

ACTUAL LETTER FROM A COLLEGE GRADUATE TO HIS MOTHER CONCERNING LEGAL AND ILLEGAL DRUG USE*

November 15, 2006

Dear Mom,

It has been eight years since I entered high school on the heels of your famous advice about drugs: "Johnny – be skeptical and, most of all, be safe." Although I'd like to tell you that I never needed your advice because I never encountered drugs, I'd prefer to be as honest with you as you have been with me

Just as you predicted, I spent high school and college navigating a highly experimental teenage drug culture. While some of the substances that I encountered were illegal, like marijuana, cocaine, and Ecstasy, many were not, like alcohol, cigarettes, and Ritalin. Because you explained that a drug's legality does not mean that it is better or worse for me, I approached every substance with skepticism, moderation and common sense.

Our household mantra of 'safety first' guided me through a maze of difficult decisions, particularly in college where alcohol use and abuse is widespread. Because you didn't lie or exaggerate the risks of drug use, I took your warnings seriously. I always made plans for sober transportation; I refused to leave friends alone if they were highly intoxicated; and I was never afraid to call home if I found myself in a dangerous situation.

Of course you advised me not to use drugs, but as an expert in the field, you knew that I was likely to experiment. Most parents panic in response to this likelihood, but you and Dad remained levelheaded: You didn't impose rigid rules that were bound to be broken, and you didn't bombard me with transparent scare tactics. Instead you encouraged me to think critically and carefully about drug use. When I inquired, you armed me with truthful, scientifically based information from which I could make my own decisions. This was excellent practice for adulthood, and we built a loving relationship based on trust and truth.

Mom, your work does so much more than teach parents how to talk to their kids about drugs; your work keeps parents and kids communicating at a time when most kids shut their parents out. Our relationship is a perfect example. For never ceasing to communicate with me, even when I tried to shut the door on you, and for tirelessly keeping me, my sisters, and so many other kids safe, thank you.

Common Sense for Drug Policy
www.CommonSenseDrugPolicy.org www.DrugWarFacts.org
www.ManagingChronicPain.org www.MedicalMJ.org
www.TreatingDrugAddiction.org
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* Above is an unedited, unsolicited letter to Marsha Rosenbaum, Ph.D. from her son John.