

**The County Executive and County Council Proclaimed:  
“March 2013 is HC DrugFree Youth Alcohol and Drug  
Abuse Awareness Month in Howard County”**

**HC DrugFree Anonymous Q&A:**

Parents, please send your *anonymous* questions to [Joan@hcdrugfree.org](mailto:Joan@hcdrugfree.org) so your questions can be included in future HC DrugFree updates. The answers provided are the opinions of the respondents and not medical/legal advice.

**Question #1:**

My friend's son is 17 and a senior in high school. He just got accepted into a local college and is a good kid. He got A'S and B'S on his 2nd quarter report card. He does smoke pot and the parents are a bit tolerant about it. They choose to let him "experiment" with it and ultimately make his own decisions about it. The kid says other kids drink and he thinks this is a better alternative to drinking. He says it helps him unwind from the pressures of school, friends, etc. I was wondering if you knew any good facts or websites that the parent might use to dissuade pot...maybe health statistics about negative effects of smoking pot. I have this theory that it inhibits testosterone growth in males. Do you have any other "fuel" for this debate over whether or not pot is unhealthy? Thanks for considering this question.

**Answer #1:**

You are correct that marijuana is not a good drug. Of course, neither is alcohol. Both drugs (alcohol is a drug) are even more harmful to adolescent brains as they are still developing. The main concern I have for pot is that it decreases a person's ability to control his/her emotions, decreases motivation, and decreases memory retention. It definitely affects learning. Not only does the person have more trouble learning, but they don't care as much that they are not learning and then they get mad when people ask about the change!

Here are some web pages you might want to look at:

<http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/marijuana-facts-parents-need-to-know/talking-to-your-kids-communicating-risks>, or

<http://www.athealth.com/consumer/disorders/Marijuana.html>

This one is from a study showing decreased testosterone levels for over 24 hours after smoking. If a male uses 1-3 times a week, then his body is not receiving the needed level of testosterone for days at a time. Over time, this can cause ongoing problems and decreased muscle growth. Men look like men because of the regular introduction of testosterone - Regular being key!

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/6316036>

Mark Donovan, LCPC, LCADC  
Congruent Counseling  
Integrative Counseling

**Question #2:**

What is the number one ally for the promotion of substance abuse?

**Answer #2:**

It is parental denial, which is not lying, but rather it is a subconscious, psychological process we engage in to block out reality. As I note in my book, [What Is Wrong With My Kid?: When Drugs or Alcohol Might Be a Problem and What to Do About It](#), parents stay in denial by engaging in minimizing, intellectualizing, rationalizing, justifying, and excuse making to avoid reality. It arises from guilt (blaming self for the kid's problems) when in reality it was a free will choice the kid made to engage in the drug scene. Guilt must be overcome and it is suggested parents utilize the "3 C's": 1) I didn't Cause the addiction (it was a free will choice the kid made); 2) I can't Control the addiction (witness my vain efforts to control his/her behaviors); 3) I can't Cure addiction (that can happen only when the drug user chooses to stop using drugs).

George E. Leary, Jr.,

Howard County Parent, Licensed Counselor and Author

**Question #3:**

Why is addiction considered to be a brain disease?

**Answer #3:**

Drugs and alcohol change the way the brain receives, processes and sends information. This alters behaviors and thinking. The troubling behaviors that parents are witnessing are not the product of poor parenting or upbringing nor are they symptomatic of a person who is anti-social. Rather they are the result of a brain that has been altered with substances that can be described as "brain-altering substances." Chapter 4 of my book, [What Is Wrong With My Kid?: When Drugs or Alcohol Might Be a Problem and What to Do About It](#), has an excellent discussion of the impact of illicit substances upon our youth's developing brains.

George E. Leary, Jr.

Howard County Parent, Licensed Counselor and Author

**Question #4:**

I have a teenager and it seems that all I can get from her lately are one word answers. I've tried asking open-ended questions and usually end up with an, "I don't know." Do you have any tips to help me get her to open up more?

**Answer #4:**

FamilyJournal is a simple, free and fun interactive website that improves family communication and connection using an easy Q&A format to help users share their thoughts and feelings. Family connection and communication leads to reduced high risk behaviors. Visit [www.familyjournal.com](http://www.familyjournal.com) and enter **HCDrugFree** in the Partner Code.

