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As a shy freshman, I chose to join Drug Free Club because I heard it looked good on college applications. I had not seen many drugs or been made aware of their effects due to a lack of age and a lack of perspective. Little did I know, they had surrounded me since I took my first breath. As a current senior, I can attest that joining Drug Free Club was one of the healthiest decisions I have made for my high school career.

Drugs have meddled in my life since I was a newborn. My mother recently confided in me about her brother and his issues with substance abuse. My uncle has been a heroin addict since he was 11 years old, and has overdosed and relapsed several times since. He always wanted to be part of my life, and eventually my mother (his sister) allowed him to be. I was six years old, he was two years clean and seemed to have genuine interest in my life. Sadly, we discovered he was using heroin while taking care of me. I have a fond memory of us sitting and watching Star Wars, but this sweet memory is tainted. I'm unsure if he was genuinely enjoying his time with me or if he was enjoying being high. I was used as a way for him to be alone to secretly use his drug. Drugs adulterate relationships that could be very special.

Throughout high school drug use became more apparent in daily life. I witnessed students become addicted to drugs easily. One person I knew became addicted to a painkiller drug. They started using it as a party drug, but the use quickly became common in daily life. This addiction ruined our solid friendship for months. Thankfully, this friend is a member of Drug Free Club. Their membership forced them into becoming clean. Luckily, we have since rekindled our friendship. I am forever grateful to Drug Free Club that they are clean. Sadly, some students in the same situation never become clean due to a lack of Drug Free Club in their school.

Drug Free Club also helps me be aware of the gut-wrenching effects of drug use. The club leaders often make posters about the effects of substance abuse to hang around the school. This may seem insignificant to some, but these posters serve as a daily reminder of why I will forever stay clean. Having a "why" to avoid drug use is so much more helpful than an excuse to avoid drug use. My "why" was given to me by real life experiences, and is reinforced within me by Drug Free Club.

The club means much more to me now as a senior than a simple way to look good for college applications. I love seeing my friends in their Drug Free Club t-shirts. I truly feel that I could trust each one of them not to hurt our friendship with drug use. I love being able to say that I am clean, and that I plan forever to be. I also love that sobriety is encouraged throughout my high school. The club once seemed to me pushy and childish, but now I know the club is encouraging and necessary. Drug Free Club gave my shy freshman self the ability to say no, and now gives my empowered senior year self no option but to say no.