



# *Letters from Juvenile Hall*

*And Other Writing by  
Juvenile Drug Court Participants  
Marin County Superior Court*

*2005-2007*

*Edited by Lynn Duryee*

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## **Introduction**

It has been my privilege to preside over the Marin County Superior Court Juvenile Drug Court since January 2005. Every Thursday afternoon, ten to twenty teens dutifully shuffle into Courtroom L to discuss their struggles, sobriety, longings and life lessons. Each week, participants must meet with their probation officer, attend treatment, go to self-help meetings, give UA's, exercise, and complete their assigned homework. Some of their homework is contained in this book.

Interested in why teens use drugs? On page 11, our writers say they're sad, bored, anxious, lonely, depressed...and hanging out with the wrong crowd. What should parents know about teen drug use? Our writers report on page 14 that drugs are everywhere, it's hard to say no, and "once you dig yourself into a hole, it can be hard to get out." How can you tell you're an addict? Teens reveal that drugs took over their lives; they lied, cheated, argued, missed important events and lost everything, "from tangible materials to intangible things."

Unlike other court proceedings where adversaries line up on opposite sides and fight for a desired outcome, Drug Court involves a team of professionals working together for a common purpose – to help teens live happy, clean, and productive lives. I am constantly awed by the dedication and professionalism of our Juvenile Drug Court team – it is truly a joy to collaborate with them. Similarly, working with our always-entertaining and inspiring teens – along with their triumphs, troubles, setbacks and successes – makes Thursday afternoon my favorite day of the week. After reading this collection of their honest and courageous writing, I think you'll understand why.

**Lynn Duryee**  
Presiding Judge, Marin County Superior Court  
June 1, 2007

## What Is Juvenile Drug Court?

A 9-month structured program which helps teenagers get their lives in order. – Katy age 17.

A program to help kids overcome their addiction and do better things with their lives. – Stephen, age 15.

A drug program to help kids change and succeed. – Paula, age 16.

Rehab. – Chris, age 18.

Probation and drug addiction support group. – Morgan, age 17.

Recovery court. – Alton, age 17.

A system to help drug users get their lives back. – Rob, age 16.

A way to keep my life in order and to keep me off drugs. – Mark, age 17.

## One Thing I Have Learned in Drug Court...

Support is the rock in everyone's sobriety. – Alton.

Being honest is important. – Heather, age 14.

My life is better when I am sober. – Conor, age 17.

**Play by Drug Court rules or you will die painfully.  
– Chris, age 18**

Running away from problems never solves them. – Katy

Drug Court works for people who work a program. – DJ, age 16.

How to be responsible. – Joey, age 18.

Being honest goes a long way. – Jess, age 17.

If you lead a law-abiding life, you won't have anything to worry about. – Mark

School is important. – Morgan

B.S. will get you nowhere. – Stephen

What I want for myself is not always what I need to be successful. – Careina, age 16

### **One Thing I Hope to Achieve before Drug Court Graduation...**

I want perfect attendance at school, and I want to graduate with my class. – Kerri, 17.

I want a good AA program. – DJ

Control over what I do. – Rob, age 16.

Sobriety, better relationships with family, sober friends. – Heather, 14.

Trust. – Chris

My permit. – Jess

My license. – Joey

To be a responsible young woman. – Paula, 16.

I want to make sure I am on a path success. – Conor

I would like to stay sober and pay back everything I owe. – Mark

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| <p><b>I WANT TO EARN THE RESPECT OF THE JUDGE AND<br/>THE DRUG COURT TEAM. – STEPHEN, AGE 15.</b></p> |
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Structure in my life. – Katy

A job. – Barrett, age 17.

My high school diploma. – John, age 17

Believing that sobriety is fun and safe. – Ari, 17

Self-respect. – Wednesday, 16

A support group. – Lindsay, 15

## **Let Me Out!**

### **Letters from Juvenile Hall**

Dear Drug Court Team,

Ever since 7<sup>th</sup> grade I have been hurting my mom and myself by doing the stupid things that I do. From the first day I started smoking, I became really fond of it, and along the way I got introduced to alcohol. For the last 4 years that I have been using, I did not know that I was hurting my mom. I thought Hell, if anybody was getting hurt, it was me. But as usual I was wrong.

I finally realized that no matter what I did or how bad I hurt my mom, she was always behind me and supporting me. Well, I am tired of letting down my mom, and I want to make her proud, and I want to make myself proud. I entered Drug Court wanting to get rid of my problem. At first I was doing well. Then I had a few slips but got back on my feet. About a month ago, everything was perfect. I was 60 days sober. I had a job, I was out of trouble, I had goals, I knew where I was going in life. And most important of all, my mom was happy, proud of me, believed in me, and had a smile on her face. I want that feeling back.

