

“You are important to us, that’s fact!”

Drug prevention with heart and mind

von Dr. med. Sabine Vuilleumier-Koch*

“Endlesslife addiction prevention helps to prevent addiction at an early stage and to promote physical, mental and social well-being.” With these words, the association “Endlesslife” from St. Gallen describes what some 120 students at a cantonal school were able to experience at the end of March. Thomas Feurer, founder of the “Endlesslife” organisation (see box), and his team managed to hold the youth’s attention for a whole morning – four hours in total – and motivate them to actively participate.

“We don’t want to lecture you”

Thomas Feurer, 53 years old, dressed smartly in black, stands before the students and talks about his teenage daughters. He expresses his bewilderment at some of the vocabulary they use, which is partly unfamiliar to him. To translate this, he turns to the young people in the room with a question, and they are happy to help – an initial connection has been made. His powerful words are clearly driven by a desire to reach the young people’s emotions, to encourage them to reflect, and thereby give them the chance to protect themselves from using toxic substances. He explains the potentially destructive effects of drugs to them without coming across as patronising. He knows that in crucial situations, it is up to the individual to decide whether to give in or turn away. “Every person is their own most important ‘coach’ in life”, he tells the young people right at the start of the event.

“Nobody sets out to become addicted”

Thomas Feurer openly shares his own life story and his descent into a severe, 15-year drug addiction. He was completely rejected by his father, a “drunkard” – he did not experience the trust necessary for a healthy childhood development in his relationship with him. His father, on the other hand, “celebrated” his brother. This and other

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Thomas Feurer (right) with his prevention team. (Picture made by the author)

traumatic experiences in his childhood led him to start using cannabis regularly as early as the age of 12. Yet there had been opportunities in his life to say no to drugs – or yes to the help offered by a teacher.

Thomas Feurer repeatedly urges the young people to turn to a trusted adult if they have problems. “Endlesslife” is also always there to help. Problems become easier simply by confiding in someone and then looking for a solution together. But he chose the other path.

To get hold of drugs, he helped himself to the “Mammomat”, his mother’s purse. The young people in the hall have already come to trust him so much that, when he asks, some raise their hands – yes, they too had stolen money from their mothers. By chance, he found himself in the situation of snorting heroin for the first time at around 14 years old – though he hadn’t known that the little pile of “dirt” in front of him was heroin. He had been pressured into taking it by new schoolmates and didn’t want to look like a weakling. The effect had been catastrophic; he had “redecorated” the entire school playground with vomit. He had consumed heroin, and later cocaine too, in high doses for years. It was clear: heroin manages to make you emotionally – not physically – dependent from the very first time.

It is fully evident that this man knows what he is talking about.

He never set out to become addicted. Nor to become a criminal. Up to a certain point, every-

one thinks they can stop taking drugs tomorrow. A grave delusion!

The facts: nicotine, snus, vapes, alcohol, cannabis, cocaine – and the damage caused

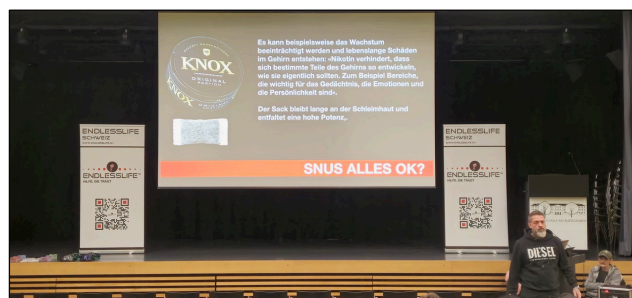
Then, one after another, illustrated with images from adverts, social media, the internet and rock music, comes information about the neurotoxin nicotine in cigarettes, vapes (electronic cigarettes) and snus (tobacco pouches/nicotine pouches).¹ Nicotine is a powerful neurotoxin. “A quarter of a teaspoon can kill a man; a carelessly discarded nicotine pouch can kill a child!” Almost all addicts had been drinking alcohol before they started using cocaine. But alcohol, too, is a powerful neurotoxin; it attacks all the organs. Many have sex for the first time whilst under the influence of alcohol. Here he also warns against the consumption of pornography: a natural encounter with a person of the opposite sex would then hardly trigger any arousal in those who regularly consume pornography, with impotence being the result.

