

## **HOW TO USE THIS PROGRAM**

This program was produced for use in classrooms, libraries, community centers, social service agencies, youth organizations, camps, teen groups, and parent education centers, or for viewing by parents and teens together at home. Although its target audience is teenagers, anyone who has regular contact with and a commitment to young people can benefit from this video as well. It is meant to be used as a part of a learning experience that begins before viewing the program and extends beyond the classroom walls. The discussion questions and follow-up activities are intended to enhance this learning experience. Educators and counselors planning to show *More Than This* to teens may want to view the video in advance so that they can adapt their program follow-up to best suit the needs of their group. It is suggested that teens view the video under adult supervision.

## **OBJECTIVES**

- \* To explore the roots of negative body image & self-esteem issues that can contribute to steroid abuse and eating disorders .
- \* To spotlight & better recognize the sometimes subtle signs of steroid abuse and eating disorders (including their destructive subcultures that promote them).
- \* To examine what peers and educators can do to reach out to someone they feel may be privately struggling with steroid abuse or an eating disorder.

## **SYNOPSIS**

Living in the shadow of his older brother's past athletic glories, Donnie turns to steroid abuse to help him 'measure up' on the basketball court. Not long after, he finds his life slowly spinning out of control as his girlfriend, Angela tries in vain to help him kick his addiction. In the meantime, Angela is also struggling to convince her friends, Dara and Lucy, that, contrary to what they've read on the internet, anorexia and bulimia are not 'lifestyle choices' but, instead, serious medical disorders. Angela should know; she too once struggled with bulimia but now finds herself reluctant to share this potentially helpful fact with her two misguided friends. Donnie's Coach, Jack, is also struggling

with intervening in what he suspects may be Donnie's steroid problem. However, once Jack's sister, Joy reminds him of her son's tragic loss to drugs, he is forced to reconsider his position. Focusing on body image issues via steroid abuse and eating disorders, 'More Than This' also strongly emphasizes the importance of doing right by others ~ even when it's personally difficult.

## **ISSUE STATISTICS**

### **STEROID ABUSE**

Driven by the belief that anabolic steroids and other appearance/performance enhancing drugs (APEDs) will not only help them become super athletes but also more physically attractive, teens are drawn to the instant gratification of steroids. Some experts claim that approximately one million U.S. high school students - as many as 6% - have used anabolic steroids. However, in a 2008 NIDA-funded study, teens were asked if they'd ever experimented with steroids and only 1.4% of 8th and 10th graders and 2.2% of 12th graders said they had ever tried them. While new information on teen steroid abuse is still emerging, the number of users is reported to be higher among males than females (though that number is on the rise among young women).

Advocacy sites like The Taylor Hooton Foundation offer the following list of steroid abuse signs & symptoms -

#### **Physical Symptoms**

- \* Unusually fast muscle growth
- \* Unusually greasy hair or oily skin (often with stretch marks on the inner joints)
- \* Small red or purplish acne, including breakouts on the shoulders and back
- \* Gynecomastia, the abnormally excessive development of the breast tissue in males
- \* Bad breath

- \* Thinning hair throughout the head or receding hairline (male pattern baldness)
- \* Increased length and thickness in hair (on body parts other than the head)
- \* Hair loss in bed, shower, comb or brush
- \* Jaundice or yellowing of the skin
- \* Skin eruptions and infections, such as abscesses and cysts
- \* Drastic appetite shifts (extreme hunger or lessened/loss of appetite)
- \* Joint pain; greater chance of injuring muscles and tendons
- \* Disrupted sleep patterns (not sleeping well or sleeping too much)
- \* Fluid level changes, bloating (face & body), and night sweating
- \* Dizziness, trembling, nausea or vomiting
- \* Rapid or progressive weight gain
- \* Increased muscle size (sudden or progressive)
- \* Hyperactivity or lethargy (too little energy)
- \* Trouble urinating; discoloration or blood in urine

### **Personality and Psychiatric changes**

- \* Extreme mood swings
- \* Increased aggression or irritability
- \* Becomes disrespectful or abusive (verbally and/or physically)
- \* Poor decision making stemming from feelings of invincibility
- \* Becomes secretive and/or starts lying

- \* Withdraws from family members
- \* Depression (usually when steroids are discontinued)
- \* Hallucinations - seeing or hearing things that aren't there
- \* Paranoia - extreme feelings of mistrust or fear

## **Social changes**

- \* Sudden urge to work out at the gym
- \* Always has a towel covering the back when leaving the shower (to hide acne)
- \* Closes and/or locks bedroom door more often
- \* Changes in family, friends and personal relationships
- \* Very irritable
- \* Takes longer showers or baths (this time is often used for injecting)
- \* Phone conversations become more private
- \* Begins receiving more packages in the mail
- \* Asks for money more often, or has more money than usual
- \* Is stealing or losing belongings
- \* Begins taking naps and/or falls asleep in class
- \* Loss of focus or concentration (at work, school or home)
- \* Decline in grades
- \* Forgets plans, dates and activities
- \* Sneaking around on the Internet wanting no one to see them

## EATING DISORDERS & PRO-ANA/MIA MOVEMENT

According to the National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders (ANAD), 6 percent of people with eating disorders will eventually die from the disease. The nearly 500 'Pro-Ana' or 'Pro-Mia' Web sites that offer tips on how to become anorexic or bulimic are clearly contributing to this tragic number, attracting mostly teenage girls and young women to their web sites daily. Most of these destructive web sites are run by self-proclaimed "rexies"; people who celebrate their eating disorders (with some even going so far as to call it a religion). These same sites are known to feature "thinspirational" photos, which depict the emaciated bodies of models and celebrities.

Advocacy sites like ANAD offer the following tips for parents to recognize the early-warning signs of eating disorders -

- \* Sudden interest in calorie counting
- \* Wearing baggy clothing
- \* Excessive caffeine consumption
- \* Fanatical exercise
- \* General obsession with weight

Advocacy groups also urge parents to monitor their children's Internet activity, keeping a watchful eye out for pro-ana and pro-mia sites.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR TEENS & PARENTS

1. Do you know or know of anyone who has ever been a steroid user or had an eating disorder/an interest in the Pro-Ana movement ?
2. Imagine what Donnie's life was like when he was younger, living in the shadow of his older brother's athletic achievements. Were there any early indicators that Donnie was prone to low-self esteem issues? If so, what were they? (Similar questions may be asked of Dara, the character who was obsessed with the Pro-Ana movement.)

3. How would you react if, like Angela, you thought your friend was getting involved in something dangerous like the Pro-Ana movement? How far would you go to help her?
4. If you were Coach Jack or Angela would you have done anything differently to help Donnie with his steroid abuse problem?
5. What do you think happens after the film ends? How might the rest of the story play out...?

## **FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES**

1. Invite a local mental health professional to talk to your group more in-depth about the issues addressed in the film.
2. Write and perform a short prequel or prequels to 'More Than This', imagining what Donnie's life was like when he was younger, and the experiences that may have contributed to his later steroid use. Take this same approach with Dara, following the road to her ultimate fascination with the Pro-Ana movement/lifestyle. After the performance(s), an informed follow-up discussion is strongly recommended.