

Keep Your Mind Clear

If you are a teenager, there are now more opportunities than ever to use drugs. Forty years ago, adolescents had to choose between alcohol and marijuana, and both were difficult to obtain and expensive. Cocaine and LSD were available only to the very rich or well-connected. Crack was not even invented, nor was crack. Opium was banned, heroin was unheard of, and steroids were still a chemist's dream. Now you, the teenager, have your choice. You also have more disposable income than any previous generation in history.

You know drugs are bad – for your health, your emotional well-being, and your wallet. Sex and drugs are even worse. Using drugs reduces your inhibitions – and your common sense – and can lead unprotected sex (i.e., sex without a condom), sometimes with a total stranger. That hit you take, and that condom you don't use (or don't insist he use) could lead to chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, or even HIV. Syphilis (in a female) has no symptoms, but untreated it can cause blindness and brain damage, and lead to birth defects or spontaneous abortions. Chlamydia, the most common sexually transmitted disease (STD), can make both males and females sterile, cause blindness, and eventually lead to reactive arthritis in males – a very painful, debilitating disease. Gonorrhea, like Chlamydia, can make both sexes sterile. HIV has no identifiable symptoms for up to 10 years, and one in four people don't even realize they are infected. By the time they are diagnosed, it's too late to do anything but medicate and prepare for the end. You might be fortunate, and escape these consequences. But are you willing to roll the dice?

You don't have to if you always carry a condom. Condoms are the safest and most reliable way of preventing both STDs and unwanted pregnancy, and you don't need a prescription to get condoms. If you're too embarrassed to buy condoms yourself, have an older friend or sister get them for you, or go to a clinic, where they often give condoms (and information on birth control) free for the asking. If you are a male, condoms should be as much a part of your wallet as your driver's license or state I.D. If you are a female, condoms are as essential as a tampon or a tube of mascara. You may not be able to talk to your parents about sex or drugs – I know I couldn't. Now that I'm the parent, I realize one thing; it's too late to talk about morals when your child is dying of AIDS.

You may be put in a position where you are tempted to use drugs. It might be peer pressure or simple curiosity, or something more complicated. Forty six percent of teenagers have used drugs, 36% of them in the past year. You may be one of them. It can happen again. Drugged, you may not be able to say no to sex, or prevent having sex forced on you. The condom you carry with you always can be a way of mitigating the situation. Without it, you could end up another statistic: half of all cases of STD in 2006 were among young people aged 15 to 24; 20 percent had herpes, which is incurable.

Please use a condom. Your parents doesn't have to know about your condoms, but they will love you for it anyway.

For more information visit: [Keep Your Mind Clear](#)

About the Author

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