

## **DRUGS & ALCOHOL**

We told our children everything we could about the harms of drugs. We tried to set good examples as parents, teachers, siblings, or friends. But even the best influences we exerted were like adding tiny drops of water to the immense social ocean. The drug problem is societal, not individual, and the solution is societal too.

No person or loved one can compete with all the influences a child, or anyone, is exposed to. "But surely society isn't condoning drugs," you're thinking. Actually, society is doing just that. Not all drugs, of course, but certainly the most accepted of drugs – alcohol! And alcohol is potentially more harmful and deadly than many if not most other drugs.

The solution to drug addiction is to denounce all drugs, including alcohol, or the message is contradictory. We can't celebrate major life events with cheers of alcohol, but imprison youth for using other, often less harmful drugs. But that's exactly what's happening, and it's blurring the message.

Years ago, tobacco was recommended by doctors as beneficial. We gradually became aware of its harms. Likewise, the problems of alcohol are increasingly gaining our attention. Much more awareness of alcohol as a "drug" is necessary before we can make a dent in drug addiction. It's illogical to discourage certain drugs and not others. A drug is a drug. The only real difference is the method of use. One drug you drink, one you eat, one you sniff, one you inject. The end result is the same – varying degrees of mental and physical impairment.

Until people regard alcohol as a bona fide drug, we'll have problems with all drugs. Imagine outlawing white wine but permitting red wine. Just because cultures and some religions accept alcohol in varying degrees does not mean alcohol is beneficial. We once

thought women should be obedient to men, and slaves to their masters. Even scripture once tolerated both.

It's now time to change the social norms surrounding drinking. While the alcoholic beverage industry is funding scientific 'research' to advertise unproven benefits of alcohol, our youth are dying. And as middle-aged and seniors die from unexpected ailments, the same industry is covering up unbiased research that shows links between alcohol consumption (even moderate), heart disease and cancer.

Society learned to survive without smoking in most public places. We can also learn to talk and laugh again like we did when we were children and alcohol free. Let's pass that good health and joy forward to the next generation. Let's keep the message clear and consistent: All drugs, including alcohol, destroy lives and families.

*Please see References*