For years people have told my mom that I am a failure, and it's all because of her. I want to prove these people wrong. I have come to the realization that smoking and drinking will lead to nothing but trouble and Juvenile Hall. I want to accomplish things in life and not be a failure. The only way I can do that is to be sober.

The most important thing in my life is to finish drug court and graduate. By graduating and being sober and out of trouble, I will make my mom happy and make me happy. I need this structure in my life now so I can learn and be successful before it is too late. So please believe in me and give me one last chance to show you and everyone else that I can be successful, be sober, and graduate drug court.

Bobby, Age 16

Dear Drug Court,

If I get out, I plan to go to a meeting a day for 90 days. I will call my sponsor and tell him what happened. I am going to stay away from people that use and make sober new friends. I am connecting with my higher power, and I will continue to do that. I am going to call my employer and find out if I can still work there. If I can't work there, I will get a job at either Burlington Coat Factory or Longs. But my number one priority is going to be sobriety, because without that I will have nothing.

Daniel, Age 17

Dear Drug Court Team,

I feel really sorry for lying to the whole team. I know that I should have said I was drinking, but it was hard. I didn't want to say, "Hey, guess what, I've been lying to you and drinking, aren't you guys stupid." I know what I did was wrong and I want to do better. I want to get into the program. I want to stop lying and do it truthfully. I got this great opportunity in front of me. I could keep doing what I'm doing and keep BS-ing the team or be sober, go to meetings, and make my mom happy and me happy from doing good and completing Drug Court. I have a chance to try again if I'm still in Drug Court. I just want to get off the wrong track and start to do good. I want to try to really get into AA. I look at people in AA and people at my school, and they got there and are having fun being sober. Thank you.

Jonathon, Age 15

I miss my family. I love them so much. I haven't seen my sister in a month and now I'm in here. I miss her so badly. I'm really worried about how my relationship is going to be like with my family after I get out of the hall.

Paige, Age 14

Dear Judge Duryee,

I would like to apologize for being dishonest in my first few weeks of drug court. I did not understand the importance of being truthful and that is why I was placed in Juvenile Hall. Before last Thursday I would have never admitted I had a problem with marijuana, but now that is not true.

It is sad that it took such a major event for me to see I had a problem. The first night here was one of the hardest in my life. Being placed in my cell and reflecting on myself almost drove me crazy. I had to think, really think, about why I was addicted to smoking weed. The answer did not come easily. I was finally face to face with all the problems in my life. Smoking weed was making me numb to all the pain. My weekend was slow but useful to set up a plan for my teenage years.

While locked up all of my confidence was stripped down to the bone. I realized that I did not need to smoke weed to get around my problems. I am a smart kid and I decided I would find a new way to confront and fix these problems. My family is now my drug and this became obvious when I was not withdrawing from the marijuana, but really my parents.

I am sorry for being dishonest to you and the rest of the drug court group. I promise to you that the last week has changed my life. I do not belong in jail and would do ANYTHING not to come back. I want to go back to school, see my parents, and start my new drug free life.

I solemnly swear to myself I will not take a single hit of marijuana. I will not smoke cigarettes or drink alcohol. I want to spend my life with my family without being numb. I want to face the challenges in life. I have learned my lesson. I look forward to proving to you that I can do the right thing.

Conor, Age 16

Dear Drug Court Team,

I relapsed. It started with having a friend over. I thought he was a positive influence on me. I started taking a whole bunch of random pills. Which was a stupid idea, to take something that I had no idea what it was.

I have had a lot of chances in Drug Court. I've done some big things and little things. Judge Duryee and Wardell Anderson have never given up on me. They have tried all kinds of things on me, because they believe I can be successful and do good in life. I'm a big talker who doesn't do any action. For once in my life I'm going to follow through with what I have to say. Keep my day busy. Going to school is mandatory but having a set schedule would make me really happy. Go to the gym. Having a job. I know there's nothing left drug court can really help me with other than being by my side. Having faith. It's something I have to do. And I am gonna go through with it. I am sorry for wasting your time in the past.

Paula, Age 16

I'm just realizing how grateful I am for drug court. It is such a great opportunity and I can't believe I haven't taken advantage of it. I've been screwing around this whole time when if I would have just put in a little effort, I could be having a good time on the outs with my family and have all my privileges, but instead I tried to cheat the system. I'm so stupid.