**Question #5:**

What is the tragedy of drug addiction?

**Answer #5:**

The Tragedy of Drug Addiction - it destroys the pleasures of life. It destroys that which makes life worth living. A warm summer's day, a good hug, grandma's homemade apple pie, a promotion at work, an "A" on your exam, that first love, hearing your newborn baby cry for the very first time, that song that brings a smile to your face, the smell of a flower, the colors of a rainbow. Our enjoyment of all of these is deadened by the addictive drugs of abuse. One of the common denominators of these drugs is that they all stimulate the pleasure centers of the brain, and eventually lead to their destruction. We substitute a natural high for an artificial high. Repeated use leads to tolerance where weakened pleasure centers require higher doses to produce the same highs. Addicts are constantly seeking that first drug-induced high that will never come again.

Dr. Norbert Myslinski, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Neurosciences

University of Maryland School of Dentistry

**Question #6:**

Why should parents choose to be an HC DrugFree PTSA/PTA Representatives?

**Answer #6:**

Working with HC DrugFree has been a family affair for us. Our son, Joshua Peoples, is also a Howard High School HC DrugFree Teen Advisory Council Representative and we, my wife and I, share the responsibilities of the Howard High School HC DrugFree PTSA Representative. Our work with HC DrugFree has been a catalyst for many insightful conversations. The work Joan (Executive Director) and Molly (Hispanic Outreach Coordinator) do is very much needed in today's society if we are to help students navigate the plights of high school and life...*Alcohol and DrugFree!*

Raleigh Peoples,

Howard High School HC DrugFree PTSA Representative

**(Parents interested in serving as HC DrugFree PTSA/PTA Reps should contact HC DrugFree and your PTSA/PTA Presidents. Teens interested in joining HC DrugFree's Teen Advisory Council should contact HC DrugFree.)**

**Question #7:**

As a "survivor" of a child going to Ocean City for Senior Week, what advice would you give other parents?

**Answer #7:**

As a veteran "senior" parent having two children survive senior week in two different years, I offer the following advice: 1) trust your instincts about with whom you allow them to share a house; 2) keep the numbers in one house or apartment to six or less; 3) make it mandatory for students to attend one of HC DrugFree's "*Senior Week: Staying Safe in Ocean City*" programs; 4) have a mandatory parent and student meeting to

decide "rules of the house"; 5) do not allow them to have a car for the week; 6) have a time each day that they must check in with you by phone (no texting – hear their voices); 7) consider sending students for 3-5 days instead of 7; 8) make them get a bus pass for the week so they are riding the bus which is free and the safest way to travel; and 9) warn them about jaywalking across the highway.

Even when you follow all of the guidelines above, expect your student to be exposed to, and to possibly participate in, drinking alcohol. Therefore, make sure they understand the signs of alcohol poisoning and the importance of getting help if a friend is in trouble. One of our children came home after only 24 hours due to the wild behavior of housemates including the use of alcohol. (Those same students all signed a pledge in front of all the parents not to bring alcohol.)

*Who can be more macho in front of the girls* is a pastime for the boys at senior week in Ocean City, so warn your son to ignore this behavior which leads to frequent fights on and near the boardwalk. Consider having a parent chaperone the house. If that is not acceptable, consider what we did one year which was alternate a parent staying nearby, but not in the same house as the students. This was acceptable to the kids and kept them "honest" because they never knew when they might run into the parent. Several parents split the week so that no parent had to be there more than two nights.

Senior week is a good experience for students who must learn to be responsible. However, it is also a lot of time, temptation, and freedom all at once. You must clearly set the expectations, be present if possible, and then hope they make good choices.

Signed: An Anonymous Mom Who Survived Senior Week (and doesn't want to embarrass her children by naming names)

**Question #8:**

If Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) medications help kids to study and retain information, should kids without ADHD use them when studying?

**Answer #8:**

The American Academy of Neurology (AAN), the world's largest professional association of neurologists, is releasing a position paper on how the practice of prescribing drugs to boost cognitive function, or memory and thinking abilities, in healthy children and teens is misguided. The statement is published in the March 13, 2013, online issue of Neurology, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology.

