

EPIDEMIC...

No. 5

Straight talk about kids, drugs and families from Straight, Inc.

RECOVERY!

Recovery is defined in the dictionary as "the regaining of something lost or taken away; restoration or return to health or a normal condition." So, when a teenager "recovers" from drug or alcohol use, he or she is expected to be returned to a "normal condition". But what is "normal" for a teenager who has been a drug user for a number of years? A child who begins drug use at 14 and "recovers" at 17 has lost 3 years of maturing, of learning the values and rules of society, 3 valuable years in a short life. Which is why at Straight we talk about "quality" recovery — not just abstinence.

By quality recovery we mean recovery beyond abstinence. Although abstinence from drugs or alcohol is the foundation of recovery, there must be more. Teenagers have to catch up on the years they missed while "stoned" and learn how to function successfully. "Effectiveness of drug treatment however, must

be evaluated by more than just numbers. Tangible guides for assessment of quality of recovery are not easy to come by, but are at least as important as the quantitative measure...In effective programs...abstinence from drugs should not be seen as a program's only goal. Children should be developing attitudes and skills that make them able to live up to their potential, to feel good about themselves, and to learn the joy of personal accomplishment."¹

The Straight program teaches and guides our teenagers toward quality recovery from day 1. One of the foundations of the program is called The 7 Steps. "Called "Tools of Personal Change", the 7 Steps used at Straight are actually principles of living — tools that are learned and used during the program and throughout life to help guide the person through the choices that confront him or her. The goal, achieved during the 5 phases of the program, is to internalize the program so that choices

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... and beyond.

Recovery...and Beyond

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are routinely scrutinized — is it in my best interests? does it keep me out of trouble? The 7 Steps are guidelines used to direct this process.”² The teenager begins in the program without any responsibilities. As he “earns” his way up through to graduation, he gradually takes on more responsibilities and “earns” the right to go home to live, to go back to school, to go to the beach or a movie with a friend. The maturing process that would have normally taken a few years is caught up with in the program by denying any responsibilities at first and then “earning” these responsibilities with proper thinking and actions. (By “proper” we mean acceptable to society in general and evaluated by his peers and the adult staff at the

“Quality recovery...recovery beyond abstinence.”

program.) “Straight is relentlessly normative. Its stated goal is not any perpetual attachment to Straight but a gradual return to full and productive membership in the general society...The children at Straight do not engage in the sort of intellectual pursuits that might be found at a school or university. They do not, for that matter, even read books or watch television programmes devoted to ideas. They are not there for the purpose of expanding their knowledge of intellectual affairs. They are there, nevertheless, to exercise their intelligences. The programme is extremely rational but it is also very simple and direct. It is pragmatic and it honours clear-headedness. In this sense it is basic training for any intellectual pursuit in the future.”³

The teenagers that graduate from Straight are returning to the real world — not some idealized socie-

ty viewed through drug or alcohol induced vision. They must cope and survive and hopefully grow — as we all must do. Their chemical dependency was a reaction to the pressures of our world and the program teaches them that there are non-chemical ways of coping. “Returning a drug-free child to an unchanged environment with an unchanged belief system dooms him to failure. All good programs aim in some way to strengthen his belief in himself. A return to the mainstream of traditional cultural values that honor God, country and family is a desirable goal.”⁴

At Straight we feel strongly about our teenagers and their place in this world in the years ahead. In a presentation given by Dr. Robert L. Dupont, President of the American Council on Marijuana, Inc. at the First Annual Awareness Banquet at Straight — Atlanta on October 17, 1981, Dr. Dupont said: “In the 20th Century in the United States, every age segment of our population has gotten healthier from one decade to the next with one exception: America’s teenagers, 15 to 24, are now dying at a roughly 16% greater rate than they were in 1960. No other age segment of our population in the entire 20th century has ever had a rising death rate. These young people — the future of our nation — are dying primarily in motor



vehicle accidents, suicides and homicides. These causes of death have been called “victimless” but they are more realistically seen as disorders of self-control or social control. They are all powerfully related to drug abuse.”

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Teenage drug and alcohol use is rampant. The statistics on teenage suicide are so alarming they have finally gotten media attention. When will it stop? Only when positive and direct steps are taken to help our teenagers cope and grow and achieve. “Quality recovery” must go hand in hand with abstinence. The Straight program is based on personal self-change, family involvement and the values that have characterized the mainstream of American culture.

One of the tools of personal changed used at Straight is the Serenity Prayer:

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

At Straight we define serenity as peace amidst the storm, not freedom from storm; courage as ability to act appropriately in the face of fear, not freedom from fear; and wisdom as the ability to see life situations from God’s viewpoint, not from our own.

¹ Donald Ian Macdonald, M.D., *Drugs, Drinking, and Adolescents*, (Chicago: Year Book Medical Publishers, 1984), p. 165-166.

² “The Straight Program,” *EPIDEMIC*, No. 4, 1984.

³ Andrew I. Malcolm, M.D., F.R.C.P. (C), “An Examination of Straight, Incorporated”, Toronto, Canada, 1981.

⁴ Macdonald, p. 172.

A message from: William D. Oliver, Executive Director

One of the most popular children's stories is the Wizard of Oz. Written in the 1930's, it is the story of a Kansas farm girl transported by a whirlwind into the Land of Oz, a scary and unusual place controlled by an all-powerful wizard. There are all kinds of strange creatures which Dorothy encounters, munchkins, witches, talking animals and dark forests. In order to get back home to her family, Dorothy sets out for the Emerald City, and the castle of the Great Wizard. Along the way, she picks up three friends, a brainless scarecrow, a heartless woodsman, and a cowardly lion. The powers of evil, led by the wicked witch of the West oppose their every step. The fight and the struggle, however, produce some unexpected results. The Scarecrow develops intelligence (wisdom); the Woodsman develops feeling (serenity); and the Lion develops

valor (courage). Armed with these characteristics, Dorothy destroys the Wicked Witch and confronts the Wizard (only to find out that he is a total fake with no power after all.) She is, however, now able to get back to Kansas and home (sanity).

A family's recovery from the swamp of chemical dependency is much like Dorothy's adventure. No one wanted the trip. The land is full of strange creatures and dark places. The wizard pulls strings and apparently controls the world. However, the development of serenity, courage, and

"A family's recovery from the swamp of chemical dependency is much like Dorothy's adventure in the Land of Oz."



wisdom (the key ingredients to quality recovery) restores sanity, destroys the opposition, and regains stability of the family.

I can hear Dorothy now, "Coming Home!"



RE-PRINTS AVAILABLE

Straight, Inc. has the following re-prints available for those parents interested in more information on kids, drugs and families. Please enclose 50¢ for each item ordered, to cover postage and handling.

- ☐ "The Ordeal of an American Family", Ladies Home Journal, October, 1984.
- ☐ "Let's Get Our Kids Off Drugs", by Nancy Reagan, Ladies Home Journal, 1983.
- ☐ "My Child Was a Walking Chemical", by Roul Tunley, Reader's Digest, April, 1982.

The following past issues of EPIDEMIC:

- ☐ No. 1 — Denial
- ☐ No. 2 — Prevention — Protecting the Family Dream
- ☐ No. 3 — Family Roles — About the Games We Play...
- ☐ No. 4 — The Straight Program (with a Special Edition insert covering Nancy Reagan's visit to Straight — Cincinnati)

I have enclosed _____ for the above re-prints.

Name _____

Address _____

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