

The 2009 Mission Trip to the Dominican Republic

Healthy Risks for Youth

Things that challenge self-confidence: speaking, acting or singing in public, leading a group, whether of peers, children or their elders...

Physical challenges: platform diving, mountain climbing, camping, hunting, white-water rafting, sports...

Social challenges: traveling on their own, making new relationships, living abroad or in another community/culture, doing a job with a high social element...

It is better for our youth to do something and fail than to do nothing and succeed.

The Real Risk in Eliminating Risk

Teenage fascination with risk helps explain the typical list of *relevant* topics for youth group role plays: rebellion, sex, suicide, violence, crime, rejection, the use of drugs and alcohol... That list is far more exciting than adult concerns: mortgage rates, job opportunities, family time and baby formula.

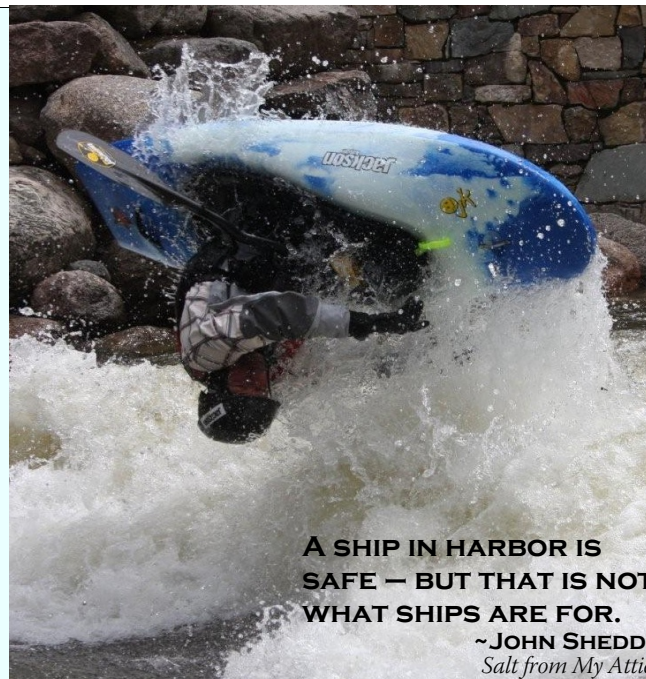
Why Teens Do What They Do

Risk and adventure are key motivators for teens, who tend to describe life's activities as either *cool* or *boring*, that is to say, stimulating or not stimulating. This is partly due to brain development. A 17 year-old's amygdala (the adventure center) is fully functional but the frontal cortex (the judgment center) isn't. The frontal cortex will continue developing until the early 20s. Brain development explains why the *desire* to make important judgments (to take the risk) often comes before the *ability*.

The Right Response

That gap in judgment makes good parents nervous, but eliminating risk from a teen's life isn't the best response. Providing the right kinds of risk – at the right times and in the right ways – is much better. Why?

- ✓ When youth are positively challenged the likelihood of engaging in the *wrong kind* of risk-taking behavior decreases.



A SHIP IN HARBOR IS SAFE – BUT THAT IS NOT WHAT SHIPS ARE FOR.

~ JOHN SHEDD,
Salt from My Attic

- ✓ In facing healthy risks together teens build strong relationships with one another and with their youth workers.
- ✓ Conquering fear, enduring pain and overcoming challenges result in character growth.
- ✓ Guided risk-taking where good judgment matters can motivate more of the right kind of thinking.

The Real Risk in Eliminating Risk?

In eliminating risk we may also unintentionally eliminate some other things important for growth.

The History of Youth Culture

Part 3: When Music Went on Drugs

According to the *National Commission on Marijuana and Drug Abuse* (1973) marijuana use in America was negligible until three things happened in the mid-1960s: rock musicians promoted it, youth culture adopted it as a sign of rebellion and the media put it on the front page.

Exclusively rock-n-roll music stations didn't exist in the early fifties until Alan Freed, a disc jockey, began promoting rock-n-roll music – first in Cleveland on WJW and then in New York on WINS. By 1955 many urban areas had start-up radio stations that played only rock-n-roll.

The marriage of drugs and youth culture happened rather suddenly 10 years later when Bob Dylan sang “everybody must get stoned.” *POST* magazine put him on the cover of their July 1966 issue. That same year John Lennon

and George Harrison tried LSD for the first time at a party. It radically changed their world view, music and lyrics. By 1967 the Beatles were singing about hallucination on their *Magical Mystery Tour* in songs like *Strawberry Fields Forever* and *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds*.

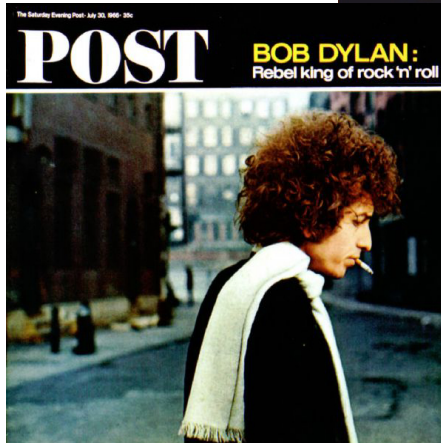
POST TWIGGY SPEAKS OUT ON LIFE AND LOVE



Dr. Timothy Leary was interviewed in 1966 in *Playboy*. He had been promoting LSD on college campuses with the phrase “turn on, tune in and drop out.”

LSD became a household word. Drug use on campus multiplied and quickly became a core part of youth culture. America had gone psychedelic.

By 1968 references to drugs in rock songs became common. Jimi Hendrix, the Doors, Donovan, Steppenwolf, Jefferson Airplane and others were snorting, smoking, popping – and singing all about it.

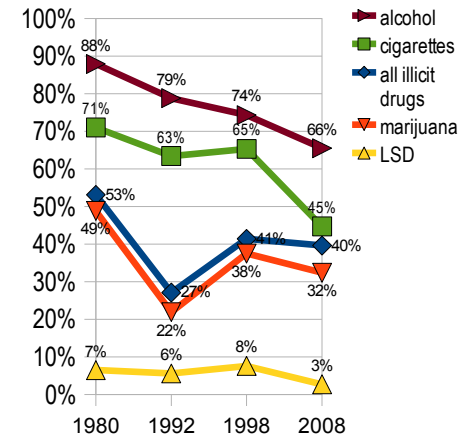


And Today?

Alcohol, cigarette and illicit drug use among high school seniors has been closely monitored since 1975 in an annual study called *Monitoring the Future*, done by the University of Michigan.

As of 2008 cigarette, alcohol and LSD use are declining. (Percentages refer to the number of those who used the drug at least once that year.)

- Cigarette smoking dropped from 71% in 1980 to 45% in 2008.
- Alcohol use has been dropping steadily from 88% to 65%.
- LSD use started dropping in the early 1970s. It was under 3% in 2008.



Illicit drug use dropped rapidly from 1980 until 1992 when it rose again, cresting in 1998 near 40%. Since then inhalant, crack and heroin use among high school seniors has been mostly stable.

Newly popular drugs come 'in' for a while and then settle at about 1% use. 'Ice' and Methamphetamine are recent examples that peaked at 3% to 5% before settling. The current 'in' drug is cough syrup (dextromethorphan or DXM). Dumb kids drink it straight and get nausea, itching and headaches, along with the high. Smart kids extract it using ammonia and naphtha.

Marijuana, used by 1 in 3 high school seniors in the past year, is easily the main illicit drug in use and at levels far above 1960.

In 2009 drug use remains a key element of youth culture. Alcohol and marijuana are the two main areas of concern.

