



My Old Friend

By Gerry Perez

NO ONE ever knows how a young man or young woman really feels about himself or herself. No one ever knows how difficult it is and the problems they deal with every day. When a young man, like myself, was in that position I found a friend, a friend who unfortunately was making me angry with other people while I wasn't with that friend. I began disrespecting my mom and grandma who were the two that taught me how to be the young man that I am. This new friend made me change from the young man I was to something I didn't even know. No one knew me anymore, and I especially didn't know myself.

Whenever I wasn't with my new friend, which was marijuana, I was mad or desperate or anxious to do it—and to go out all day and do what I wanted. My first two years I thought I was controlling it, but then my friend took over me. Once I got to high school I started missing school almost every day. I was going to my classes high, I

was also sleeping in most of my classes. For some weird reason the only classes I was passing were art and English. Missing school got so bad that I had to go to juvenile court, because the school thought I was wasting their time. Even though I went to court I kept doing drugs and missing school. Well I was doing so bad that I was losing hope in my future and then I thought that I could be doing better than doing nothing in my life, like doing better in school or doing more for my mom helping her around the house. So I got my stuff straight, and I started leaving my old friend bit by bit until I felt better. It was hard leaving my friend behind because our relationship had been every day. I got a lot of help from my cousins because they knew what I was going through. When I got everything straight I started hanging out with the right people and started going to school. I still see “her” with other people but I try to stay away and not talk to “her” at all.

After I let my friend go, I started getting along with my family again. I started going to family barbeques and went to family parties like cousins or uncles. Whatever came up I started hanging out with them. Suddenly my mom started being my best friend again and she never holds it against me that I was doing drugs. We get along better than ever and she asked me how I felt more often and how I am doing—something she never did or at least I didn't remember her doing. All my so-called friends stopped talking to me because I didn't do what they did. I changed my life completely by going to church since my mom is religious. I met new friends there and still talk to some who still do drugs but they know me and know I don't do drugs anymore. All I know is that I can still have lots of fun without being under the influence of my old friend marijuana. Another thing I did to change my life was I was going to a different school and this school has helped me in lots of ways. Now I'm really close to graduating and this is something I didn't think I was going to do. If you were asking me a year or two ago I would have never thought about graduating or doing something with my life and now I do. At the end I knew “she” wasn't my best friend and never was, now my best friend is my mom and always was. I just didn't know it. 🙏

ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Gerry Perez is a recent high school graduate from Washington. Alert Magazine congratulates him for winning the Alert Scholarship and we encourage him in the pursuit of his academic goals. We would also like to encourage future seniors to participate in our scholarship program.