

Meth: "You don't realize it's a problem until you quit." by Erick J. Aune

These quotes have been provided by a panel of former teen users. We appreciate their willingness to speak out, their candidness and desire to help those who may be impacted by meth or similar substances. The Federal Drug Enforcement Agency notes: "Meth is available in New Mexico in multiple kilogram quantities. The majority of meth seized originates in Mexico, but arrives in New Mexico from distributors in Los Angeles and Phoenix. Meth investigations are especially prevalent in the area known as the Four Corners."

I was 11 when I first tried meth. I was introduced by a family member, my sister's husband. We didn't know what it was... we were young and stupid.

90% of those who have a problem do not have record, they have no where to go.

If you haven't been in trouble and are caught, the suggestion is that you do not have a problem and are dismissed by the law. Especially if you are a girl and you are caught with a gram or so of meth, you are usually just let go.

When you go and ask for help, someone is always looking at you the wrong way. There is not really a secure place to go and ask for help without getting into trouble.

If you have the courage to ask for help and go through the withdrawals, everyone will look down on you.

My boyfriend helped me stay off meth... I stayed with him for 2 weeks. He literally had to beat me to stay, it was the only rehab... I was so skinny...

One of my friends, the first 8 ball he ever did his mom gave it to him. Sometimes we would go over to a friend's and their parents would set us up and leave their own kid out.

I just wanted to take away the reality. When you are high you don't think about problems other than where the next high will come from, sleep for a few days, go again.

I called my boyfriend, I was coming down and I wanted to do anything to kill myself. I tried to hang myself, but when I dropped my toes could touch the ground...I failed. My parents still do not know.

If you don't have a good reason to quit, a really good reason, you never will. When you're high, you or your self simply does not matter. Some of those who were able to quit were either pregnant or about to completely lose their family.

You have to have so much support in order to stop, you need some one by your side... I had to move to a different town.

When you are clean and see your user friends and say, 'I used to act like that'.. you have to have strong will not to use any more.

When they see mommy and daddy doing it... it's like eating candy.

Junior High is when you get introduced...

You are like Superman, you really don't care about anything... one friend shot himself because he thought he was shooting someone else.



At the extreme - Meth Poster Child

One guy thought that the police had put a microphone in his tooth... he pulled out his teeth.

If I had only realized how I treated my mom. I would treat her like shit... she would cry for hours.

A girl lost her teeth at 21... the chemicals take the enamel off. She had done it by taking the powder form and rubbing it on her gums.

Over the summer I lived with someone with an 11-year-old daughter ... no food, no water...

Once you are addicted, it (meth) is a necessity to live.

The kids don't have anything in the house, but the parents are high everyday. It makes their temper really bad... parents will literally beat their kids.

You get really depressed when you are on meth.

It triggers bi-polar schizophrenia... as soon as the dope interacts with the medicine (unknown) he will be chasing someone down the street with a chain saw... he's beating his sister with a bat.

Everyone is your enemy unless you are sharing.

You never know what is going on in people's heads when they are using. People have been murdered for no reason. I've had a gun pulled on me because I blinked the wrong way.

When I got to the point where I really wanted to die, that's when I asked for help, got better... went back to it.

The topic is "Methamphetamines in our Community."

The forum is "TALON Community-Input." Please join the discussion in whatever capacity this issue has affected you - personally, your family or friends, or your profession. The floor is yours... 334-1039.

We Lost our Son for Years

(We thank this individual for having the courage to tell this story.)

Our son was exposed to all the good things. Where did I go wrong? We were there and we were a family unit. We blamed ourselves. We realized that he needed to take personal responsibility for his addiction in order to beat it.

We both work and our children graduated from Aztec High School. Our problems were with our youngest child. We were not aware of his use for the first couple of years. We had no clue what he was doing, but found out by accident and tried to get him into rehab. He said he could do it on his own, but it was on-again, off-again for three years.

We learned the hard way. The bottom line is you cannot help those addicted to meth until they are ready to be helped. We kicked him out of the house because we could not watch him deteriorate any more. It was traumatic. Six weeks later, he called and said he couldn't do it anymore. We helped him find a rehab program at Four-Winds Recovery Center. That's all there is available here. By that time, he had nothing left; meth had robbed him of his soul and self worth.

Through rehab, we saw him come back to life. A year later, he was arrested on a criminal complaint based on a prior offense while on meth, and we lost our son for another five years, this time to prison.

