

CONNECTIONS

the MAGAZINE of AFLV

DO THE
RIGHT
THING

WE CAN BE THE SOLUTION



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AFLV encourages the submission of content to:

Carol Preston • Editor
connections@aflv.org

Submit advertising queries to:

Lea Hanson • Director of M & C
lea@aflv.org
970 • 372 • 1174
888 • 855 • 8670
info@aflv.org

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Send address corrections to:

Association of Fraternal Leadership & Values
123 N. College Ave. • Suite 250
Fort Collins, CO • 80524
970 • 372 • 1174
888 • 855 • 8670
info@aflv.org

Creative Director • Layout & Design

Steve Whitby • CAMPUSPEAK, Inc.
steve.whitby@gmail.com

Editorial Board

Andrea Battaglia • Drury University
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04! WHAT WILL YOU DO IF?

MIKE DILBECK • RESPONSE ABILITY PROJECT

What would you do if... It's easy to presume how we'd act when disaster hits and although most of us think we'd be valiant superheroes, that's less often the case. Too often, people are bystanders. We stand back and say nothing when something needs to be said. When was the last time you walked away from a conflict and thought, "I should/could/would have..." Exactly. Dilbeck gets real by telling us that you don't have to be Batman to make a difference and be someone's hero. Stand up, say something, read this article.



08 IT'S LONELY AT THE TOP

ADDISON ELLIS • COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

If anyone knows leadership is hard to do, it's a fraternity/sorority president. Being a leader of a values-based organization in which the members are college students, not to mention your closest friends, is a very difficult line to walk. It's hard to make values-based decisions without making somebody mad. Addison Ellis knows this all too well. As a chapter president pushing his chapter to drop outdated (and illegal) traditions, he learned leadership the hard way. Read this personal account of why doing the right thing is the right choice, even though it's often the choice that sucks the most.



12 BE A TRANSFORMER

LORI HANSON • LEARN2BALANCE.COM

We love Lori Hanson because she gives it to us straight. If you're all, "Help! I'm so stressed out! What should I do?!" She's all, "Here. Here's a list that will help you." Being a leader is stressful. Being a leader who consistently chooses to do the right thing is even more stressful. It's science. In this article, Hanson talks about the pressure cooker that is college and gives some uber helpful tips of how you can make it out not only alive, but a better person.



16 DEADLY DISORDERS: WHAT COLLEGE WOMEN NEED TO KNOW

DR. KIM DENNIS • TIMBERLINE KNOLLS

Everyone has heard of anorexia and bulimia. While dangerous, and even deadly, you need to know that disordered behavior goes far beyond eating disorders. Kim Dennis has written an outstanding article that introduces some important new topics to both students and professionals regarding deadly disorders that impact college women today. Have you heard the term "drunkorexia?" If you haven't, you need to read this article. Dennis gives us the down and dirty and she gives it to us straight. These topics are tough to talk about but guess what? They're real.

COLUMNS

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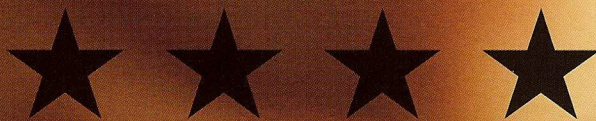
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Be A Transformer

By Lori Hanson



There's a reason some college students "can't handle their liquor" and overdose on drugs, and others don't. And it is a bit more complex than you might expect. Over the past four years as I've been speaking on college campuses and for AFLV, AFA and SEPC Conferences I heard a lot of concern and discussion about the risks of binge drinking and taking drugs. Yet the problem persists. And I don't think it's because all college students just want to be rebels (like I was), nor do I believe they all intend to repeat the behavior. It just "happens," and they get out of control.

