

Deena Bartel-Wagner
P. O. Box 225
Spencerport, NY 14559
Email: editor@verbaloxygen.com

“Hey, Ethan, you want to shoot some hoops?” asked Trey.

Ten-year-old Ethan flipped his math book shut and grinned at his older brother.

“You bet! I just finished my homework and I’m ready for a break.”

It wasn’t long before Ethan and Trey were facing off against each other. “How’s your school year going?” asked Trey.

“It’s okay but Mr. Blackstone is a tough math teacher though,” said Ethan. “What about you? What’s your toughest class?”

Trey made a fast drive towards the basket and tried to tip the ball in before he answered. “Classes are okay but I’m going to have to keep on top of them all them. Coach already gave us the speech about low grades and being benched from playing.”

“I’ll bet Nick loved that speech,” Ethan said with a grin. “Basketball’s always been more important than school to him.”

Trey stopped bouncing the ball and looked off into the distance.

“Hey, what’s wrong?” asked Ethan. “I didn’t wear you out already did I?”

Trey began bouncing the ball again but didn’t shoot. “Nick’s not on the team this year?” he said quietly.

“What do you mean?” asked Ethan. “That’s all you guys used to talk about. You were always practicing and making plans for playing basketball together in high school. Now you’re in your junior year and Nick’s not playing?”

“Yeah, well people change,” said Trey. “Nick and I don’t do much together anymore.”

Ethan looked surprised. “You guys have been best friends since kindergarten,”

“Let’s sit down,” said Trey. “There’s something I need to tell you about Nick.”

Worried, Ethan sat down quietly and waited for Trey to say something.

“I haven’t said anything to you or Mom and Dad about Nick,” said Trey. “We haven’t been doing much together since the beginning of last school year. Nick’s made some choices that I don’t agree with and he’s become a tweaker.”

Ethan screwed up his face. “What’s a tweaker?”

Trey sighed. “I don’t want to have to tell you this but you’re going to find out sooner or later. I guess it is better coming from me. Nick started doing drugs with some new friends last year. They hooked him up with meth and now he’s addicted.”

“So a tweaker is somebody who uses meth?” asked Ethan.

“That’s right,” said Trey. “And meth is very addictive. You only have to use it once or twice and you can become addicted. Nick’s really messed up. He’s not the same as he used to be.”

“How’s he different?” asked Ethan.

“He shows a lot of the signs of someone using meth,” said Trey. “He can’t sleep and noise really bothers him. He’s always grumpy now, too.”

“Wow, that’s not Nick,” exclaimed Ethan. “He was always so easy to get along with and nothing ever bothered him.”

“You’re remembering the old Nick,” said Trey. “Not only is the new Nick grumpy, he scratches himself all the time. Now he’s got sores on his face and arms that don’t heal up.”

“Why does he do that?” asked Ethan.

“Meth users feel like they have bugs crawling on them,” said Trey. “They are called crank bugs. Meth ingredients are things you wouldn’t put in your body-stuff like cold medicine, lye, antifreeze and even battery acid. It’s this stuff that causes the weird feeling on your skin.”

“Yuck, why would anyone want to put that into their body?” Ethan rolled the ball around as he thought about what Trey had just told him.

“How did Nick even get meth?”

“It’s easy to get,” said Trey. “That’s part of the problem. There are people who are called cookers that make the meth in places like apartments and hotel rooms. Then they sell it to kids like Nick.”

“Thanks for telling me about Nick,” said Ethan. “I don’t like the sounds of this meth stuff. I think we should tell our friends about how dangerous it can be.”

“That’s what I’m going to do,” agreed Trey. “I’m going to warn them to not even try it once.”

Thought questions

1. What were some of the signs that Nick was using meth? How had it changed him?
2. Trey told Ethan some of the ingredients of meth. What were they? Why would people want to use something that had these things in it?

3. What did Ethan say they should do about the meth problem in their school? How would this make a difference? Can you make a difference in your school and neighborhood?

Activity

Find pictures of some of the chemical that are included in meth. Use them to design a poster warning students of the dangers of meth. Other ingredients in meth include drain cleaner, acetone, lithium batteries, rock salt and kitty litter. Also find pictures of how meth affects users and include these on the poster. Get permission to hang the poster at your school or library.