This growing trend, in which teens use "study drugs" before tests and parents request ADHD drugs for kids who don't meet the criteria for the disorder, has made headlines recently in the United States. The Academy has spent the past several years analyzing all of the available research and ethical issues to develop this official position paper. "Doctors caring for children and teens have a professional obligation to always protect the best interests of the child, to protect vulnerable populations, and prevent the misuse of medication," said author William Graf, MD, of Yale University in New Haven, Conn.,

and a member of the American Academy of Neurology. "The practice of prescribing these drugs, called neuroenhancements, for healthy students is not justifiable." The statement provides evidence that points to dozens of ethical, legal, social and developmental reasons why prescribing mind-enhancing drugs, such as those for ADHD, for healthy people is viewed differently in children and adolescents than it would be in functional, independent adults with full decision-making capacities. The Academy has a separate position statement that addresses the use of neuroenhancements in adults.

The article notes many reasons against prescribing neuroenhancements including: the child's best interest; the long-term health and safety of neuroenhancements, which has not been studied in children; kids and teens may lack complete decision-making capacities while their cognitive skills, emotional abilities and mature judgments are still developing; maintaining doctor-patient trust; and the risks of over-medication and dependency.

"The physician should talk to the child about the request, as it may reflect other medical, social or psychological motivations such as anxiety, depression or insomnia. There are alternatives to neuroenhancements available, including maintaining good sleep, nutrition, study habits and exercise regimens," said Graf.

The statement had no industry sponsors.

(From March 13, 2013 Press Release from American Academy of Neurology: Doctors Caution Against Prescribing Attention-Boosting Drugs for Healthy Kids)

View the full statement at:

<http://neurology.org/lookup/doi/10.1212/WNL.0b013e318289703b>

View the AAN's full statement on neuroenhancements and adults at:

<http://www.neurology.org/content/early/2009/09/23/WNL.0b013e3181beecfe.full.pdf>

### **Kudos to HC DrugFree**

Congratulations to HC DrugFree on your good work and recent County Executive and County Council Proclamation *announcing March 2013 as HC DrugFree's Youth Drug and Alcohol Abuse Awareness Month*. It seems like HC DrugFree is everywhere! I was at the mall a few weeks ago and saw several large HC DrugFree ads on display, and then yesterday I was on [www.countysportszone.com](http://www.countysportszone.com) and saw the HC DrugFree banner. Every time I open my Columbia Flier or the Business Monthly it seems there's at least one Public Service Announcement or advertisement, and I regularly receive your emails and HCPSS HC DrugFree program updates. Good job on getting the word out.

Signed: Anonymous Grateful Howard County Parent

### **Howard County Gun Buyback Safety Day, March 16**

HC DrugFree encourages you to support HCPD's Gun Buyback Safety Day. For more information go to <http://www.hcdrugfree.org/hcdrugfreenews.html> and click on the link.

## **HC DrugFree Calendar of Events**

**HoCo FilmFest** including HC DrugFree category winners  
Join HC DrugFree at the HoCo FilmFest to see all winning films.  
Friday, March 22, 7:30 PM, Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Lab

**RHHStival** with HC DrugFree message between performances  
Saturday, March 23, 7:00 PM, River Hill High School

**What Parents Need to KNOW** (drug and alcohol trends, tips and more for parents)  
Tuesday, March 26, 7:00 PM, Oakland Mills High School

**Teen Advisory Council Mtg.**  
Monday, April 8, 5:30-6:30 PM, The Barn in Oakland Mills

**Senior Week - Staying Safe in Ocean City**  
Monday, April 8, 7:00 PM, Mt. Hebron High School Auditorium

For more information about HC DrugFree or to submit anonymous questions for  
HC DrugFree's newsletter, please contact Joan Webb Scornaienchi, Executive Director,  
HC DrugFree, 10451 Twin Rivers Rd., Suite 404, Columbia, MD 21044.  
Phone 443-325-0040, email [joan@hcdrugfree.org](mailto:joan@hcdrugfree.org), or visit [www.hcdrugfree.org](http://www.hcdrugfree.org)

If you like our work and want your name listed on our website to show your support to  
our funders and the community, please consider making a donation of any amount and  
becoming a *Friend of HC DrugFree*. Visit <http://www.hcdrugfree.org/donate.html> for  
more information.