

THE DAMAGE IS DONE

[Assignment: Write a thoughtful essay in which you examine either causes or effects of a significant event in your life.]

(1) There are countless reasons that people give for using drugs. No reason anyone can think of is a valid excuse for subjecting himself to the physical and mental abuse that so often accompanies drug use. Different people have different ways of dealing with life and its problems. Drugs should not be one of them. Sure, today's media are filled with people beating us over the head with the horrible facts of drug use. However, there are countless hard-headed, stubborn, stupid people who cannot accept the sickening truth. I was one of those people. My excuse is just as invalid as anyone else's, and there never is any single reason for such asininity. But, in my case anyway, I think there was a main contributing factor.

(2) After an accident in which I blew off two fingers while making a "bomb," my life took a one hundred and eighty degree turn. This once self-confident, ordinary boy was suddenly insecure and different. I went from "jock" to "stoney." One would think after losing two fingers, a person would achieve a greater respect for his body. This was not the case.

(3) First in the succession of events that led up to my excessive substance abuse was my beginning to smoke cigarettes. Instead of puffing on these seemingly innocent objects, I began to inhale deeply. I am not saying that anybody who smokes is going to wind up a drug addict. I guess I already had it in the back of my mind that I was going to experiment with dope (marijuana), and I was just preparing my lungs for the harsh reality of dope smoking; I did not want to be considered a "lightweight" by my peers because I could not hold a "hit." I thought this experiment would not blow up in my face. I was wrong.

(4) My first experiment soon led to a short-term trial period, which led to another, longer one. Before I knew it, I was a steady source of income for my local dealer. The cost of such an obsession with drugs soon became apparent to me. My lunch money and allowance took care of the financial aspect for the first few months. However, the physical toll needed some kind of compensation. I found myself falling asleep in class and running out of energy. It was time to introduce a new drug to my bloodstream: speed.

(5) Before long, the effect of two speeders was not cutting it. It was taking me three times as much to achieve the same results. At the same time my obsession with the hemp plant grew steadily. I was smoking five to

eight doobeys a day. Money was running short. My life was a constant struggle to stay stoned. I needed other income to fulfill the cravings of my body. Dealing was the obvious alternative.

(6) I never pushed drugs on anyone. Other kids knew my reputation and would ask if I could get them something, and I would act as if I did not know what they were talking about. I only dealt to people I knew were "cool," which meant that they were already established drug users and could be trusted not to turn me in if they were busted. I came to know the major supplier for the northern half of the city, and could get anything I wanted to: speed, hash, ludes, acid, coke . . . My profits went up in smoke, and down the hatch. When I began to supply the more destructive drugs to the heavier users, my curiosity began to rise. I wanted to try them out. "These other dudes seem to get into them," I thought, "I'll give 'em a try." Suddenly I was into hard stuff, something I thought I never would do. After every buy, I would skim a little off the top. Before I knew it, I was a heavier user than the people whom I used to consider heavy users.

(7) After about two years of extreme abuse, I began to notice the drastic changes that my environment and I had gone through. The pain and embarrassment I had inflicted upon my family suddenly became apparent to me. My motivation was gone. I was having a hard time staying in school. The administrators were always looking for a reason to suspend or expel me. My life was in a shambles, and my mind was oblivious. It was time for a change.

(8) In the following years, I gradually withdrew myself from drugs. No rehabilitation centers, no counselors, just myself and a will to succeed. Fortunately, I succeeded on my own, something very few people are able to do.

(9) Those years cost me a fortune, one that can never be replaced. I am not talking about finance. I am talking about my youth, that childish innocence which protected me from the harsh realities of the world. Drugs did not help conceal those realities, they only helped to reveal them. Once time is spent, it cannot be repaid. The time I spent in drugs is too heavy a toll for anyone to pay, not to mention the damage I inflicted upon my brain and body.

(10) There are many things to consider, so many reasons not to get involved with drugs. As for me, the damage is done.