Melissa, Age 15

## **Identifying Conflict at Home**

### **1. What are the 3 most common causes of conflict in your home?**

- Miscommunication causes us to become angry because we think others are saying something hurtful.
- Finances.
- Lack of quality time.
- Not being home much
- Not eating dinner with my family
- Not taking care of responsibilities at home
- Not taking school seriously
- Not keeping in contact with my mom during day so she knows I'm ok
- Not doing what I'm asked
- Chores, cleaning
- Questioning my dad all the time
- Raising my voice with my step-parent
- Not paying attention when my parents talk to me
- Doing poorly in school
- My mom and I don't see eye to eye on what's clean and what's fine
- Me not following directions

### **2. What are 3 things you can do to reduce conflict in your home?**

- Communicate plans with parents.
- Parents discuss finances outside of kids' presence
- Be a clear communicator. Set a timer on my phone to remind me to call parents
- Apologize when I hurt parent's feelings
- Make sure I'm not reacting in anger. Count to 10 first
- Go to school on time. Set alarm.
- Plan to spend at least 1 night a week at home. Spend quality time with family
- Clean my room, do what's asked of me, follow directions
- Be respectful. Don't be a smartass

## **Relapses**

On October 31, 2006, the day before my 2 years [of sobriety], I made the decision to drink. I thought that I could control it and I thought that my life would continue to be the same. Within 3 months I proved to myself that I could not manage my life and manage drinking and doing drugs. My grades dropped because getting loaded was more important. When I was sober my dad got me a car because he saw how much I improved my life. Within 3 months of having the car I crashed it. I lost my parents' trust because getting loaded was more important. I lost my relationships with friends I had in the program. I stole money from my mom and ran away to Chico. I lost my job because of my absence.

My actions were just not me. I did things that I would not have done if I were sober. I ended up back in Juvenile Hall where I hadn't been for over 2 ½ years, and I ended up back in drug court where I spent so much time improving my life and it all was ruined.

It's hard to come back to this point where I have to redo everything, to restart my life. It's hard to come back and know that I messed up, but I have to remember that everything happens for a reason. The weirdest part was raising my hand as a newcomer and seeing all the familiar faces of people that care about me, that I showed no love for when I was out there.

I'm not really trying to think about the future, but I have been thinking about school. Once I graduate, I want to go to beauty school and get a job so I can move out and start my career with cosmetology. But personally for myself as of now, I want to get my life back, stay sober and get the things back I lost when I was out there, things that are extremely important to me. And the things that are important to my family so I don't have to feel that guilt and shame I felt for ruining everything. I have to remember that it is possible to get those things back, I just have to work at it.

Kerri, Age 17

On Sunday, I relapsed for the first time after starting the drug court program. But what was different was that I had a guilty conscience afterwards and didn't like the feeling of being high, knowing that I was taking one step back from my goal.

Little by little I started to realize what was important in my life today and what steps I'd have to take in order to make progress in my situation. Knowing that I have been given a second chance motivates me to get on the right track.

David, Age 17

I've been in and out of AA for a full year now, and I have truthfully for the first time admitted to myself and my higher power that I am completely powerless over drugs and alcohol. I have finally decided to surrender my will and my life over to the care of God. My way of living obviously isn't suitable for my life.

On Friday, July 28<sup>th</sup>, I was hanging out with some acquaintances. They were smoking weed and drinking. I took a sip of beer and told myself there was no point stopping there, I had already relapsed. From there on it was all down hill. I did things I don't remember and did things that I regret. I realize that if I want to stay sober, I need to jump in with two feet, even if the program is boring me.

Jess, Age 16

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### **At Risk for Relapse:**

“Making excuses is a really bad thing for sobriety because it leaves loopholes. Loopholes are the little things that enable you to relapse.” – Morgan

“Not talking at meetings doesn't help relapses, because sometimes meetings are the only place to talk about what's really going on in your life.” -- Jen

“Not enjoying sobriety is a big factor for me. A lot of the time I still wish I could still use here and there. It's because I don't have other stuff giving me fulfillment in life.

Since I'm not enjoying sobriety, it puts me in risk. Wanting to do drugs and not enjoying being sober is a big trigger to get loaded." -- Chris

"Being critical of others is horrible for your sobriety, because it means you're spending all of your time looking at other people and seeing what they need to do and not worrying about yourself. That's when you start to slip away from the program." -- Jess

"Not talking at meetings puts me at risk for relapse. I feel I have nothing to say or that I can't relate or that I relate too much. Also, I make excuses on why I don't want a sponsor. I don't want to do all of the extra work. I like to focus on the negative and sit on my own shit." – Paula

"I think the biggest thing that leads me to relapse is lying. If I tell the smallest lie, I will start lying about everything, and sooner or later, I will use." –Ari, 17

***Meetings play a big role in my sobriety. They are places where I can go when I need support or feel like relapsing. When I go to a meeting, I see people I know and that I can talk to. When I am listening to the speaker, I reflect on when I was using. It reminds me how bad and tore up I was. It lets me realize how much better my life is sober.***

***Calling my sponsor is the thing I need to do more. We need to do a step study, which is the main thing that helps people get sober. We can go get coffee at six in the morning.***

***In AA, it is not always meetings and work. You need to have sober fun, and believe me, AA and NA events are really fun. We do things like go to the Russian River and attend AA programs. –Raja, age 16***

