

GATEWAY DRUGS ...

WHY PREVENTING THEIR USE IS IMPORTANT

THE USE OF PSYCHOACTIVE DRUGS IS ASSOCIATED WITH 80% OF CRIME AND VIOLENCE.

Drug use is also associated with 1/4 to 1/2 of all hospital stays in this country. Alcohol and other drugs are involved in at least one half of all the suicides, drownings, car crashes, crime, violence, falls, unplanned sex, poor school performance, trauma, and injury to young people.

Adults rarely ever start using psychoactive drugs for the very first time.

DRUG USE IS PROGRESSIVE, PREDICTABLE, AND ALMOST ALWAYS STARTS IN CHILDHOOD.

Young people don't just wake up one morning and decide to "do a line of coke." They don't go from "little league baseball" to "big league drugs" overnight. The process is fairly predictable.

Once a young person gives himself/herself permission to use ANY harmful, psychoactive drug, it is so much easier the next time to do the same, and the time after that, and the time after that.

**THE DRUGS CHILDREN MOST OFTEN USE FIRST ARE:
ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, MARIJUANA, AND INHALANTS.**

The psychoactive drugs children use first are called "**gateway drugs**" because children learn to accept and embrace the "high." These drugs can open the "gates" to further drug use. Adolescents learn drug-acquisition skills and drug-taking habits such as how to lie, cheat, sneak, and steal to get drugs. The use of any "**gateway drug**" is a strong predictor for future use of other drugs.

THUS, ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, MARIJUANA, AND INHALANTS ARE THE GATEWAY DRUGS.

The average age of first use of any drug in our community today is 12 years.

Several studies have found that if society can prevent an individual from using any of the gateway drugs until age 21, the chances are 93% in favor of that person not using illicit drugs or using alcohol in a high-risk manner.

Put another way, in a comprehensive article, *How to Beat Drugs*, (*U.S. News & World Report*, 9/11/89) it was stated: "Every drug counselor and drug-education expert interviewed agrees that a drug or alcohol abuser who did not begin with at least one gateway drug is virtually unknown."

The younger a person is when he/she starts using drugs, the more trouble he/she gets into with drugs and the more trouble he/she has in stopping drug use.

**THUS, PREVENTING ANY USE OF ANY GATEWAY DRUG BY ANY YOUNG PERSON IS
ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL.**

"How to Beat Drugs" *U.S. News & World Report*, 9/11/89

"Tobacco: A Gateway Substance to Other Drug Dependencies" *Family Practice News*, 5/14/91

"Marijuana, Medicine and the Law" Alan I. Leshner, *Washington Post*, 10/5/94

"A National Survey of Public Support for Restrictions on Youth Access to Tobacco" Bailey and Crowe, *Journal of School Health*, 10/94

"Substance Abuse & Violence" D. Friedli, *NEWSWorthy*, 5-96

"Study Concludes: Nearly 90% of Cocaine Users Had Smoked, Drank and Used Marijuana First" Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, 10/27/94

"Stages of Progression in Drug Involvement from Adolescence to Adulthood: Further Evidence for the Gateway Drug Theory" *Journal on Studies on Alcoholism*, 9/92

"Expert Tells Senate That Cigarettes are 'Entry' to Hard Drugs" *New York Times*, 3/11/94

"That First Drink Can Begin a Life of Misery or Crime" *Omaha World Herald*, 1/17/98

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