

The Life of a Persistent Young Offender

Alcohol and other Drugs / Crime

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Research (and experience) tells us that young people who are persistent offenders, will often have significant alcohol and other drug problems and will have commenced offending at an early age (eight and nine years of age is not uncommon). While the relationship between alcohol, other drugs and crime is complex, it is true to say that a cycle frequently develops in which offending follows alcohol and other drug use (particularly violent offences) or offending is the means through which funds are derived to enable alcohol and other drug use.

The following provides some excerpts taken from various books (criminological or sociological texts) about offenders. Read the excerpts and then answer the questions below.

“I would have been eight or nine and I started not coming home on weekends, started getting an alcohol problem”

“Probably at thirteen, fourteen, I was stealing a bit from shops and at fifteen I did a few other things like break-and-enter and a couple of drug charges for pot. I was really impulsive, I didn’t think of consequences, I’d just do something”

“I was an alcoholic by then, smoking pot, into speed. I used to thief every day for me pot, for me alcohol... At that age, it’s, like, most kids just experiment”

“I ended up pinching the stereo and TV from my own home. I went straight from there to the drug dealer... It didn’t hurt me inside knowing that I robbed my family; it had to be done”

“I think if I would have done more juvenile time I would have been more unpleasant, done bigger and worse things”

“So I had violence every day of my life and the violence I had at home, I used to take out on the street”

“We used to graffiti trains, search shops and hop tills and get money out of the tills and backroom purses”

“It was always bad when I was a teenager... we used to go out looking for people just to bash. We got into poofteer bashing, and we used to hurt a lot of them badly”

References:

Korn, N. (2004) *Life Behind Bars: Conversations with Australian Inmates*

Questions:

- When will they commence drinking alcohol?
- When will they commence using drugs and what drugs will they start using?
- What types of offences will they get involved in and at what age?
- Why will and how does their drug use and offending behaviour escalate?
- Will young persistent offenders be fearful of punishment?