## What Parents Should Know

### 1. What specific situations that led to your drug use? What led to your continued drug use?

- Depression, loneliness, boredom. Plus, it was fun.
- Lack of structure. I wasn't accountable to anyone. Soon my use became abuse.
- Hanging out with people who would party and drink.
- Stopped going to meetings.
- People around me, issues with myself and my family. Drugs were the easy way out. I cave in easily to peer pressure.
- I was convinced to try crystal. I didn't want to do it at first. Once I started, I did it every weekend for 2 ½ years.
- I was depressed. When I got mad at my mom, I went out and got loaded.
- I got in with an older crowd at an early age that used and did a lot of experimenting. I got caught up. It was easy to get and seemed to be the thing to do.
- Not being able to cope with my feelings. Not being able to deal with life on life's terms.
- My dad introduced me to drugs and alcohol at a young age. When he left me, the only thing I thought would replace him was dope. I got lost in another lifestyle. Drugs made me confident.
- Sadness, anxiety, insomnia.
- Boredom, curiosity, change of friends. What led me to continued use was me liking the feeling.
- Many of my peers were using. I felt like at least giving it a try.
- I was angry and decided Why Not. Then I started doing it for fun. And I got hooked into the routine.
- I've always felt different. I saw older people drinking. When I tried it, I loved the taste and feeling. I continued using because I could.

## **2. What did you do to hide your use from your parents?**

- Stayed out. Didn't come home. They didn't look very hard or assume anything.
- Eye drops for my red eyes. I didn't use at home.
- They pretty much knew I was using. They tried to get me help, but it didn't work.
- I tried to avoid them. I usually had a friend stay the night with me.
- Nothing. I just got away with it. They didn't notice at first.
- I ignored them.
- Saying that I would sleep over at a friend's house.
- Everything: AXE, Visine, water.
- I was pretty discreet. I came home after my mom was in bed. I made her believe that drugs were not an option for me.
- I tried to be sneaky about it and not be myself. They catch on sooner or later.
- Nothing. I came home loaded. They never suspected anything.
- When I was using meth, I would smoke weed so my eyes weren't so big. Smoking weed wasn't a big deal to them.
- I did not try to hide it. I didn't tell them I used, and I didn't want them to know. I was lucky they didn't notice.
- I would sneak out at night and come home in the morning. We didn't talk. I would chew gum and rub lemon on my skin.
- Lying about where I was and what I was spending my money on.
- I lied to them, kept a lot of stuff from them.
- I used to pretend that I was angry at my parents so they would not be interested in spending time with me and find out I was using.

## **3. What could your parents have done to better monitor your situation?**

- They could've watched me like a hawk.
- They did the best they could.
- They could have been stricter.
- Mom did everything to help me. My dad could have cared a little more.
- Nothing really, except to keep me in the house all the time.
- Nothing really. I never listened to them. I thought I was always right.

- Not very much. My mother trusted me. She believed the lies I was telling her.
- My parents have done a good job. For a while I was barely one step ahead of them.
- When they tried to tighten down, I went out and didn't come home for extended periods of time. I guess I was out of control.
- Nothing, because whether they said I could or couldn't do anything, I would still do it. Because I was selfish and didn't have a care.
- Helped me look at what the drugs were doing to my life. Punishment would have worked.

**4. If you hadn't started drug court, what could your parents have done to help you become clean and sober?**

- I'm not sure there's anything they could've done on their own. I am pretty resourceful and tended to do what I wanted to do, for better or worse.
- Home testing
- Send me to rehab again for a long time.
- Put me in Phoenix.
- Put me in something to keep me busy in my free time.
- I don't think that there was anything else they could do. It was up to me.
- My mom could've given me more attention. She could have just done that.
- Nothing. I have to be willing to be sober. Whether I'm in drug court or not. And they are powerless over what I do.
- Routine checkups and some sort of money monitoring.
- I have no idea. Maybe kept me locked up in the house all day.
- They could have been less in denial about my use and could have kept our relationship more safe and honest.
- Could have...ummm...honestly, they did all they could.
- They could have been in less denial when they would find me up at 4 a.m. thinking I was doing "homework."
- They could have checked out how I looked when I got home.

**5. What do you think parents should know that they don't know about teen drug use?**

- What teens think isn't bad is bad.
- Parents, I think, can't 100% stop their kids from using. You have to let them work it out themselves but support them.
- It's hard to quit your use.
- Once you dig yourself into a hole, it can be hard to get out. Parents, help your teen be honest with himself and with you by supporting him and not being judgmental.
- It surrounds them and it's hard to stay away.
- Sometimes it's not as bad as they think it is.
- A lot of the teen population uses drug and alcohol.
- All teens experiment.
- It can go from a small problem to a big one in a short period of time.
- Peer pressure. How common it is. Kids are starting to do drugs at a very young age.
- Most kids do it. And it doesn't matter how they're doing in life. They could be really good people, but still they use.
- If you suspect your child is using and you see the signs, they are using.
- All kids will try something at least once. There's a good chance they will continue their drug use.
- Drugs are everywhere.
- I do not use to rebel or be cool. It is hard for me to avoid using.
- It leads down a very scary road that no kid should go. Outside of AA, I don't know many people who don't use drugs.

