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Recovering teens want to change for the better

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KUALA LUMPUR: "Drugs destroyed my dream of becoming a national sprinter. My future is now completely destroyed, because of my addiction to psychotropic pills."

At just 13, Khairul began getting involved in drugs. He had always wanted to become a sprinter, dreaming of glory on the international stage, but the pills destroyed his life and his dreams.

Now 17, the teen is going through a second rehabilitation programme at Persatuan Pengasih Malaysia centre here.

He said his older friends had brought him down the road to drug addiction, but he blamed only himself for giving in to peer pressure.

"I was always hanging out with them and they seemed to be able to get the pills so easily. Soon, I began taking the pills as well. I

used to represent my district in sprints, but I became less and less interested in sports."

Khairul spoke about how he used to always fight with his parents, to the point that he would sometimes hit them.

"Maybe that's why they reported my activities to the police."

At 14, Khairul was arrested and he was later placed at the centre. Ten months later, he was released and went back to his family.

"But, not long after that, I got involved in drugs again. This time, it wasn't just pills that I took. I also took syabu and other kinds of drugs.

"It happened during Hari Raya Aidilfitri. All my money went to buying psychotropic pills, syabu, Eramin-5 pills and cough mixtures."

Khairul said his family again

sent him to the centre.

"I am undergoing treatment and rehabilitation here. But this time, I am aware what I did was wrong. I want to change. I want to chase my dream, this time to become a pilot.

"It was something my father said to me... he asked me who would look after my younger siblings when he dies.

"It was that question that made me want to change so I can look after my siblings who are aged 16, 9 and 8."

Another teenage addict undergoing treatment at the Pengasih centre is Ashakim, 18.

He said it was the environment he was in and family problems which pushed him into drugs.

"I never knew my father, and my mother worked overseas. I was brought up by my grandparents. My hometown is known for

its drug problems.

"At first, I used the pocket money my grandparents gave me to buy drugs. But when I began to get more and more addicted, I found that I didn't have enough money so I began to steal. I played truant."

Ashakim, too, said he had changed his ways and wanted to improve himself.

"I want to help my mother (earn money). I want to look after her."

But Ashakim had an important message for society.

"It's not my intention to blame anyone (for my mistakes), but I hope that people would pay more attention to what's happening in their communities.

"If they know of drug problems in their areas, they should take action.

"If they don't know, they should make it a point to know."