

WORDS CAN WORK®

When
Talking
About

Drugs

A GUIDE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, PARENTS, AND CAREGIVERS

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Chasing a High

FACT: Nearly half of all teens believe that using prescription medications to get high is much safer than using street drugs.²

Growing up, Joel was a good kid. He felt he had to be; his dad was the school superintendent in a nearby town. “I had a lot of pressure on me to do well in school,” Joel says. “And everybody expected me to excel in sports.”

In seventh grade, he started drinking. “By drinking alcohol,” he says, “I just didn’t care about all that stuff anymore.” But when the alcohol wore off, he felt the stress again.

Joel started smoking marijuana, too, and never felt he could get high enough. “I had to smoke four or five times a day,” he says. But the escape was always temporary.

In tenth grade, Joel started abusing prescription painkillers he bought in the hallways at school. Before long, he needed more and more pills, just as he had needed more and more marijuana. “To achieve the same high I’d get from one pill, I’d have to take five pills,” he says. He was headed for disaster.



Joel

Spiraling Into Addiction

FACT: More than six percent of high school seniors surveyed reported that they had tried methamphetamine.⁵

Everyone in Eric's close, church-going family expected Eric to succeed.

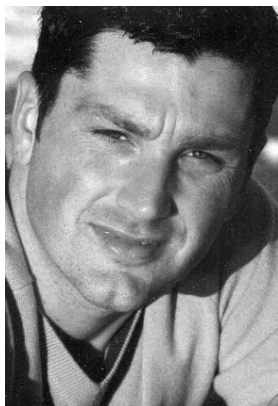
Then when he was 15, Eric started smoking marijuana and drinking alcohol. He lost interest in spending time with his family. "I wanted to hang out with my friends and smoke a joint," he says.

His parents constantly asked him what he was doing. "I always lied," Eric says.

When Eric graduated from high school, he got a construction job and moved into a place of his own. One night a group of guys were partying at Eric's apartment and snorting crystal methamphetamine. "They gave me a line," Eric says, "I felt bulletproof."

But he was far from bulletproof. Within a few weeks, Eric was addicted. "Things started to go wrong almost immediately," he says.

He lost one job after another. He enrolled in college and dropped out. Without a steady



Eric

"All my thoughts and actions centered around getting drugs. Things started to go wrong almost immediately."

Eric

Janna's words to young people

"From what I've seen, if you use drugs to deal with your problems, you'll end up feeling more hopeless than ever."



"Talking about drug use gives kids a chance to think through what could happen."

Jeanne Blake

Consider This

Jeanne Blake: Janna responded to her parents' warnings about drugs. How they spoke with her had an impact.

Dr. Johnson: They weren't controlling. They let her know they care about the choices she makes, and that they know what happens when someone uses drugs. But they were also clear that, ultimately, she would make her own choice.

Jeanne Blake: Talking about drug use gives kids a chance to think through what could happen. Then, if they hear, "Oh, you should try this drug," they have more confidence in refusing.

Dr. Johnson: Parents can ask their kids, "Do you know any kids using drugs?" "Why do you think they use them?" "How do you think using drugs would affect your ability to do well in school?" Then listen to their answers and follow up, as Janna's parents did, with your own opinions and the reasons you hope they'll stay drug-free.