

# Students from 17 schools list their Top 17 Addictions

Many people hear the word addiction and think that simply means abuse of alcohol or drugs. In reality, the problem is more complex, and much deeper than that.

My name is Scott Gallagher, and I offer a unique program to schools that helps kids deal with addiction, bullying and other destructive habits.

In my program – **The Power of Choice** – participants are never asked to reveal their habit. Sometimes students share with me, but I wanted to get a more complete picture, supported by genuine statistics.

In some of the schools I visited throughout 2007-2008, I asked kids to confidentially fill out a questionnaire and identify their unwanted bad habits.

From a sampling of 17 schools, 265 students (Grades 7 to 12) anonymously listed 92 different destructive habits, for a total of 1031!

The number of habits that were listed from such a small sample was shocking. Students admitted to an average of four habits – each – that they knew were destructive and they wanted to eliminate.

Here is a list of 17 real groups of habits identified for me by kids in my program. They are shown here from most to least common.

1. **Junk food**
2. **Technology**
3. **Illicit drugs**
4. **Alcohol**
5. **Self harm**
6. **Tobacco**
7. **Under-eating**
8. **Sex**
9. **Bullying**
10. **Money**
11. **Manipulation**
12. **Negativity**
13. **Avoidance**
14. **Destructive behaviours**
15. **Prescription drugs**
16. **Caffeine**
17. **Need for acceptance**

(For specific examples and the number of responses for each, see below.)

Based on these statistics, I wanted to gather more front-line information to allow us to get a better picture of exactly what kids are dealing with and how we can help as many of them as possible.

In each and every school I visit, I'm now using a questionnaire based on this information to learn even more about what kids are facing every day—directly from them.

I know from personal experience that in every school there are kids aching for help.

In some schools that brought me in, some faculty members were worried that no one would volunteer to attend the program. They thought that the problem simply wasn't serious enough, or that kids would not want to admit they had an issue - even though they never had to say specifically what it was. But that simply never happened. No matter how small the school was there were always kids volunteering to come forward and participate.

Often, these weren't the students the teachers or parents expected would attend. They weren't the kids already identified as "at-risk" or troubled. They were simply kids who recognized that what they were doing was having a negative impact on their lives and knew they had not been able to change on their own. Most people were surprised at who chose to attend, since they had no idea as many students, or these in particular, were struggling.

In reality, the need is far greater than many people realize.

During the last school year (2008-2009) I spoke to over 25,000 students from 65 schools across Canada. At the end my presentation to the entire school, I offered the opportunity to everyone in the audience to attend a one hour session on "How to Break a Bad Habit" - 3,003 attended.

To those students, I offered the further opportunity to join a supportive 28-day "Healthy Habits" program to work on replacing their bad habit with healthy ones. Over 900 kids did just that.

As a professional speaker, I've learned that the common approach of trying to scare kids out of experimenting with what is dangerous or illegal is not a realistic approach. In fact, it often makes the activity seem even more enticing.

That's why I've chose a different approach. I use my personal story as a way of connecting to all kids. I let them know that I've been where they are. I share my own challenges and choices and then invite them to attend the follow up seminar, workshop and 28 day program if they want to.

The schools I've worked with have seen extremely positive results. For more details on their experiences read some of testimonials from real participants talking about real situations.

My program is based on choice. I help empower kids to make positive choices in their lives and offer them practical steps to make it happen.

That's what The Power of Choice is all about.

### *Results from 2007-2008 student survey*

These results were based on the questionnaires filled out by 265 students in 17 schools who took part in my workshop and 28-day healthy habits program.

Of these students, 182 were females, 76 were male and 7 did not specify.

**1. Junk Food - 258 responses**

Junk Food - 109  
Sugar or Candy - 79  
Over eating - 69  
Chocolate – 1

**2. Technology - 154 responses**

Internet/Computer - 103  
Video games - 38  
Telephone usage - 5  
Movies and television - 5  
Text messaging – 3

**3. Illicit Drugs - 147 responses**

Marijuana and/or Hash - 92  
Ecstasy (psychedelic drug) - 16  
Cocaine - 12  
Magic mushrooms - 8  
LSD - 6  
"Special K" - 4  
2-CB (psychedelic drug) - 2  
DMT (psychedelic drug) - 2  
Salvia (psychoactive drug) - 2  
DIPT (psychedelic drug) - 1  
Methadone - 1  
Unspecified illicit drugs – 1

**4. Alcohol - 89 responses**

Alcohol – 89

**5. Self Harm - 87 responses**

Self harm - 48  
Nail biting - 14  
Over exercising - 3  
Over working - 2  
Over working - 2  
Over working - 2  
Over working - 2  
Over working - 2  
Lip biting - 1  
Self blame - 1  
Choking - 1  
Burning self - 1  
Drinking blood - 1  
Fidgeting - 1  
Pain - 1  
Panic Attacks - 1  
I like to watch people get hurt - 1  
Insomnia - 1  
Overactive - 1  
Hair pulling - 1  
Partying - 1  
Being abused – 1

**6. Tobacco - 85 responses**

Tobacco – 85

**7. Under-eating - 77 responses**

Under eating or Anorexia - 69  
Bulimia or purging - 6  
Diet pills – 2

**8. Sex - 46 responses**

S-e-x - 41  
P.o-r-n.ography - 3  
Masturbation – 2

**9. Bullying - 42 responses**

Bullying or abusing others - 38  
Gossiping - 2  
Forcing/manipulating others - 1  
Harming animals – 1

**10. Money - 37 responses**

Stealing - 17  
Gambling - 11  
Over spending/shopping – 9

**11. Manipulation - 31 responses**

Lying - 29  
Making others feel sympathetic - 1  
Manipulating others – 1

**12. Negativity - 29 responses**

Depression - 6  
Anger - 5  
Bad attitude - 4  
Being a victim or blaming others - 4  
Fighting with parents - 3  
Stress - 2  
Worrying - 2  
Suicidal thoughts - 1  
Negative thinking - 1  
Opposition to authority – 1

**13. Avoidance - 19 responses**

Laziness or lack of motivation - 12  
Over sleeping - 5  
Isolation or being alone – 2

**14. Destructive Behaviour - 14 responses**

Cursing - 3  
Rudeness - 2  
Complaining - 2  
Pyromania - 2  
Arguing - 1  
Tardiness - 1  
Violent behavior - 1  
Fighting - 1  
Holding grudges – 1

**15. Prescription Drugs - 14 responses**

Oxy cottin - 4  
Pain killers - 3  
Morphine - 2  
Opiates - 2  
Percodan - 2  
Valium – 1

**16. Caffeine - 8 responses**

Caffeine - 4  
Energy drinks – 4

**17. Need for Acceptance - 5 responses**

Co-dependence or people pleasing - 3  
Gang membership - 1  
Choosing bad friends – 1

**Notes:** Only 13 of these behaviors were listed on the original form. The other 79 were written in by students themselves as being problems with which they wanted help. Yet even these numbers do not tell the whole story. For example:

Bullying—38 kids came to the workshop for help with bullying behaviours they were unable to stop. However elsewhere in the survey, 93 kids admitted to bullying others, while 58 students said that being bullied was a problem for them.

The number of students who experience addictive and compulsive habits is clearly much higher than those who attended the workshops. Many kids who were known in their school to be "at-risk" or have specific problems did not attend.