. There is such a huge haze over this generation. What kids see is that it is just a different way of living. They don't see the effects it is having on others because they are hanging out just with these kids. They don't see the consequences of choosing this lifestyle. They don't see these kids 10 to 15 years down the road. They don't see these kids at home every night fighting with their families, or flunking out of school, or losing their relationships with husbands and wives. They just don't see that. I never saw it either. If I could have just related the consequences to my life, not "you are going to be on the streets and homeless," but of the true effects my choices were having, it would have made me think a lot more about what I was doing.

Maybe it would have helped for my folks to explain eye-to-eye, how much I was hurting them, how much I was really destroying them on the inside as they were watching me go through this and being in this kind of trouble. Again, I don't know if this would have helped. I was so totally oblivious. These were my parents. Parents are supposed to be strong, stable, there for me. I just don't know. There is no way to know what would have gotten through to me. When my dad said that he was seriously thinking about giving up the ministry, it severely crushed me. Did I get high that night? Yes, I did; but did that stick in my mind forever? Yes, it did. It crushed my soul that the guy who loved me so much and was always there for me, I was hurting so much, killing him with my own selfishness. Yet, I couldn't understand that; it took me a while to get to that point. It was the Lord who brought me back. It was an odd circumstance. I was raised in a Baptist Church where there is not much holy rolling and not much throwing your hands up in the air, but the Word was still strong and the Spirit was strong. I was sitting in my chair watching TV, nothing special. It was actually TBN, which I didn't usually watch. The story was about a guy who gave

up his selfishness, was sick of living for himself, and was so convicted. God convicted him to quit being a bonehead, to quit working so much and encouraged the man to meet with his friend to pray. Within three years, this pastor's church was over 3,000 strong. God gave him a vision. Because he was willing to get past himself and listen, God used him and amazing things happened.

Somewhere during that time, I literally got thrown out of my chair. I had just been in a big car accident and I was sick and sore. I had been out of work for a month and a half. I found myself out of my seat and kneeling on the floor where I started to bawl, uncontrollably. I heard a voice saying, "Evan, it is time. It's time to stop running." It was God. I called my Dad and I know he remembers the day because he said, "You want me to come over there?" He couldn't understand me on the phone because it was such an emotional time for me that I couldn't communicate it, but he knew something had happened with me.

I know that every circumstance is different. There may be times when you do have to cut off your child. It might come to that. But with the love and openness that was always in my home, I knew that at any time, I could come back. If I needed that comfort, if I needed a place to be, if I needed to come back, I had a home. I had a place.