## **Working Step One**

“We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives have become unmanageable.”

### **1. What is your response to step one?**

- Step One is good. Without it, you can't go on to the next step.
- I can't accept the idea that I'm powerless. I don't think my life is unmanageable.
- I just accepted Step One. I thought I had more control over drugs, but recent events have proved to me that I'm not in control.
- It's important. If you speed through the steps, you won't get it.
- Yes -- I'm an alcoholic and drug user.
- I AM powerless over everything in my life except my attitude and actions.
- It's true. Alcohol and drugs made my life unmanageable. They are very powerful.
- It feels really good to finally admit to myself and someone else who cares for my honesty and sobriety.
- I've been in bad shape the last week and a half. I've broken down multiple times. I gave up. I can't drink any more.

### **2. Do you think you can control your drinking or use? Why or why not?**

- When I'm sober, I think I can control it, but when I get down to the drinking, I want to get drunk. I see no purpose in it if I don't get drunk drunk.
- No. I am still in recovery. I can't control it. If I could I wouldn't be here.
- No. I would use until I couldn't walk, feed, take care of myself.
- No. I have an addiction. The word “control” does not fit in addiction.
- No. When I smoked, that was all I did. I got hooked. I could not stop once I started. I believe I lost control because I liked the relief I got when I was high.
- I don't think it's really a question for me. I know I have a problem. I go deeper and deeper into my addiction as I use.
- I spent all my money on drugs. I argued, cheated, missed important events, gave up my personal belongings. I don't think I can control my use.
- “You stop doing the drug, and the drug starts doing you.”

**3. Do you think your life has become unmanageable as a result of drugs or alcohol?**

- Yes. I lost everything, from tangible materials to intangible things.
- I can't make myself quit.
- When I was using, I wouldn't be doing anything with myself to get further in life.
- Yes. I'm in Drug Court, on probation, aren't I?
- I didn't go to school. I didn't have a job.
- I lost the trust of my friends and family.
- I didn't know where I was when I woke up.
- Can't remember periods of time.
- Made my family disappointed in me.
- I let other people take advantage of me.
- Spent all my money on drugs.
- Would do anything to support my habit.
- Once I have a little, I want more and more. I can't control the craving, the drive to want more and more. The constant thoughts of using.

**4. What ways have you tried to manage your drug or alcohol use? How successful have these been?**

- I tried to manage my drug and alcohol use. But it never worked.
- I used to think I could manage my drug use and still be successful, but that was not true. My grades dropped. Nothing motivated me.
- I failed miserably. What's the point of controlling?
- I couldn't make myself quit on my own.

**5 . How did you work the first step this week?**

- Talked to sponsor about turning down alcohol when offered
- Met with sponsor and read some of the Big Book
- I had desires to use, which is very common for me. Began to think, "Perhaps when I'm an adult I can use on occasion." Then remembered that it is not easy for me to maintain control over drug use, then decided that I will never be sure that I can use only occasionally.

## **Honesty**

### **1. Why is honesty important?**

- If I can't be honest and can't be trusted, I don't think I will get very far with Drug Court or in life. By being honest, I gain the self-respect that I work so hard at getting. If I lose that self-respect, it may trigger me to use. Honesty is one of the most important factors in my sobriety.
- Honesty is my #1 priority. When I'm dishonest, one lie can bring me down quickly.
- I have to work on my honesty.
- When I use, I lie. It's easy to tell the truth when I'm sober.
- Loss of self-respect results from dishonesty.
- Drug addicts are all dishonest.

### **2. How does honesty relate to self-respect?**

- The more honest I am, the more respect I have for myself.
- When you lie, you get nowhere.
- When I'm honest, I'm proud of myself and can hold my head high.
- When I'm not honest with others, it roots from me BS'ing myself, and I lose self respect.
- How can you respect yourself if you're a liar?
- You can't feel good about yourself if you're dishonest.

### **3. How does honesty relate to your sobriety?**

- Enables me to understand self, work the steps, talk to my sponsor
- People will trust my sobriety, and I will love and trust myself.
- I feel good not keeping secrets – not guilty or fearful.
- Gain support; maintain integrity; accurately assess my behavior
- Without honesty, I don't consider myself sober, because I wouldn't be working my program. Lying is using behavior, which results in relapse. Not being honest with yourself makes it hard to admit you're powerless.