If you're in college I suspect you know at least one person who struggles with their need to "numb out." If you break it down, that's really what addictive/crazy behavior is all about: numbing out. In today's world there is so much pressure from so many angles that no one really shuts down any more (or turns off their cell phones). The pressure can come from many places, like the pressure to:

Hit the GPA you need/want

Manage your schedule

Do your homework

Please your parents

Please your coaches if you're an athlete

Make your professors happy

Be a good fraternity brother or sorority sister or advisor

Be a good friend

Be active in the community

Work

Take on additional responsibilities and leadership roles that will make you more desirable to future employers

And....oh yeah, take care of yourself, eat right and sleep, now who really has time for that?

All of this pressure piled onto a person who isn't overly confident or a bit insecure can create a bit of a time bomb looking for a place to blow off steam. You know them; they're the cocky ones ready to take on anyone or anything. But underneath the verbose exterior is a student who is very unsure of themselves...but they'll never admit it.

In addition to the pressure cooker, another big issue that contributes to why some people binge drink and use drugs in a nutritional issue. Yes, a nutritional issue from their diet. The American diet has been severely lacking for many years. The result is more illness, disease, beat-up immune systems, more ADD, ADHD, more eating disorders and more alcoholics. So the fact that some of your brothers or sisters can't control themselves isn't necessarily their fault.

So what about nutrition? Because of all the fast food, boxed, frozen and canned food that is consumed, and the insane amount of sugar that is consumed in many forms, your body isn't getting the high-grade fuel it needs. Without daily doses of high-grade whole food that includes complex carbohydrates (brown things), lean protein, green leafy vegetables and healthy fats your body and brain chemistry suffer and get depleted. When your neurotransmitters don't get the proper fuel they need serotonin, catecholamine, gaba and endorphins supplies are depleted.

Why is this important? The depletion of these neurotransmitters contributes to addictive behaviors. For example, low serotonin contributes to obsessive thinking (eating disorders and the drug addict), carbohydrate cravings, depression, suicide and more. But when you build your serotonin levels back up and get them re-fueled with natural supplements you'll find these detrimental behaviors begin to go away. The same thing does not happen by taking anti-depressants. An anti-depressant is like a band-aid that makes you feel better between doses but does not increase your serotonin levels. So the out-of-control partier may not be at fault because of brain chemistry that is off-balance, but it is an issue that needs to be addressed.

If you Google "college student deaths from alcohol" or "college student deaths from drug overdose" you'll get a quick list of depressing statistics of the number of students who have died senselessly simply because they're acting to excess and don't know how to stop the party.

However, if you Google "college student deaths from eating disorders" the numbers aren't as readily available because death from an eating disorder is harder to track because most die from medical complications like heart failure, organ failure, malnutrition or suicide.

I mention eating disorders with the drug and alcohol abuse because more than 30% of college students have eating disorders¹—and it isn't just the women. Many students hide their issues, so the numbers are actually higher than that. And although it isn't talked about on college campuses nearly as much as alcohol and drugs (something I'm working to change) more people die from eating disorders than any other mental illness.²

College is a critical time in life. It's a big transition from high school and living with mom and dad to being on your own, making your own decisions, good or bad and learning how to live with them. The things that happen in college and on Facebook, unlike Vegas, don't stay there, and will shape and follow you the rest of your life.

Have you ever stopped for a minute to consider how you would feel if your fraternity brother or sorority sister died from a drug or alcohol overdose or from an eating disorder? And what if you knew they had a problem and just couldn't bring yourself to confront them. Or you had confronted them on numerous occasions, but they just wouldn't listen. How would it make you feel...knowing you could have done something more?

¹ Rosewood Ranch Center for Eating Disorders

² American Journal of Psychiatry, Vol. 152 (7), July 1995, p. 1073-1074, Sullivan, Patrick F.

Be A Transformer



I remember when I read the article about retired NFL player Erik Kramer's 18 year-old son Griffen who died of an apparent drug overdose last year. What struck me most about the story was that his "friend" allegedly drove Griffen around in his car while he was unconscious and didn't seek medical help until the next morning when Griffen was unresponsive.³ As I searched for the story update before writing this article, I found that Griffen's friend has now been charged with involuntary manslaughter and possession. I understand that young people sometimes get scared, but if your friend is unconscious after taking drugs or drinking it's time to act and act quickly. The ramifications will be much less painful than going to jail and spending the rest of your life knowing someone died because you didn't call for help. That is a huge load to carry on your back.

