

even more when he remembers how his friend had encouraged him, tried to build his own confidence on David's success: "I really wish you well," he'd said, "You're really doing good! I wish I could get into some of that. I'm going to do this . . . or that . . ." But it just never came together for him," David said dejectedly.

The problem that sent his friend into the dark, uncharted world of drugs was *not* caused by lack of knowledge, *that* David knows. It had to be something else.

"He knew everything there was to know about drugs," David said. "There was nothing anyone could have told him. If anyone said, 'Hey, you're going to get messed up. You're going to do this to yourself—you're going to do *that* to yourself,' it wouldn't have helped. He was totally aware of it!"

Maybe drugs afforded temporary relief when pressures around him were too much to bear. But as so many others have discovered, that mistakenly called 'easy way out' isn't easy—doesn't end there. The non-addicting drugs, often thought milder by comparison, can result in permanent—or recurring—damage, weakened thought processes. Hard drugs—methydrone, heroin, cocaine—inspire their own fears. Pill-popping and acid-dropping seem almost innocent, almost harmless by contrast. Yet a bad trip can be so earth-shattering that the mere thought of its recurrence—and this is always a possibility—can destroy the will to live!

Neither Judy nor David will ever forget the day they heard the awful news.

"I knew something was the matter," Judy said. She'd been struck by that certainty, that dreaded premonition that sometimes becomes awful fact. She'd just returned home when her mother told her about the phone call. Their friend, she told Judy, was "very, very sick."

"Oh, my God!" Judy had whispered—and went blindly to telephone David. Too many pills had *almost* taken their toll two months previously. This time, it was too late for stomach pumps, emergency treatment.

David's regret is achingly real. "I wish he were around now. I'd like to have worked with him as a lyricist with my music . . . I wish I had been around that day . . . to bring him out of whatever he was into . . ." he says, heavy-hearted, grief-stricken, remorseful. "When people are around, you say, 'I can see them next week. . . .'" His sigh was heavy, his words wiser than his years: "You never know that the time with them is going to be that short!"

"I didn't want to preach to him, because that wasn't my role—as a friend, or a human being," he says. "But it bothered me to see someone who is really that gifted, and that important to me, go to waste!"

David knows in his heart he couldn't have helped. But there is the hope of saving someone else, before they go too far!

"I hope my friend's death is a warning to those young people who think drugs are the easy way out. It certainly isn't any kind of an answer. It can only kill! What bugs me is that the people that push the stuff are walking around free. It just isn't fair.

"They keep saying drugs aren't harmful," he said, so quietly you can hardly hear him, "but they're terrible!" The words are torn from the depths of his loss. At only 19, the young man who was like a brother to David, paid the awful final price for taking drugs. And if it could happen to David's friend it could happen to yours. Or to you. Silently, passionately, David prays that it doesn't.

Hal Fisher

David stars weekly on ABC-TV's THE PARTRIDGE FAMILY.

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