- It shows other people they can trust me with being honest. If I don't tell the truth about my use, I'm affecting my recovery. I try to be honest with my sobriety, but I am having problems with it.

### **About Myself:**

I have a lot of things to work on and a lot of progress to make. -- Paula

I am really proud of how I still have my very first sobriety date. -- Rob

I'm proud that if I lie, I catch myself immediately and get honest. -- Morgan

I need to wake up. I'm depressed. I found out that I'm just another criminal in the eyes of the system. -- Melissa

I'm most proud of my honesty with the judge. I'm going to treatment to learn something new. -- Gaby

Drugs don't do anything positive for me, and if I allow myself to use, my addiction is more powerful than I think it is. --Chris

I am very proud of myself, I finally got a job I like, and I have awesome sobriety.  
-- Conor

Unfortunately, I don't feel proud of myself at all. -- Careina

Dear Drug Court Team,

I am writing this letter to express my gratitude. I am proud to be writing this letter because it means that I have graduated the Center Point program. I am thankful you have given me the second chance that I needed. Center Point has shown me many things that will help me in my recovery: how to cope with my triggers, how to express what I am thinking and feeling. It has also helped me improve my relationship with my mom and my step dad. I appreciate what you have done for me. If I apply the knowledge that I have learned at Center Point, I will do well for myself.

Jonathon

## **Making Good Decisions**

### **1. What are some of the benefits of using drugs?**

- Take away pain, anxiety
- Stress relief
- Calming, relaxing
- Brings you up
- Relieves boredom
- Fun
- Feels good
- Lessens awkwardness of social situations
- Avoids uncomfortable emotions
- Helps me feel optimistic, friendly
- Increases enjoyment of food
- Helps with weight loss
- Seems to help with problems – worries go away
- Rush of getting away with it
- Helps with sleep

### **2. What are some of the risks of using drugs?**

- Get in trouble
- Get locked up
- Loss of trust
- Loss of money
- Loss of respect
- Addiction
- Hurts body
- Get lazy
- Return of bad habits – theft, disrespect, argumentative
- Problems not solved
- Break law

- Death
- Engage in risky behavior
- Lose friends
- Overdose
- Violate probation
- Hurt yourself
- People know you're lying
- Obsessive thoughts about using
- Memory problems
- Parent problems
- School problems
- Isolation from loved ones
- Death
- Hangovers
- Brain damage
- HIV/AIDS
- Hurt loved ones

### **3. Looking at the risks and benefits, what do you choose for yourself and why?**

- Depending on my mood, I choose both
- I want to be clean but I can't always choose
- I choose to avoid drugs because using will set me back in Drug Court. It will make my parents sad. Even so, I still seek the positive effects of my drug of choice and often desire to use.
- I choose sobriety. With all the trouble I have been getting in with drugs, I am only hurting myself. I have had so much fun hanging out with AA people. Getting high on probation kills my high and gets me paranoid.
- I don't want to put my health at risk because I like sports. Also, when I don't use, I don't do other stupid stuff, like talking back, being disrespectful, and anger.
- With drugs, life is like ^^^^\\^^^\\^^^\\\\. Staying sober, life is always, in a sense, going up, even with its minor downs.

- Sobriety definitely. I was my own worst enemy when I was using. Now I'm the highest I've ever been.
- I know what you want me to say, but I don't honestly know what I choose. When I use, I'm not even thinking that I'm making a decision.

Dear Drug Court,

When entering Drug Court, I did not know how to do much of anything. Drug Court taught me my skills. I go to school, I go to work, I try to meet all of my appointments. Drug Court's job is to teach kids all these things. By doing these things, I help drug court. What I can do for drug court? I can be a leader in my community and do the right thing.

Daniel, Age 18

## Journal Entries

Drug court was harsh. Me and my mom are at each other's throats. I did my fifth step with my sponsor. School was okay. I'm trying to bite my tongue. My anger comes out when I feel anything unless I'm happy. It's like my mask.

Happy that school is out for a few extra days. Very upset with my relationship with mom. Very tired from all the stress. Already nervous about Drug Court. Always am. Very hard night with only a few hours of sleep. Sad. Mad. Tired. Lonely.

I dyed my hair today. The smell reminds me of chemicals. Chemicals = Drugs.

I HATE WHO I LIVE WITH! I WANT TO KILL THEM.

Before I thought I couldn't go out and have fun with friends without being on some sort of high. But I realized that I had other friends who aren't drug addicts like myself. Surround myself with those people more, and I find myself still having fun and doing and going more places than before.

What triggers me to want to use is boredom. I can't stand being bored. I think it's one of the worst experiences. It gets really hard to not want to go out and smoke weed when I'm bored. But somehow I'm coping with it.

To be honest with you, I didn't do the journal entries for the last 2 weeks, and decided to do it at the last minute as always. I made a couple of bad mistakes. I'm nervous that I might go to juvenile hall for this, and I'm scared. Wardell thinks I used.

