

## ■ A, B, or C—Made E-Z

**O**kay. So the downside of drugs has nothing to do with good or bad and everything to do with how they affect the quality of life—and the consequences they tend to leave behind.

That's why it's smart to think about drinking and drugs before you start bumping up against hard choices in the real world.

Because you **know** what happens if you put off thinking about important stuff.

It keeps on being important and you get more likely to do some dumb, spur-of-the-moment thing (especially if your friends are doing it), than what's best for you.

But how do you decide what you **really** want?

Try considering your options at each of the five stages that go into every decision.

Usually, we choose so fast that we don't realize just how detailed the process is.

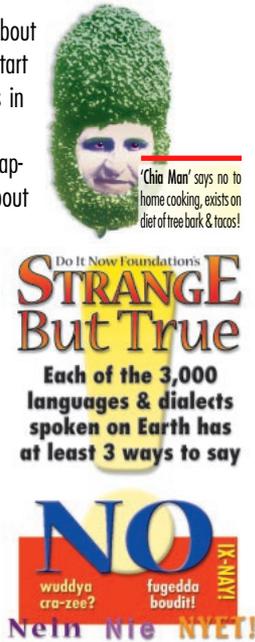
But when you think about it, there really *are* **five** parts to every decision:

- **Identify** the problem (*Turnips! Yipes!*)
- **Describe** possible solutions or alternatives (*Feed 'em to the dog! Spit 'em out! Close your eyes and swallow...*)
- **Evaluate** the ideas (*The dog's outside! The napkin's too small! Just get it over with...*)
- **Act** out a plan (*Play dead! Barf...*)
- **Learn** for the future (*Find out beforehand what's for dinner and play sick if necessary...*)

Didn't know you were that complicated, huh?

In case you didn't notice, the first letter of each step spells out **"IDEAL,"** and it is pretty much an ideal way to figure out what your options are in any situation—and predict possible consequences.

Yo, more **turnips**, anyone?



## ■ "I'm Fine"

**T**hink things through, and if you come up with 16 bazillion and **one** reasons for not trying drugs and alcohol, remember that there are almost that many ways to say "no," should the need ever arise.

You can say:

"Not tonight. I have to study."  
 "No, thanks. I'm in training."  
 "Nope, not for me!"  
 "Hey! No way!"  
 "Thanks, but no thanks." or  
 "Just leave me alone." Period.

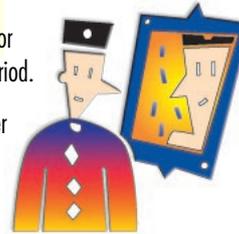
But of all the ways anyone ever devised for saying "no" to drugs and alcohol, we like one better than all the rest.

We'll share it with you, in case you ever want to try it out yourself.

Just say: **"I'm fine."**

You really are, you know. You always have been.

The trick is keeping yourself that way. But you're up to it, aren't you? ■



This is one in a series of publications on drugs, behavior and health published by the Do It Now Foundation. Please call for a list of current titles, or visit our web site at [www.doitnow.org](http://www.doitnow.org).



**Do It Now Foundation**

Box 27568 ■ Tempe, AZ 85285-7568 ■ 480.736.0599

# Peer Pressure & Choices



*How to Think for Yourself*  
 (in a world where everybody wants to do it for you)

## Decision-Making Animals

We're decision-making **animals**, every one of us. From the moment we wake up and decide what kind of mood we're in to the final choice we make whether or not to floss our teeth at night, we're all making decisions, all the time.

We decide whether to shoot hoops or watch TV after school (or watch hoops **on** TV), and whether to have vanilla, chocolate, or Strawberry-Pickle Parfait at the local 57 Flavors.

On the other hand—or foot (we **decided** to be different), we also make a lot of decisions that don't even *seem* like decisions.

Example: Passing when mom tries to pawn off **turnips** as food. That isn't a decision we spend a lot of time thinking about. Most of us just pass the bowl as fast as we can.

Saying "yes" or "no" (or "uh-huh" or "huh-huh") on the spur of the moment works pretty well most of the time. But **big** decisions need a little more attention. And choosing about drugs and alcohol is as big as decisions ever get.

That's what this pamphlet is all about.

In it, we'll discuss how to figure out what's right for **you** in making choices about drugs and alcohol.

We'll also talk about peer pressure and discuss how you can say "no" — if and when you need to — in a way that gets heard and respected.

That way, you won't have to be someone who says "yes" when you mean "no," and spend the rest of your life in therapy, wondering why no one understands you and waiting for your 50-minute "hour" of therapy to be up.

Sound worthwhile? **You** decide.

## Peers & Pressures

The first thing we'll talk about is **why** people use drugs and alcohol in the first place.

There are as many different answers to that question as there are burgers at McDonald's: about **16 bazillion** — and still counting.

Some people drink or do drugs to relax or forget their problems or have fun or fall asleep.

