As the program begins, a series of facts appear on-screen:

- **110 million Americans age 12 or older have used illicit drugs at least once in their lifetime.**

- **Alcohol kills six-and-a-half times more teenagers than all other illicit drugs combined.**

Next, viewers hear from various speakers—addicts who describe how and why they started to use drugs. One addict explains that he drank “to experiment and also to relieve stress.” Other reasons include: “There’s always a reason to do it.” “Everyone else was doing it to fit in.” “I could justify using.” “I couldn’t get enough.” “It went from occasional to daily.”

At this point, the title appears on the screen: *Teen Truth: An Inside Look at Drug and Alcohol Abuse.* Next, another on-screen fact appears: **65 percent of the youth who drink alcohol say they get it from family and friends.** An addict describes how she began to sneak alcohol when she was 11 years old. By the time she was 13, she had progressed to marijuana.

Dale Benner, the Executive Director of the New Directions Rehab Center, explains that for many users, family members and/or friends “were present when they started using because there was that real desire to fit in.” Mike, an undercover police officer, explains that “a user’s vision is very short-sighted and the only thing they are looking at is being popular and out doing what they think is fun.”

An on-screen fact reads: **The earlier drug use is initiated, the more likely a person is to develop drug problems later in life.** Viewers listen to a young woman who explains that when she started to smoke pot, she saw other people smoking crank and it made her want to try other, stronger drugs. Another user describes how he began to mix various hardcore drugs.

Dr. Michael Herrera explains that users typically start out experimenting with drugs, but soon “it becomes a more of a need than recreation for them.” One addict admits that although he thought he was in control of his use, “the only time I was sober was when I was sleeping.”

Another addict tells viewers, “I thought that if I only drank on the weekends, I wouldn’t get addicted to drinking. It was a rude awakening when I couldn’t stop and I moved on to marijuana. I thought the same thing: I can stop if I want to. [But] I couldn’t. I moved on to methamphetamines. [And] I couldn’t stop. You might think that you can stop, but it is very hard.” Another addict explains, “When I was a teenager, I never even dreamed of being an addict. And if someone told me [I had] an addiction, I would have told them they were full of it.”
Dr. Herrera says, “When they think of addicts, they don’t think of their buddy who has to use it every weekend to enjoy himself. [Addiction] is a very big misconception. Whether it is physical or psychological, it is an addiction either way. We do see kids who come in and have that same kind of thinking. They say, But I don’t use it every day.”

Next, several addicts describe the kinds of activities they used to enjoy before they became addicted to drugs: riding their skateboards, playing soccer, doing gymnastics and more. Eventually, they lost interest in anything but getting high. Undercover police officer Mike explains, “It very, very quickly dominates their lives. It dominates everything they do.” As one addict states, “All I ever thought about was getting high.”

Other addicts talk about how uncomfortable they felt when they weren’t high. They claim that using drugs helped them to feel better about themselves and their emotional states. One young man explains, “I didn’t know how to feel. When I started to feel emotions, I would go cover it up because I didn’t know how to handle it.” Another adds, “I only felt comfortable when I was high. When I was sober, I would get self-conscious.”

Next, several addicts describe the personal consequences they endured because of drugs. One woman reports, “I lost the respect of my mother. I put her through a lot of pain. I destroyed her and her trust in me.” At this point, a new fact appears on-screen: One in three families has at least one addicted family member.

“I’ve lost homes,” admits another user. “I’ve never been able to hold a job. I’ve lived on the streets, under bridges.” “I lost my scholarship in college, the respect of people and community.” “I lost my youth. Everything I wanted to be went down the drain. I lost my self-respect. I lost everything basically.”

A series of before-and-after montages show pictures of drug addicts. Undercover officer Mike explains, “your friends, your family, your self-esteem, your future… is tossed out the window cause once drugs get a hold of you they will dominate every waking moment you have.” Dale Benner says that drug addicts begin to neglect their own personal health. “Internally and externally, you’re accelerating the aging process and you don’t even know it while it’s happening.”

“I drank so much,” admits one addict, “that I started throwing up my stomach lining. There was blood, pink stuff and yellow stuff every time.” Doctor Herrera tells viewers that in the emergency room, “we see these kids who started drinking in their early teenage years, who make it to their mid-30s with a non-functioning liver.” Viewers now see pictures of a liver damaged by Hepatitis C. One addict explains that he got the disease as a result of his drug use. “I’ll have it forever,” he says. “There’s no cure for it. It will knock about 15, 20 years off my life.”
At this point, viewers hear a terrifying true story. On January 4, 2005, Janelle and her boyfriend, Michael, both 20, were driving back to their apartment when they got lost in a snowstorm. Viewers hear an actual 911 phone call.

Operator: 911, What’s your emergency?
Girl’s voice: Please help me. They’ve blocked us all up in these trees above Mandalay Apartments on Pacific.
Operator: What’s the address?
Girl’s voice: It’s the trees right above Mandalay Apartments.
Operator: What’s the address?

Janelle and Michael tell the operator that they are about a quarter-mile away from their apartment complex. In reality, they were 23 miles away. They claim they are being trapped by hundreds of people who do not speak English. They were really all alone. As the call continues, viewers hear the couple complain about how cold they are. Then the phone line goes dead and the operator cannot reach them. Students soon learn that Michael’s body was found the next day, and Janelle’s was found six days later. They both froze to death. The autopsy revealed that both of them were high on crystal meth. They took the drug two or three days before they called 911.

Undercover police officer Mike explains, “Drugs are not made in professional labs. Most drugs are manufactured in what we call clandestine labs or make-shift labs. The chemicals are not very pure. So there is a possibility of poisoning yourself and of course an overdose.”

A new fact appears on-screen: Approximately 135,000 people die each year as a consequence of drugs and alcohol. Dale Bennar remarks, “All of the people that come through this program would say it’s not worth it. It’s fun in the beginning, but after they lost control of their lives, they didn’t know how to stop those effects. They didn’t know how to stop that craving.” This is reinforced by the addict who says, “It starts off fine and dandy, but when it’s all over the only person who is paying that price is you.”

The program concludes with advice from the on-camera speakers. They all say that if they had known sooner what they know now, they would never had used drugs. Carol talks directly to viewers: “If you knew what you were doing to yourself, you wouldn’t pick up that first joint or that first beer.” While she speaks, the film shows pictures of her dating back more than twenty years. The photos show her body’s deterioration as her drug use worsened. She tells viewers, “Just one hit or one beer can change your whole life. It’s a life of hell and it never goes away, even if you stop. It doesn’t go away.” As the program ends, Carol’s final words appear on-screen: “Don’t ever start. Then you won’t have to stop.” Then the screen fades to black.