Meth consumed our son. We did not know where he was, we had no control, we were helpless. You can try and talk the addict into seeking help, but meth has a hold on people. It's an evil drug that robs them of self

worth and confidence. As a kid, he was over confident, but during those five years his confidence was destroyed. He told me, "I don't deserve to be loved, I just don't, I just don't deserve it." It is difficult for people to understand and not judge others who have fallen under the influence of meth.

Getting his self worth back was a struggle. There were times where he would be gone and I would hear a siren late at night and wonder if it would be over. That's a horrible thing to say, but you just want some sort of peace - for them and yourself. It could be your next door neighbor, your sister, your brother, your best friend. None of our kids are safe from this drug. I don't believe the public has been educated on the impacts of meth.

The difference from 1994 to 1999 was incredible. All of a sudden, meth was everywhere. People can just make it in their kitchen. When our son was in sports, it enhanced his play and weight loss. Had the coaches known more about meth, maybe they would have seen the signs and could have said something to us.

Kids here are definitely not safe from this drug, it's easy and it's cheap. Just watch for signs and changes in your child's personality. Looking back, he told us, "I could act fine around you." Don't believe them, if you feel like your child is using, follow through on your instincts. I would say to those parents, just try to intervene somehow. There were people who knew our son was using, but didn't tell us about it; we wish they had.

Now it is so prevalent, it's scary. I don't know how people are going to protect themselves. I've read that only 4% of users are able to quit. We can educate the kids, but the parents need educating. I don't think it's getting enough public recognition; the word needs to get out.

Definitions:

Chemical Dependence

Presence of tolerance, avoidance of withdrawal symptoms, consumption in larger amounts than intended, and persistent use despite negative consequences including social, occupational, psychological and physical.

Substance Abuse

Recurrent use over a 12 month period despite: Physically hazardous situations, legal problems and negative social and interpersonal consequences.

Regarding Meth.....

by AliceMarie Slaven-Emond, Health & Wellness Center

I think the long term effects of meth are yet to be seen. I have seen very bright people get into meth and end up with a significant loss of IQ, so I suspect there is some grave brain damage associated with the use.

The other part of this use is the gastrointestinal tract damage done. The mucous membranes of this body system can not withstand the acid of meth nor can the blood vessels of the cardiovascular system. I suspect strokes and heart "attacks" will be seen in the user group at a much younger age in the very near future.

Also, I see people who have multiple blotches on their skin which look like rare ulcers. It seems the meth gas escapes from the skin in this way OR that the people become so psychotic on meth, that they pick their own skin off in chunks. It seems to be seen more often on the cheeks of the face and arms.

A social worker friend of mine says she has noticed that the behavioral outbursts are very aggressive in people using meth. This type behavior then would seem to increase violent crime in our communities and put our law enforcement personnel at even higher risk.

The women I have seen using meth are extremely thin and it takes very little for them to cry uncontrollably. Most of the meth users I have known as patients have few friends (or families who will claim them) and are eventually homeless. They can rarely hold down jobs for any length of time which puts them at poverty level quickly.

So, once again, from the LSD to PCP and now to the "new" lethal Meth, we have damaged brains, damaged children, destroyed families and ruined career opportunities.

Resources:

Support Groups

Bethel Baptist Church at 201 Heiland Road in Aztec
FMI: 334-2807, 330-9899

- Monday 7 pm: Bible-based support
- Tuesday (closed) & Thursday (open) 8 pm: NA meetings

SMART Moves Program

Albert Jacquez, SMART Moves Coordinator
Aztec Boys and Girls Club
311 S. Ash St. Aztec, NM 334-8861

This nationally acclaimed comprehensive prevention program helps young people resist alcohol, tobacco and other drug use, as well as premature sexual activity. The program features engaging, interactive small group activities designed to increase participant's peer support, enhance their life skills, build their resiliency and strengthen their leadership skills

The program's components include: SMART Kids, for children ages 6-9, Start SMART, for youth 10-12, Stay SMART, for youth ages 13-15 and SMART Parents, for parents of Club members participating in SMART Moves.

HIV Aids Prevention Clinic:

1001-D W. Broadway (in PMS Clinic), Farmington,
325-8022.

This walk-in anonymous clinic does AIDS testing with pre- and post-test counseling on Mondays and Thursdays from 8 am - 1 pm.

Also available is the Harm Reduction Program, a state-approved syringe exchange program for IV drug users over the age of 21, aimed at reducing the spread of HIV Hepatitis B & C. Currently, 99% of the people who take advantage of this program are meth users.

The clinic provides one-on-one education on substance abuse and other health safety issues.

Presentations are available for groups covering risk reduction and sex and drug use. For more information, call Dona Kerr at 325-8022.