Others do it because they think everybody else does — and they're afraid they'll look clueless or totally **out of it** if they don't.

But if you peel away the first 16 bazillion layers of the onion

**1** reason that **way** too many kids **drink and do drugs** is that they're afraid they'll **look clueless or totally out of it, if they don't. Cool, huh?**

away, you'll find that most people get into drugs or drinking in the first place because someone they know is into it.

The fancy word for the process is **peer pressure**. It means that we feel pressure (either from inside or outside ourselves) to be like other people.

Peer pressure isn't a bad thing. It plays a **big** role in determining who we are and how we dress and talk and act.

It's a main reason that kids in America dress and talk and act more or less alike, instead of looking and acting and talking like people in Lithuania or Katmandu.

Still, peer pressure can cause problems, too. Because, sometimes, people in groups act differently and do things they'd never do on their own.

Why? Because we all lose at least some of our **identity** in a group. And the normal controls we put on our behavior can crumble before the need we all feel to fit in and be respected by others.

Peer pressure isn't always (or even usually) the obvious stuff they show in TV commercials. ("Wanna try a joint? **No**? Wussamadda? **Chicken?**")

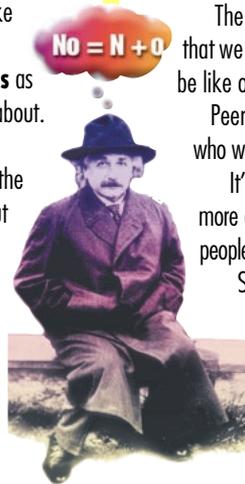
More often, it's hard to even notice, much less resist.

But if you want to pull your own strings in life, you need to be aware of it and know how it works and learn how to make choices for yourself, in spite of it.

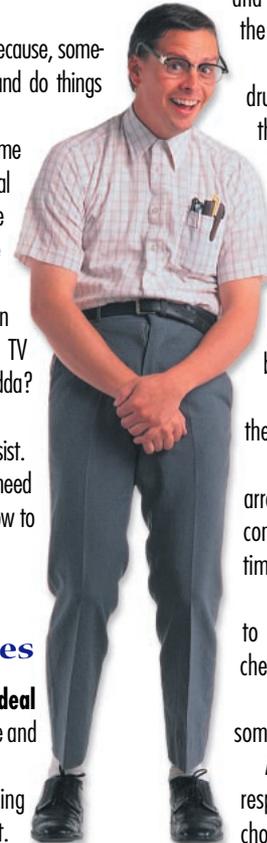
## Truth or Consequences

Ever wonder why our society makes such a **big deal** out of drugs and alcohol — and spends so much time and money to talk you out of trying them?

It's not that drugs and alcohol are bad and ducking them is good, although a lot of people believe that.



**Simple Genius:** Even Einstein couldn't have improved on the word "no" for getting an idea across.



Drugs are drugs. Period. Alcohol is alcohol. They're not good or bad. They're chemicals.

Think of it this way: Drugs and alcohol are like dynamite — it's not good or bad, either.

Use a couple of sticks to clear away a boulder that's blocking a road to a jungle hospital, and it's good. Use it to blow up the hospital, and it's bad.

Drugs are like that. Some have real value, but **any** chemical that can change the way you think and feel is something you need to consider carefully.

That's especially true because the effects of drugs and alcohol aren't **external** (like dying your hair green on St. Patrick's Day), but **internal**, and can cause real changes in the body and brain.

And even though some drug effects feel cool for a while (or people wouldn't do them), they always wear off.

Then the body-and-brain's owner is back at Square One, dealing with the consequences.

What consequences?

The same kind of stuff that follows in the wake of every choice we make. (If you choose chocolate, you can't have vanilla. Choose vanilla, and you can't have Strawberry-Pickle Parfait. *Duh!*)

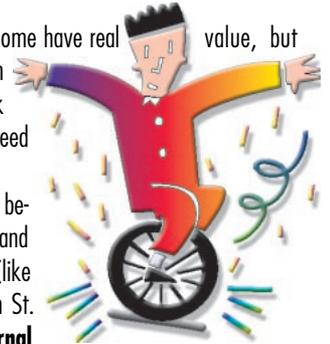
Drugs and alcohol have consequences, too and some of them aren't cool, at all.

And it isn't just hangovers or failing in school or getting arrested that you need to consider — although those **are** real consequences that can affect the quality of your life for a long time.

There are other consequences, too, and we're just beginning to understand some of them — like the changes in brain chemistry that can follow periods of drug use.

Because the fact is that **all** drugs change brain chemistry somehow — or they wouldn't work at all.

And anything **that** powerful really ought to be treated with respect and taken a lot more seriously than some people take the choice to drink or do drugs.



**Balancing Act:** The toughest tightrope we ever walk is the line between who we are and who others think we should be.