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# Speak Sobriety Newsletter

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## *Teenage Summer Of Drugs: The Beginning Of The End*

By [Stephen Hill, September 18, 2019](#)

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It was the last day of school my freshman year. The sky was blue, the sun was shining, and the hallways were filled with happy faces. My friends and I were eager to hear the sound of the last bell that marked the end of the school year and the beginning of summer. That feeling of freedom students gets when walking out of class on the last day of school is a natural high, a feeling I still get in law school when I walk out of my last final exam for the semester. Teachers, counselors and administrators feel it too.

What I didn't know on that first day of summer break—my natural highs were about to end—only to be replaced by substance induced highs, and of course, lows. The cost of what seemed like the greatest summer ever, full of parties and good times, was the onset of my substance use disorder, leaving me stuck in the grips of addiction for over a decade.



It wasn't like I just picked up drugs and alcohol on the first day of summer as a rising sophomore and instantly became a full blown drug addict—it was progressive. I experimented with alcohol, nicotine, and marijuana my freshman year, but without any negative consequences. I did not even start that summer with a “party hard” or “lets get wasted” mentality, but it certainly ended that way.

"When did you cross that line? When did things get really bad?" I get asked those questions almost every time I speak at a school or event. I started that summer focused on my top priority growing up—sports. I went to an advanced hockey camp in Canada with a few of my teammates, played in a summer lacrosse league, and lifted weights at the school gym.

But I started to drink and get high more and more. I thought I had it under control, but the disease of addiction had other plans for me. I started selling marijuana for one of my older teammates at a party that summer, and the rest is history. I found a new identity in the drug game.

My attitude, thought process and behavior changed dramatically in just 10 weeks. My every once in a while substance use quickly became habitual. I was known as an athlete my freshman year, but just a few weeks into my sophomore year I developed a reputation for being involved with drugs. That summer officially marked the end of my innocence, and the beginning of my nightmare.

## Noticeable Changes in Behavior:

What changed? I came to school under the influence the first day of my sophomore year. I always carried visine in my pockets to clear up my bloodshot eyes and cologne in my bag to cover up the smell of smoke. I loved to wear hoodies with a flat brim hat just over my eyes to block my face. I became very secretive, always looking over my shoulder and locking doors behind me. I talked and walked differently, with more swagger and confidence, but not in a good way. I obsessed over my status and identity of being involved with drugs. I only listened to rap music that glorified using and selling drugs. I failed my first class, but not my last. I formed a new group of friends centered around drug and alcohol use. I even began to lose interest in sports. My identity as an athlete faded away, and I became known as the troubled kid involved with drugs.



## 5 Prevention Tips:

- **Keep an open, honest, and continuous discussion about recent drug trends**
- **Fight the urge to have a zero tolerance approach to issues surrounding alcohol & drug use**

- **Conceding to hard truths about substance use helps educators & parents maintain credibility, making them more approachable when students are really in need of guidance**
- **Remember to focus on the progression of a substance use disorder by not just discussing the horrifying end, but what also mistakenly seems like an “innocent” beginning**
- **Utilize peer leadership by continuing to remind older students how much their actions matter, not only to themselves, but to the younger students that look up to them**

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**Contact Speak Sobriety today to have Stephen Hill share his story of recovery with your community, school, or organization!**

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