

Know What You Know and You'll Know What to Do: Advice For Teens

OK, you've heard about alcohol and drugs before. You've heard it from your parents, at school, at the doctor's office, even on TV. Do all of these people really expect that you will *never* drink or use drugs? Are alcohol and drugs really that dangerous? Maybe you should read Michelle's story:

"I always knew that it was dangerous to drive after drinking or using drugs. That's why I always slept over at parties instead of looking for a ride home. One night I went to a party at Kim's house. I met a bunch of new people, who seemed pretty cool, and I had a great time. I felt safe because I knew I was sleeping over, so I just kept drinking. Some time later, after a lot of drinks, I guess I blacked out. I have no idea what I said or did, I only remember waking up with a guy I didn't know on top of me. You just don't know how gross that made me feel. I never thought something like that could happen to me. It made me realize that alcohol and drugs are dangerous in lots of ways. I don't want to drink any more, at least not for now." — Michelle

Top 5 strategies for saying "no" to alcohol and drugs

1. Plan ahead. If you are going to a party or concert, decide not to drink or use drugs **BEFORE YOU LEAVE YOUR HOUSE**.
2. Arrange to spend time with friends who don't use.
3. Think of ways to have fun without drugs. If you can't think of anything you may really have a big problem.
4. Tell your friends you are trying to avoid using. If they still push you to use, maybe you need to think about who your friends are.
5. Think of all that you can accomplish with your life. Then think about how alcohol and drugs can get in the way. Is using really that important?

Don't go yet — read Evan's story before you put this paper down:

"I've always known that drinking and driving is dangerous. But I'm smart; I promised my parents and myself that I would never get behind the wheel if I was drunk. I didn't drink that much anyway. Smoking weed was a lot more fun. I would light up with my friends and we didn't worry about that because we all knew we could drive better after smoking. It wasn't until after the accident that I learned how much marijuana can slow your reflexes and affect your judgment. That's probably why I didn't see the car coming down the street as I was pulling out of the driveway. My friend Billy got really messed up. Now we don't know if he'll even be able to walk again. Nothing will ever be the same now." — Evan

Top 5 strategies for saying "no" to a ride home with an impaired driver

1. Plan ahead. Have a ride home worked out **BEFORE YOU LEAVE YOUR HOUSE**.
2. Have a back-up plan in case something goes wrong. Be prepared to take a bus, call a taxi, sleep at a friend's house, or call your parents if your ride falls through.
3. If your ride has been drinking or using a drug, tell him that you "feel sick" and don't want to get in the car.
4. Don't try to decide if you or someone else is "all right" to drive. If you drank or used anything at all that night, **DON'T DRIVE**.
5. Sign the "Contract for Life" with your parents (provided on the Internet by Students Against Destructive Decisions at www.saddonline.com)

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