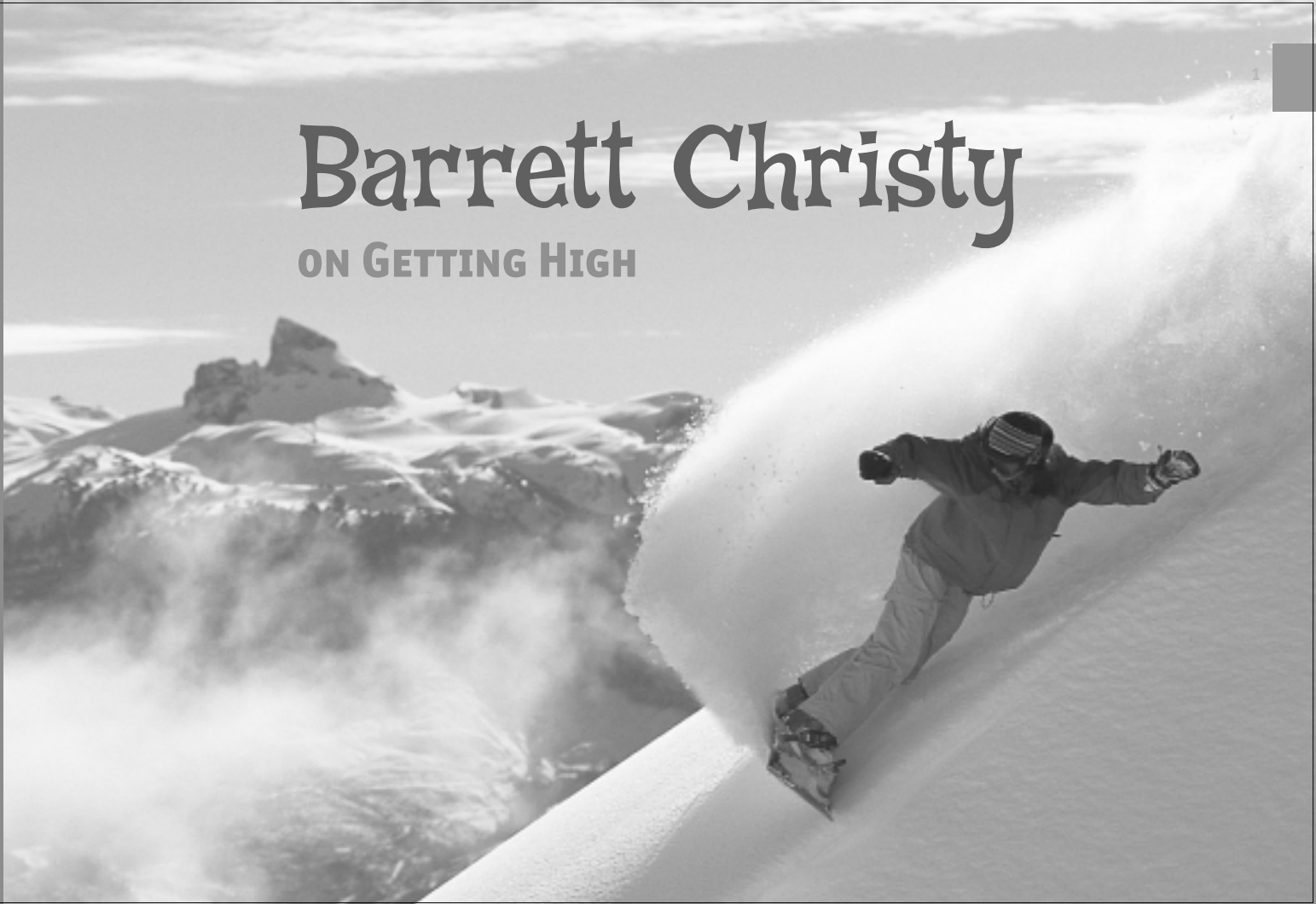


Barrett Christy

ON GETTING HIGH



2 Barrett Christy

SNOWBOARDING, FOUR-TIME X GAMES GOLD MEDALIST

When I was 15 years old, I was at that awkward point of going from junior high school to high school. It was intimidating—a bigger place, new kids, more work. I was lucky though, because I was playing varsity field hockey and lacrosse, and I felt “cool” to be hanging out with the older girls.

