

## Choosing Decisions Right Can Make Your Life Bright

D.A.R.E. has changed my life. I didn't know that I could learn so much from D. A.R.E. To be honest, I thought I would just learn everything that I already know. I was definitely wrong. I learned so much more about how to handle good and bad situations that come throughout my life. I learned about drugs, alcohol, peer pressure, confident communication, bullying, and how to make good decisions.

One of the subjects that I'm so glad that I've learned about from D.A.R.E. was drugs. Drugs in general have killed more than 400,000 people each year. For one thing, smoking is terrible for you because it can cause mouth cancer and it's really bad for your lungs. It even reduces the amount of blood that flows to the brain. Honestly, I was so scared of drugs that it was hard for me not to wonder...Would I ever do this? ...Would I ever get myself into that situation?...Would I make the right choice? I knew I would never do drugs, but deep, deep down inside I couldn't get those questions out of me. I doubted myself and I was not confident in myself. Not only have I learned about drugs and overcome my fear of them, but I've learned about stress and how to take care of it. Whether it's stressing about homework or about those questions. I've learned many resistance strategies like changing the subject or walking away with confidence. I now know how to deal with challenging questions if they were ever to be asked.

Underage drinking can ruin your whole life plans. Just that one bad decision will go on your permanent record. When teenagers underage drink, they are usually still developing emotionally and physically, so their body is not yet fully developed. Alcohol affects teenagers more than adults because they are still growing. If you were to underage drink, it would go on your permanent record. That one sentence in your permanent record can ruin your whole life like not getting a job after an interview. Those teenagers are actually going against the law. That's probably what upsets me the most. I think that it's so depressing that there are more than 75,000 deaths related to alcohol each year.

Another part of D.A.R.E. that I've really enjoyed was the lesson on peer pressure. Peers can pressure you to do something that you usually don't want to do. Peer pressure, in my opinion, is very hard to deal with. Depending on what the situation is, you don't want to say yes or no to maybe look uncool or look like you're scared. Let's be honest. Who wants to badly lose their reputation? No one does. So I've learned how to talk when I answer a question that is being asked. For example, you should always talk with a confident voice. Not a demanding or unsure voice, because then the bully will make fun of you more because it might come off differently than you mean it to. Sometimes they could even threaten to hurt you just because they wanted you to do something and you didn't do it. So we talked about ways to avoid the conversation like changing the subject, giving an excuse, avoiding the situation, and strength in numbers, which means to have strength in people around you who have the same opinion as you and can back you up.

The one lesson that really stood out to me was the bullying lesson. Officer Moore really went into detail about being a bystander. At first, I didn't really know what he meant by a bystander, but now, after the lessons, I definitely understand. He used an example if someone killed themselves because of bullying.

He talked about how some people would say that they are so sad that they died and that they were nice, but you know what he asked us? Where were you? Where were you when they were getting bullied and you were standing there watching and laughing? You could have stopped it by standing up for them and building them up, not knocking them down. That question means a lot to me. Where were you? You, the person that is sad because someone died, could have stopped it. Maybe that one laugh that was yours set them over the edge. Another thing that really got stuck in my head was that bullying isn't a one-time thing. It's an aggressive behavior that is done constantly to isolate, harm or control another person and the behavior is usually unwanted. I knew that bullying hurts and some people do kill themselves because of it. But what I didn't really know was that so many people kill themselves because of it. To me that is devastating and breaks my heart because the bully is just doing it for some dumb reason. Sometimes the bully does it because at one point in his or her life they were the ones who got picked on and they want other people to feel the same way that they did. Sometimes, the reason come close to home and they usually take their anger out on other people. I guess my point is that people sometimes kill themselves when other people bully them and the bullies are doing it for no real reason. Honestly bullies are cowards, so I've learned to not be a coward. I've taken that statement to not be a bully because you will hurt someone whether it's physically or even emotionally. Why would you want to hurt someone else just so that you can satisfy yourself? So don't be a coward.

Though I've learned many things related to drugs and alcohol, I've learned about making the right decisions. I've never really realized how much making decisions, hopefully the right ones, can change your life. If you make the right decisions relating to drugs, alcohol and bullying, they will change your life. Of course I hope they are good, but we all make mistakes, right? We learn from our mistakes and the decisions we make. They make us better people. Usually when you are making right decisions, it has to include improvising and solving a problem. Making the right decisions incorporate throughout your life and the choices we make makes us us. To be honest, I was scared of drugs. I was scared of alcohol. I have definitely overcome my fear and I'm able to release myself from the thoughts that once scared me. I learned so much from D.A.R.E. and I'm so glad I had the opportunity to do D.A.R.E.

I, Lucy Haller, pledge to make right decisions, to not do drugs nor alcohol excessively, and not to bully. I will continue to be kind to others and learn from my experiences throughout my life.