I hope I don't get kicked out of school. I think I might which would be all bad because then I would have to go back to County and that school is no good for me.

*Lately I've been more happy of a person. I've been feeling good about life, how friendships, relationships, things at home are going. Since I've steered away from drugs more, it seems I've got less things to hide, and I don't have that dirty feeling when I'm around loved ones.*

I've noticed things have gotten a lot better around the house, and there has been a lot less stress on my parents' part since I've been in this program. It feels good to see them less worried about me.

Today my friend got screwed over for stealing and lying. That made me grateful that I have nothing to lie about and that I'm not stealing any more.

I know this time I really hurt my dad. I feel so bad. I love my dad more than anything in the world, and I hate hurting him. But also I like to do what I want, but it always lead to hurting him. He is the best dad ever. He gives me all the love he has but I still continue to let him down. I love my dad and want to make him proud but it's so hard for me to do good.

I was really getting along with my parents. I have gained trust and it feels great. They left me and my friend at our house all day. They never do that. I really like having trust.

I really wanna use!!! But I'm not going to, I can't!

I know how important exercise is in this program and to my health. But when it rains, I have a hard time doing it.

My goal is to get out of drug court. I'm not gonna get kicked out. I'm not gonna let that happen. I'm actually gonna stay away from drugs. I don't want to go down that path again. Been there, done that. I'm trying to be successful.

One of the goals I would like to achieve this week is to get a sponsor. I need someone phoning me, someone I can call for advice, because I'm lagging on getting to meetings.

I went to an AA meeting today. It was boring but I actually paid attention and some of the things the speakers talked about were pretty interesting. What I liked was that they were being real about it and honest. Today I am 9 days sober. To be honest I feel pretty shitty.

My issue today is my goals. My first goal is to stop drinking. My second goal is to get good grades. And my third goal is to show everyone I could really stop drinking and I'm not just saying that.

## On The Run

*Two of our Drug Court Participants have been on the run since the beginning of March. Recently, both left messages saying that they are almost ready to turn themselves in. Assume that they've been using and that when they return to court, they beg for another chance in drug court.*

### **1. Do you think we should give up on the runaways? Why or why not?**

- You should not give up on them unless they want to be given up on. It really hurts when you know people are giving up on you.
- I don't really know them or their situations, but I don't think we should give up on them yet. Everyone has to reach a different point before they can make the changes they need to make.
- We should not give up on them. I was rebellious too. I didn't want treatment and kept on relapsing again and again.
- Give them a chance. I didn't want to have Drug Court help me. I kept thinking I don't have a problem, but I do.
- We can't help them until they know they got themselves into the situation, and it's not going to get better until they get help. If the only way to get their lives back is by residential treatment, they have to try their hardest to make it work, even if they hate every minute of it.

### **2. Should the runaways be given another chance at Drug Court?**

- Yes
- Drug Court is the best thing for them, even if they don't totally deserve it
- Give them another chance, if they truly want one. Everyone deserves a second chance.
- Only if they want to be clean and sober.
- If I were drug court, I would feel really disrespected.

**3. Do you feel jealous of the runaways for being able to do whatever they want for six weeks while you've been working hard in Drug Court?**

- No. I know what it feels like to be on the run. It's no fun. And you're not that free.
- No, I don't have to deal with the consequences, and I feel good about the progress I've made.
- Yes, I felt trapped when they were free. But I'm glad I didn't do things that could destroy my body.
- Yes. I wish I could be doing whatever I want without consequences. But otherwise no, because with the help of drug court, I have learned that I'm worth more than doing drugs and bringing myself down. I have hit rock bottom too many times. I have learned to have more respect for myself and others.
- No. Running is just a delay. You are going to have to face the music at some point.

**4. While these participants were on the run for six weeks, what are some of the things you've learned about yourself or your sobriety?**

- Sobriety is the way to go
- You can't run away from yourself. You are going to carry your problems with you.
- The drug court team cares about us and wants us to stay sober.
- There are better ways to deal with problems than running away and using.
- I can't stay sober by myself.
- I can have fun without drinking.
- People really do care about me and want to help me
- AA meetings really can help if you let them.

## Letters to Our Younger Sisters and Brothers

My Dearest America,

You are at the age where your environment will start to change and, inevitably, so will you. I hope that you will make the right choices when it comes to certain things because I know I didn't. Some things you need to experience for yourself, but I promise you that when it comes to drugs you are not missing out on anything. Being young and being bad is considered cool, but if being bad means you have to do drugs, it is not worth throwing your life away. All those kids who mess with drugs and don't care about anything in life? Yeah, they look cool right now but later in life they won't be worth anything.

