

Suggestions for Young People on Getting and Staying Sober

Avoid the people, places and things that were associated with your old drug using lifestyle. It's hard to break away from old friends, old activities, and old hangouts, but the chances of staying sober if you don't are next to zero. Don't fight reality; it will always bite you in the butt. Your old playmates, playgrounds, and playthings are apt to be filled with all sorts of euphoric memories that will create cravings - not exactly what you need right now.

Practice how you're going to **tell people that you are now sober**. You can make excuses at first, but at some point you'll want to tell people that you really don't want to use anymore. Be prepared for comments from old drug using peers like "Have you been brainwashed?" or "You're kidding, right?"

Develop a great relationship - perhaps with some romance, but be careful because breakups can really mess with your thinking and foul up your hard won sobriety.

Expect to have cravings and know that they may last a few minutes or a few hours, but they will pass. Cravings are kinda like stray cats - they will go away if you don't feed them.

If you've got a craving that just won't go away, try to **picture all of the really awful things** that have happened to you when you've given in to cravings in the past. Focus on the disappointment in your mother's face, the feeling that you had when you were suspended from school, the death of a friend who overdosed, or the isolation you had when you were hospitalized or were locked up. Then get yourself involved in something that is so fun, challenging or complicated that you can possibly think about drugs. Call someone who is sober and get the support you need.

Ask your parents or friends to **sit in the nonsmoking sections of restaurants**. Tobacco is a 'gateway drug' and it is best to avoid it as well. If you must smoke, inhale only.

You will likely experience some drug dreams - they may be intense, but they too will pass.

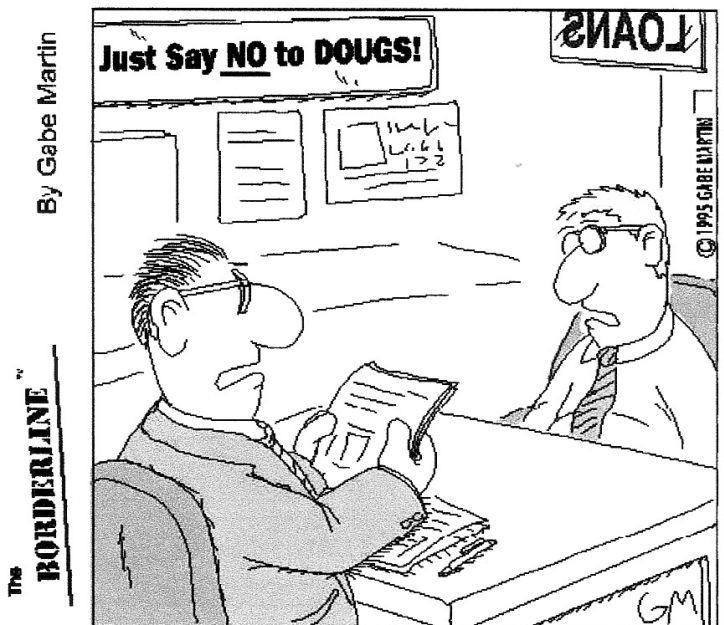
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Keep yourself occupied with positive activities. Few things are worse for staying healthy than boredom. Volunteer for something, learn to play guitar, read a novel, write a novel (maybe a song or poem), go bowling, get to know your family better, join the YMCA, learn to play guitar, go to a movie, take your little sister to a movie, take up tennis, work out, go to an AA meeting, but do something. **NOW!**

Get to AA, CA, or NA meetings on a regular basis. You need contact with sober people, need to keep the sober message strong, and you need a chance to link up with your sponsor regularly. If you don't have a sponsor, get one!

Be a nice guy - **do something decent for someone**.

Understand your parents' role in your life. Their obligation as parents is to provide you with guidance, support, encouragement, limits, and consequences. Don't fight with them when they set a limit; they are just doing their job.



"I'm sorry Mr. Hallerson, but I'm afraid we can't help you. And frankly, I don't think anyone will be willing to help you."

Don't fight it when your parents want to **drug test** you. The testing will keep you honest and will give you an extra excuse not to use (if you need still one).

Think about **getting a job** (or at least think about doing some part-time work). Keep busy.

When you are away from home, **check in with your parents fairly often . . .** it will make them feel a lot more secure. You probably need to build some trust and this will help.

Don't even think about going to a party just yet, unless it is sober, adult supervised, and free of old drug buddies. Try to avoid temptations as much as you can.

If your faith is important to you, **maintain a relationship with your higher power.** Pray, connect with the kids at the church/temple, and 'turn it over' to God when you're stuck. If you don't have a faith in a higher power, find out more from a friend, a pastor or rabbi.

Get rid of possessions that are likely to make you think about using drugs. Obviously you need to get rid of pipes, bong, and paraphernalia, but also think about how posters, pictures, T-shirts, some pants, hats, and room decorations make you think and feel. Your beer bottle collection has to go (or at least pack it up and put it in the garage)!

If the alcohol in your parent's liquor cabinet is a problem for you, ask them to **put away, lock up, and/or get rid of the alcohol.** Temptations so close may drive you crazy!

If it's an issue for you, explain to your parents that **any alcohol served at meals or in your presence can trigger cravings.** If your parents have a party at your home while you are there, it may be a good idea for you to be elsewhere. Let your parents know that holidays are especially tough because many holiday events include alcohol.

Find a safe sober place for holidays like New Year's Eve or the 4th of July (maybe an obviously sober party or an AA meeting). If cravings are a problem, ask your parents to agree to a Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner at a relative's home at which alcohol is NOT a part of the festivities.

You may want to **get rid of the music that you used to listen to when you were stoned.** Some music brings back memories that will create cravings that will drive you nuts.

Before you attend a movie, think about the impact that the subject may have on you. Will it create cravings or touch on topics that will make you feel vulnerable? Avoid dangerous situations.

If you are feeling under stress, talk about it. Let your parents know, talk with your best friend, call your counselor/psychologist, converse with your brother, or get together with your sponsor, but don't just let the feelings sit there.

Attendance at concerts is generally not a good idea. If an extended period of sobriety has been established and your parents are willing to have you risk it, go with a sober peer that you absolutely trust. Plan to pass a drug test when you return.

Since many recovering drug users **enjoy activities that have a high degree of stimulation,** consider involvement in sports like white water rafting, paint ball sports, snow boarding, scuba, water skiing, or mountaineering. Finger painting will never replace drugs or alcohol, but other activities can give you a really good rush. Most any type of exercise is apt to help.

Contribute to the family. Look for things that need doing. You will build trust, be appreciated, and you will demonstrate your commitment to the family.

Show appreciation to your parents. Don't forget the pain that your parents experienced during the time when you were struggling with your addiction.

Understand that life is all about choices. You will become the sum total of the decisions that you make for better and for worse. Focus on the person who you want to become, design a path to get there, reach out for the support you need to help you stay on track, and make the choices day by day to make it happen.