The first time I smoked marijuana, I didn't think that it did anything special for me. So I didn't try again for a while. But then, as I got into the rigorous schedule of high school sports and academics, I started smoking pot. I thought it was a good distraction from all the studying and demands. It became a neat escape for me from homework and chores. I didn't think at the time that it was any big problem.

But looking back at it now, I can see how much it affected me. When I was smoking, I looked at things differently. Smoking pot altered my priorities at the time. I really became unmotivated. I

found it very difficult, while being stoned, to finish any projects I started. I had no focus. I lost some friendships, too. And when my mom found out once, I got into a lot of trouble.

I liked the escape “weed” provided for me. But I also hated the way it made me feel so tired and sluggish. In my early 20s, I decided to move on to healthier things. There didn't seem any point to doing it anymore. I just found that I had better things to do with my time, even when I was bored. I made a decision to change, and I was lucky that it was not a difficult problem for me to quit. My life was filled with sports, work and school. I had goals, and now I was able to follow through with them.

In a funny way, if it weren't for smoking pot, I would have taken a different path in life. When I was smoking I was drawn to solitary adventures. I ended up quitting team sports. Then I found snowboarding, mountain biking and rock climbing. And because of my involvement in those activities, I stopped smoking pot. So now, I have the focus and the energy and the motivation to fulfill my dreams.

“I LIKED THE ESCAPE, BUT I ALSO HATED THE WAY IT MADE ME FEEL SO TIRED AND SLUGGISH.”

GETTING HIGH

You wake up one morning, and the whole world looks different. You're not a kid anymore—life as a teenager is starting. Your perspective is changing as quickly as your body is, and you're ready to dig those heels in, grit those teeth and experiment with anything and everything. It's time to turn the dials of your life and figure out how you want to be defined. Is it going to be tough-girl cargoes or girly-girl capris? 'Nsync or Destiny's Child? Friday night with the popular girls or your next-door neighbor? Who are you? What style are you down with? Where do you fit?

A choice you'll probably have to make is whether or not you're going to mess with drugs. The pressure is in your face—someone passed you a joint at a party or told you ecstasy is a harmless drug that'll make you feel happy and alive. You're curious about the buzz, and you don't want to look prude and prissy. But, on the other hand, every adult in the world has told you to avoid drugs like the plague and your stomach knots up like a pretzel every time you see the stuff. Suddenly the experiment stops being fun, and you're freaking out about what to do.

Here's some help. Trust your instincts! You're nervous because drugs can be dangerous—and even deadly! Choosing to smoke pot, sniff inhalants or do other drugs is so much more than a style choice. It can ruin your health, your relationships and your drive

to achieve your goals. Most drugs are addictive. You get high once and want to feel that buzz, so you do it again. For a lot of kids, drugs become a habit—an escape from reality that forces them to lie to the people important to them, lose interest in the important things in their lives and pretty much changes the people they once were.

If you're scratching your noggin about the drug question, step back, chill out and take a look at the big picture. Is a quick buzz worth more than every hour you've put into your sports dreams? Is it worth your relationship with your parents? How about your life as you know it? Peer pressure fades away, but your independence and self-confidence are with you forever. Choose to take care of you.

Deal With it!

- Trust your instincts and fears—no drugs are safe.
- Use the law—walk away because it's illegal.
- Use your health—you're risking your health and possibly your life by doing drugs, even once.
- Choose to be an athlete—there's no room to be your best when you're into drugs.
- Think about your friends—if they don't respect your choice not to mess with drugs, are they really friends?

Red Flags

Do YOU HAVE ...

- Mood swings (anxious, depressed, paranoid, nervous)
- Confusion, lack of coordination, restlessness, dizziness
- Nose bleeds
- Diarrhea and puking
- Slurred speech
- Memory loss
- Hallucinations
- Loss of appetite, energy and motivation

YOU'RE HEADED FOR ...

- Addiction
- Violence
- Heart and breathing problems
- Coma
- Death

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL OR SURF:

- Drug Help National Helpline
1-800-378-4435
- www.clubdrugs.org
Substance abuse information

Additional resources are listed in the Resources section of this Guide.

