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## *Natural High vs. Drug High*

*Contributed by Bruce Pemberton*

Natural highs are intense, elated experiences that offer healthy, life affirming choices to a drug induced high. People have the ability to experience natural highs. They occur because the brain releases chemicals called endorphins. This helps to relieve stress, and keep us energized. Natural highs exist in all of us. After jogging for long distances (three miles or more) people often experience a “runner’s high.” In other words, feeling really good, altering your conscience state of mind, and feeling a positive sense of self. This is a “healthy high” compared to that received from drinking, smoking and using drugs.

There are different kinds of natural highs. They can be brief and fleeting (making a last minute, winning score for your team, hitting a homerun in a baseball game). It can be enduring (learning to play a musical instrument you really love). It can also be life-long (doing work you look forward to each day or watching your child grow). Doing well in school and getting good grades is another example of a natural high. Our heart-beating, mind racing natural highs are desirable experiences. Some people unfortunately, try to induce a high with alcohol and drugs. Why? Drugs such as alcohol affect many of the brain chemicals that cause artificial highs. They create and intensify pleasant moods, and ease social interactions and enjoyment.

Although much has been researched about alcohol and drug addiction, most people understand little about what draws people to drugs and why they become hooked, even after negative consequences and repeated attempts to quit. There are severe negative side effects from alcohol and drug problems. For example; hangovers, anxiety, depression, high blood pressure, accidents, financial problems, relationship and family problems. These problems last much longer than the initial desired effect of the drug. Natural highs do not cause such devastating, long lasting side effects.

People deserve to be the best they can be. We are all capable of enjoying the simple pleasantries of daily life, and contribute fully to our society. Ultimately, we are each responsible for ourselves, our health, our well being with an open mind, and a curiosity for learning. We can grow old with a clean and active mind. Why choose unnatural, harmful drugs when natural highs are free and right in front of you? It’s your life, your choice, and so why not make it a good one?