So what can you do? Or more importantly what will you do—you need strategies that you'll feel comfortable using regardless of the situation. You can be a transformer and make a big difference in the life of your brothers, sisters or other friends that are out of control.

1. TALK TO THEM AND FOCUS ON THE RISKS

Yeah, this isn't rocket science, but peer pressure is a big deal. It's not easy to confront your brother or sister with the "unpopular facts" about what they're doing to themselves. And, chances are you indulge too, just not as much. So the pattern continues and in many cases grows. And with it the risks of: death, injury, assault, sexual abuse, unsafe sex, academic problems, health problems, suicide attempts, drunk driving, vandalism, property damage, police involvement/records and addiction which can have a huge impact on their life and ability to achieve their goals. Talk to them about the realities they face if they continue on this path and make it real for them.

2. GET ADVICE FROM AN ADULT OR PROFESSIONAL

This one can be really helpful if you're dealing with someone who has an eating disorder who is in denial. Saying things like, "Why don't you just eat," or confronting a bulimic about what you accidentally found in the trash will totally put them on the defensive. The longer a person has an eating disorder and the deeper the behavior goes the more isolated they will get. Denial is easier than facing what they aren't up to facing.

Also, with eating disorders many individuals don't understand the damage they are doing to their body and that they can die from this behavior. For many it starts innocently enough and then they get hooked and can't just pull away. Sometimes the in-your-face approach is the best. I've had numerous conversations with teens and college-age students who had no idea they could die from anorexia and bulimia.

Professionals may include your campus counseling staff, local rehab clinics for drugs and alcohol and treatment professionals or facilities for eating disorders.

3. OFFER TO SUPPORT THEM AND NOT JUDGE THEM

After you've had a conversation with your out-of-control friend. Invite them to open up or share what they are going through. Sometimes this happens when they're drunk, or after they've just had an episode with their eating disorder behavior. But when you offer your support understand that this doesn't mean being the food or alcohol police. Support means helping them think through their behavior and being a willing listener when they need to talk it through and not judging them.

One of the biggest mistakes people make is after the person with the problem opens up, the supporter decides to police their every move. This will only push them away and isn't helpful. Instead encourage adult/adult conversations with them, but also keep your boundaries so they aren't calling you every night at 3 am!

4. ACT QUICKLY WHEN NEEDED

If you've tried talking, listening and nothing seems to be working. Don't be afraid to take action. I shared this advice with a couple of girls last year at SEPC (Southeastern Panhellenic Conference) after my program that followed the advice and contacted the parents of a roommate battling with bulimia. The end result for the bulimic was relief and admission that she had a problem and needed help.

If you see someone who is overly intoxicated or may have overdosed on drugs who is non-responsive or unconscious ACT. Make a commitment right now, that if you're ever in this situation you won't think twice but will act to save their life and yours from living with guilt for many years to come. Make a commitment to be a transformer.

5. THINK POSITIVE

This is perhaps the biggest one of all. When you find yourself confronted with a situation like we've discussed in this article instead of letting your mind race through all the negative things that can happen ("he or she will never speak to me again," "I'll get in trouble if I mention this to an adult," or "I'll be in trouble with my parents"....). Focus on all the best-case scenarios and be optimistic. They could respond with relief; they could get pissed and get over it when they realize how much you care, which could strengthen your friendship; opening up to their parents may be the start of real healing within their family...the possibilities are endless of good things that can come from this.

Be a transformer, be a standout, be special. Make a commitment that you will help yourself and anyone else who is struggling with excessive habits. You'll feel so good knowing you've helped to transform and improve the quality of life of your brother or sister. Because after all that's what we're all here for to learn and grow.

Be well. Live BETTER.

³ Teens charged in death of retired NFL player's son, By Zohreen Adamjee, CNN updated 5:59 PM EST, Sat November 19, 2011