

LETTERS ABOUT LITERATURE

MASSACHUSETTS LEVEL III HONORABLE MENTION 2009

Dear Nic Sheff,

Your book *Tweak* truly inspired me to quit drugs. Before I read your book, I sat there day by day reading the same type of stuff every drug addict encounters. Your book was different. When your family basically kicked you out of the house (like mine did), I realized that you went through the same stuff I did. Feeling hopeless, feeling like the drugs **ruled** me. I'm an adolescent that is dealing with the same stuff you did, from bouncing in and out of treatment, to having people you can't be around after you quit. My parents didn't want anything to do with me when I started drugs; I would steal anything, money included. I would be, well, going off and staying out all night. I would be smoking drugs in the house. They didn't know what to do with me.

My parents finally intervened in my "fun" and they got the courts involved. They told the judge, "He's out all night, and he doesn't take input from anybody. He steals from us. We have a daughter that's scared for her life!" By that point in time, I was a juvenile adolescent. When my parents took me to court, I felt as if the world had just come crashing down around me. I couldn't stop – at all. I tried; I went a few days max without getting high.

I got sent to an in-patient treatment center for trying to fix this problem independently. After I got out I realized my so-called "friends" back home were just using me for drugs and money.

Of course by then I was OK; I was back home and just having fun. I went to skate around and saw a bunch of people smoking and popping. I went over...and that was the worse mistake of my life so far. I relapsed on drugs. But this time my decisions were worse; I ran away more to find anything I could put my hands on to buy more drugs. My money ran out, and my parents stopped bringing cash into the house. I went through countless withdrawal symptoms, including sleepless nights, night sweats, hallucinations, and not being able to breathe.

When I read that you were going in and out of treatment, I felt as if it's OK to relapse; you just have to keep your head high and fight through it. I read that you let go of your "drug" friends and that's really hard for me. My whole life has been filled with anger, depression, and negative relationships.

I first tried drugs when I was in seventh grade. I didn't want anything to do with them after that because I was planning to join the football team in high school. So I was like, "No, not for me." My freshman year of high school I was an A+ student, and it felt so so good because usually I'm the type of kid in the back of the classroom flinging stuff at teachers. I was a wide receiver on the football team.

But then WHAM! Drugs hit my life. I got hooked quickly and began using. By semester three I was failing miserably. My coach didn't know what was going on. He saw that I wasn't coming to practice. He saw I was getting hurt more easily. My mom wanted me to tell him I couldn't be on the team anymore. I gave up my dream because I couldn't stop.

When I was reading *Tweak*, what surprised me and caught my eye was how much you suffered. You and I share so much in common; I went in and out of hospitals for drugs and depression, just like you. I got into heavy substances, just like you.

But what I'm really confused about is that you're clean and you're living your life, but your parents still dislike you. Is that because you disappointed them so many times? Ever since December 2007 when my process started, my parents have been there by my side most of the time. My mom told me a few days ago, "Mitchell, no matter what you do, we will always love you." Why can't your family see that you went from this drug addict to this unbelievably cool guy?

Thank you, Nic Sheff. You have inspired me to change my life and not be an addict. I'm currently in a residential program in Northampton, Massachusetts, still undergoing treatment. Thanks so much; you really taught me it's OK to mess up. The message I got from your book was "It's OK to mess up, but it's all about what choice you make in the end."

Sincerely,

Mitchell

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