Tuesday, November 1

You only live once. Four powerful words with one simple message: would you rather live your life to the fullest or cut it short with drugs and alcohol? Substance abuse is a pandemic in the U.S., killing thousands of teens every year as a result of drug overdose or underage drinking. It kills more people than cars, guns, and falling. And did you know nine out of ten adult addicts today began using an addictive substance before they turned 18? The choice is simple. If you choose a lifestyle that includes drugs and alcohol, choose your consequences: A. heart attack. B. brain damage. C. lung disease. D. stroke. E. death. Or F. all of the above. The sooner you use, the sooner you lose.

YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE, BUT IF YOU DO IT RIGHT, ONCE IS ENOUGH.
Tuesday, November 8

Whether it’s making friends, performing well in school and sports, getting a job, or raising a family, we all want to succeed in life.

However, can you name one person you know that has succeeded in life by using drugs and alcohol? For example, I want to hire someone who abuses drugs and alcohol…said NO boss EVER! If we all know abusing drugs and alcohol is harmful and even deadly, why do millions of teens continue with this behavior? (Because they’re clueless?) Some teens want to relieve stress. Others use them to fit in. Using drugs and alcohol doesn’t fix problems. It causes problems! If you know someone or if you are someone who struggles with substance abuse, tell your parents, teachers, or counselor ASAP. Instead of peer pressuring your friends into drugs and alcohol, peer pressure them towards help.

REMEMBER THAT THEY AND YOU ARE TOO COOL FOR DRUGS.
Tuesday, November 15

Look at the people around you. On average, two out of three people will be involved in a drunk driving crash in their lifetime, and if you make the wrong decision, it could be you or the person next to you. Drunk driving costs the U.S. more than $132 billion every year, but more importantly, it costs us tens of thousands of lives annually. In 2015, 10,265 people died in drunk driving crashes. That is one death every 51 minutes. These deaths could have been prevented. It only takes one person to make a huge difference. So, rather than making a negative impact on someone’s life, why not make a positive impact? Don’t drink and drive, and if you’re concerned about a friend, get him or her help immediately, and do not let that person get behind the wheel.

ALLOW LIFE TO THRIVE. DON’T DRINK AND DRIVE.
Tuesday, November 29

Smoking stinks, both literally and figuratively. It makes your skin age faster, giving you wrinkles, and it turns your hair gray until you have no more hair left to turn gray. Other side effects include shortness of breath and lung cancer. Smoking is dangerous for secondhand smokers too. Innocent bystanders, as they walk past a smoker, inhale the cigarette smoke, which is toxic to the human body. Smoke contains about 7,000 chemical agents, 70 of which cause cancer. Some of the toxins found in cigarette smoke are found in rat poison, toilet cleaners, and formaldehyde (for-MAL-duh-hide), which are used to preserve dead bodies and animals. The simple solution would be to quit smoking, but only 12% of teen smokers who tried to quit were successful. It’s hard to quit because cigarettes have nicotine, which is as addictive as heroin and cocaine and takes only eight seconds to reach the brain. If smoking continues at the current rate among youth in this country, 5.6 million of today’s Americans younger than 18 will die early from a smoking-related illness. That’s about 1 out of every 13 Americans age 17 years or younger. Smoking doesn’t relieve stress; it creates stress. Once smokers become addicted to the nicotine, they crave more of it and are anxious until they satisfy their urge.

BE BRIGHTER, AND PUT DOWN THE LIGHTER.
Tuesday, December 6

Did you know that your brain won’t finish developing until you turn 25? That means, if you abuse drugs now, it can have long-term cognitive and behavioral effects since the brain is still developing. Over-the-counter medicines are easy to obtain and legal, which means they’re easy to abuse. According to the CDC, 105 people in the U.S. die every day from drug overdoses. Over-the-counter medicines that contain dextromethorphan (DEX-tro-meth-OR-fan), which is found in cough, cold, and flu medicines, impair your vision and sense of judgment. High doses can lead to loss of coordination, dizziness, nausea, hot flashes, and hallucinations. They weaken your motor skills, which make any activity potentially hazardous. They can also increase your heartbeat and blood pressure, which make it more likely you could have a heart attack or stroke.

LEGAL DOES NOT MEAN SAFE.
Thursday, January 5

Many adults who are addicted to drugs and alcohol became hooked as a teen. However, some have been successful in their attempts to overcome their addiction and live to share their success with others. Before Robert Downey, Jr. became a Golden Globe-winning actor, his abuse of cocaine, heroin, and marijuana put him in handcuffs and behind bars multiple times, cost him acting opportunities, and reduced him to earning eight cents an hour scrubbing pizza pans in a California jail kitchen until he became sober in 2003. Multi-platinum selling artist Demi Lovato was severely bullied and used drugs such as cocaine and alcohol to cope with her depression until she checked herself into rehab and became sober in 2011. Lastly, Super Bowl champion and three-time MVP winner Brett Favre abused prescription painkillers and alcohol until a seizure in 1996 almost ended his life. These celebrities figured out they couldn’t use drugs and alcohol to reach success, so they did something about it. Admitting they had a problem, seeking treatment, and maintaining their sobriety allowed them to become some of the most successful celebrities in their profession. In conclusion, here is an old Hollywood line with a Charger twist:

“LIONS AND TIGERS AND BEARS! OH, MY!” DRINKING AND SMOKING AND DRUGS? GOODBYE!
Tuesday, January 10

MYTH: “People I know drink and do drugs, but they’re fine.”

MYTH: “I can quit whenever I want.”

MYTH: “No one can help me with this problem.”

People use these excuses to convince themselves that substance abuse is not wrong, denying the real life-threatening consequences of their actions. This is one sign of addiction. Addiction is when people become so dependent on a drug they cannot stop taking it, even if they want to. The drug has taken over logic, and they feel they have to take it to feel normal. People don’t take drugs to become addicted, but the longer they take them, the less control they have over their own minds. Addiction is not a choice; it is a chronic brain disease that often goes untreated. It changes how the brain works, and these changes can last eternally, affecting memory and your chances of getting a college scholarship and a job. Addiction makes a person increasingly sick over time and eventually costs that person his or her life. 40 million Americans ages 12 and older abuse or are addicted to drugs and alcohol. That’s more than the number of Americans with heart conditions, diabetes, and cancer combined. Addiction is the direct result of substance abuse. The best way to avoid addiction is to

JUST SAY NO.