My experience with crystal meth was so horrifying that I would never ever want you to try it. Not even once because how could you want or need something you have never had? Meth will ruin you. It will take away your beauty. Girls do things they would never thought they would do for that drug. I don't want you to lose your innocence.

After being sober for over eight months, I have begun to see the beauty of life and begun to appreciate the gift that God has given me. I have matured so quickly that it saddens me to think how fast I grew up and the years I threw away while I was using. I want you to enjoy each and every day. Cherish them because you will never be 14 years old again.

I hope you can understand what I am telling you because from the bottom of my heart I do not want to see you hurt. If you are ever offered meth, remember all the bad and all the pain that drug caused me and our family. Please remember it is not worth it and just say NO!

Love always,

Your big sister Hiromi, Age 16

Dear Elise,

I know you have thought about using crystal meth before because you have asked me about it. I don't know if you have gone through with it or not, but if you haven't there are some things I wish to say to you.

You have seen where using crystal has gotten me. It's gotten me into rehab, it's gotten me deeper into probation, but most of all it has gotten me to an emotional state I would never want you to be in. You've seen me on crystal and you've seen me come down from crystal. Do you really want to go through that? A lot of my cutting was from coming down off crystal. I don't ever want you to go through that in your lifetime.

You may think you are just having fun. That's exactly what I thought when I was doing it, but then you start to want it all the time, and then you start to need it. You may not believe me but this drug is so incredibly addictive and you probably won't even know you're addicted until it's too late. Fortunately for me I knew.

All I'm saying is I don't want you to go through any of the things I've gone through, but in the end I know you're going to do what you're going to do. I just hope to God that you don't. I love you.

Love always,

Shorbie, Age 15

*Schon,*

*I am writing this letter to you because of the question you asked the other day about wanting to try crystal meth. I want you to know how proud I am of you for coming to me for advice. I never want that to change.*

*All I can do for you is tell you my experience and what happened to me. Meth is a very addictive drug, and all it takes is a couple times to become addicted. You are my brother and you saw what I went through. You held me til I fell asleep when we both thought I would die and both believed I wouldn't wake up the next morning. You saw me when I was coming down, and you saw me when I was high, and no matter what state I was in, I was selfish, rude, and inconsiderate. Please don't think that this wouldn't happen to you, because believe me, I said it while it was happening. When you are using, you feel no emotions, you think you are all-around okay, but you are not. I love you very much, and I don't want to see you go through what happened to me. It is your decision. Choose wisely.*

*Love always, Lindsay Age 15*

### **Gratitude for our Mothers**

Mom, you've been there for me through my highs and lows. When I'm going through a bad season, you make me strong. Your advice and words of wisdom have made me who I am today. When I speak my thoughts and worries to you, my problems, thoughts and struggles get figured out. Every time I saw you at Drug Court and I'm on the other side wearing orange and blue, you helped me get through it, week after week after week. I want to let you know I couldn't have done it without you. I love you so much, mom.

--Your son Joey

I am writing this to tell you how much I appreciate having you as a mom. I know I don't tell you this often even though you deserve to hear it more. I appreciate your giving me rides to places I need to go. It really helps me out. I also appreciate how you work hard to try and make things better at home. You are really great at helping everyone else around you and not just thinking of what you have to do. Thank you for always trying to help me out and for not giving up on me.

-- Love, Mark

My mother is a loving, caring person. She is sweet and nice, she is good at her job, and I feel like I got the good mom. She's a good provider and works hard for our family, and even when times are hard for her, she still stays strong and keeps the family together. Plus she's young and hip. Sometimes she can be a bit too worried, but it's okay. It's good to know she cares about what I'm doing with my life.

--Chris

My goal today is to give my mom a good day.

Of course I did.

I tried to do everything that was expected of me.

I managed to do a lot.

I like the fact that my mom really cares about me.

That's all that matters to me.

-- Rob

This last week I tried my best to be respectful and sweet to my mother. I have not always had the best relationship with my parents, but I am trying hard to fix that. I have it really good, because my mom is so supportive of my doing well in JDC. I am so lucky to have such a loving mother.

-- Conor

Mum, I want to thank you for always being there for me. You've always had such good advice and told me the truth about what I needed to hear. You've gotten me where I need to go and kept a roof over my head with meals on the table and clothes on my back. When I was in juvenile hall, you were the only person who was consistent with phone calls, letters, and visits. You're an all-around amazing mum.

Love always, Buggy

## **Juvenile Drug Court Team**

Lynn Duryee, Judge

Wardell Anderson, Deputy Probation Officer

Marta Osterloh, Deputy Public Defender

Ron Ravani, Deputy District Attorney

Sophia Amargi, Center Point

Amy Kriebel, Phoenix Academy

Rebecca Leacock, Case Manager

## **Courtroom Support**

Janet Minkiewicz, Court Clerk

Deborah Bartunek, Court Reporter

Paul Meyers, Juvenile Hall