

The Power of Prevention and Advocacy: Lighting the Way in a Pro-Drug Culture

By Carlton Hall

Carlton Hall is the President and CEO of Carlton Hall Consulting LLC (CHC) , a multi-faceted, full-service consulting firm designed to provide customized solutions and enable measurable change for communities, organizations, families and individuals. He has been providing intensive substance abuse prevention focused and community problem solving services to the nation for the last 25 years and is one of the most highly sought after instructors and guides for community problem solving across the nation and internationally, with successful achievements in South Africa, Ghana, Bermuda, Kenya and others. Additionally, Carlton sits on several boards of directors, including, the National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children (NA-DEC) and Movendi International.

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As pro-legalization and commercialization efforts surrounding marijuana gain momentum, it's crucial to remember the power of prevention and advocacy. While many may feel discouraged, we must stand firm in our commitment to safeguard our communities and future generations from the potentially devastating effects of substance misuse. Today, more than ever, our voices and actions matter, and they can make a difference.

My Four Why's

The year 2017 forever altered the way I view the importance of our voices and actions. It was the year I became a grandparent. I have 4 grandchildren, each more beautiful than the next. Yet, when I visit with them in their home, I find something instructive. Childproofing gates, plugs and locks serve as blatant reminders of the important role prevention plays in prioritizing the most vulnerable in the context of their challenging environment.

My grandchildren inspire my dedication toward promoting the value of prevention and advocacy, prioritizing our most vulnerable populations, in our challenging pro-legalization and commercialization landscape.

The Beacon of Prevention

Prevention science is a beacon of light in these challenging times. It is not merely about saying "no" to drugs but about saying "yes" to healthier, more fulfilling lives. It empowers individuals with the knowledge, skills, and resilience to make informed choices. It strengthens families, schools, and communities to provide a protective shield against the allure of substances.

Prevention is an investment in our future. It is the realization that the lives of our children and the well-being of our society are worth safeguarding. It is the understanding that the consequences of substance misuse extend far beyond the individual, impacting families, communities, and the nation as a whole.

The current landscape may appear daunting, with shifting attitudes and policies that seem to favor the commercialization of marijuana products. The allure of tax revenue can be a compelling argument for legalization, but we must not forget the hidden costs of these decisions. Increased availability can lead to a rise in use, particularly among vulnerable populations, such as youth.

Advocacy: The Driving Force of Change

Advocacy goes hand in hand with prevention. It is the engine that drives change. Advocacy is not about shouting in the dark; it's about shining a light on the truth. It's about informing and inspiring others to stand up for what is right, just, and in the best interest of our society.

In a pro-drug culture, advocacy is our lifeline. It's how we bring attention to the hidden risks and consequences of substance use. It's how we remind policymakers, parents, and the public that the allure of profits should not come at the expense of our health, our safety, and our future.

Our work in prevention and advocacy is not just for us: it's for our children and grandchildren. We are paving the way for future generations to inherit a world where problematic substance use is less prevalent, and the risks are well understood.

Empowering the next generation means providing them with the knowledge and tools to make informed decisions about their own lives. It means setting an example of resilience, determination, and unwavering commitment to their well-being. It means showing them that, even in the face of adversity, they have the power to make a difference.

This is why I have been honored to work alongside federal agencies, like SAMHSA and ONDCP, and with extraordinary national advocacy organizations, like, the Drug Free America Foundation, the World Federation Against Drugs, the Institute for Behavior and Health, and of course, Smart Approaches to Marijuana, and prevention champions, like you, throughout our nation and around the globe.

Conclusion: Lighting the Way Forward

In a world where the pro-legalization and commercialization of marijuana is seemingly gaining ground, our commitment to prevention and advocacy shines as a beacon of hope. It's easy to feel discouraged in the face of powerful interests and shifting attitudes, but we must remember the importance of our work.

Prevention empowers individuals and communities to make healthier choices, and advocacy drives change by shedding light on the truth. Persistence is our greatest asset, and our efforts are an investment in the well-being of future generations. Together, we can create a society where substance misuse is less prevalent, and the path to a brighter future is clearer.

So, let us continue to stand firm, to advocate tirelessly, and to work together towards a healthier, safer world. Our efforts matter, and they have the power to shape the destiny of our society. In a pro-drug culture, we are the guiding light, illuminating the way forward for a better tomorrow for my grandchildren and yours.

October 2023