



Three Perspectives on Drugs

Read the following teenagers' comments on alcohol and other drugs. Be prepared to discuss your reactions in class.

Kara

I used to go out on weekends and get drunk and make a fool of myself, and I thought I was having fun. Now I know better. Now I go out and get drunk but I *don't* make a fool of myself.

My boyfriend and I went to the movies, and we'd been drinking, and the girl at the popcorn counter was new at the job and nervous. When she handed him the popcorn, he pretended to grab it, so when she let go it spilled all over everything, and it was like it was her fault. It was great! After the movie we went driving, real fast, and ran a red light. The cop who pulled us over gave us a hard time but no ticket, and I got home after my curfew and got in trouble.

Ana Maria

When I moved to the United States from Spain I was very surprised and shocked about the way teenagers at my school thought about alcohol. Drinking is considered to be like a game, and if you don't play the game you risk losing popularity.

In Spain, you don't have to be twenty-one years old to buy alcohol. Anyone can buy it. When I tell that to people here, though, they automatically think that everyone in the country, especially teenagers, must be alcoholic. We have alcoholics in Spain, but I think it's a bigger problem here in the United States.

Alcohol is part of my culture. Spain produces a lot of wine, and we drink wine with many of our meals. It's part of daily life, not a special way to act crazy on Saturday night.

I learned from my family that alcohol is to be used in moderation. When it's abused, though, it's degrading to the person who abuses it.

Jonathan

I got into drinking and smoking pot when I was a freshman. It seemed like the coolest thing, and the coolest kids did it, so I started hanging around with that crowd. I'm just glad I never started heavy drugs.

At the beginning it was great, it seemed harmless. But then I started having these mood swings. Someone would look at me the wrong way and I'd tear into them. But I drank more and more, and thought my life was great. Then my grades started slipping. I couldn't even get the easy stuff right anymore. Drinking and drugs were really screwing up my brain, and I don't care what anyone tells you—even if you do it only once in a while it can still screw you up.

My parents caught on to what was happening. They took a hard line—they threatened that if I didn't quit they'd kick me out of the house. I don't know how they found out, but they did, and I'm lucky they did. I finally admitted the truth, and it was like a great relief. I quit it all, even cigarettes.

I feel like I've been through hell, but made it out to the other side somehow. My parents love me and care about me enough that they did all they could to keep more bad stuff from happening. I'm never going to be that stupid again, that's for sure.