Thomas Feuerer is equally forthright regarding cannabis: cannabis users not only share the substance, but also viruses, bacteria, fungi and parasites when passing on joints... Furthermore, most cases of psychosis among young people in psychiatric clinics are caused by cannabis. No one knows in advance whether they are susceptible to developing psychosis through cannabis use. Nor is the course of the illness predictable – whether the psychosis will subside soon or persist for a long time.

We are manipulated everywhere today by nasty advertising: A boy who feels inferior might believe that smoking cigarettes will make him feel more masculine; flavourings in vapes mask their toxicity; and sugary drinks containing alcohol are trivialised. Even legal substances have “no good intent” – they are designed to encourage young people to consume them – always at the expense of their health.

Personal experience and expert knowledge

For 38 years Thomas Feuerer has been working on the issue of drugs. It began with his own 15-year history of drug consumption, which fortunately came to an end following a physical breakdown and subsequent seven-month hospitalisation. This was followed by a strong desire to be easily accessible to drug addicts and to help young people lead a life free from drugs.



Nicotine pouches are anything but harmless. (Picture sv)

In 2004, he began his work and, in 2015, founded the association “Endlesslife” together with his mother and his wife.

Thomas Feuerer is deeply concerned that young people today are constantly being exposed, particularly on the internet and social media, to content that paints a deceptively positive picture of drug use. That is why, in his talk, he goes to the “front line of misery”, shows some shocking images, speaks plainly and is emotional. He wants young people to think about what they want to do with their lives. He makes it clear that he has great respect for them. Many challenges await them, which they will have to overcome – and for that, they need a clear head. “You are important to us, that’s fact!”

Andreas, Martin and Furby

Following Thomas Feuerer’s story and a fifteen-minute break, this morning brings the equally moving life stories of three young men from his team. The topic of bullying is also addressed here. Martin urges the young people to treat one another without scorn or ridicule. Being excluded and mocked can psychologically weaken a colleague and contribute to them turning to alcohol and cannabis. The young people present learn that many experiences add up and that it is understandable how a person becomes addicted to drugs. If they treat one another with care, this too is drug prevention. Addiction is a hell from which it is difficult to free oneself.

The three men managed to give up drugs with the help of Thomas Feuerer, among others, and are now well settled in life.

Abstinence as a goal

It is no secret that Switzerland, like many other European countries, is being flooded with drugs – today, particularly cocaine. Tons of the substance arrive in Europe from South America, mostly by ship and by plane. Comparatively small quantities are seized. Supply is huge and

prices are low. The aim is to curb the strong demand.

Thomas Feurer does not shy away from using the term “abstinence” as the goal of an effective drug prevention and meaningful therapy, and in working towards it. What was taken for granted in Switzerland 30 years ago is today described as undesirable by some “addiction experts”.

It is not about “how to handle drugs properly” but a life without them that enables teenagers and young adults to lead a fulfilling, self-determined life. They are given this opportunity through committed, reality-based education, such as that offered by the association “Endlesslife”.

¹ Cf. also pilot project of *Lungenliga Zentralschweiz* «*Nikotinstopp für Minderjährige*», and the radio programme “Morning guest” of *Radio SRF* from 8 April 2026

Excerpt from the mission statement of the Association “Endlesslife”

People struggling with addiction are at the heart of our work – our work is about providing support that makes a difference. [...]

We are politically and religiously neutral and are not affiliated with any religious institution. We ensure openness and impartiality in our work. [...]

- **Addiction prevention**

We offer realistic and sustainable prevention work in schools, youth clubs, associations and other institutions, involving parents, teachers and authorities. The aim is to reach children and young people at an early stage and give them a fair chance at a drug-free life.

- **Outreach work and emergency assistance**

We are present at social hotspots, provide emer-

gency assistance and encourage motivation to break the cycle of addiction. We support those affected on their journey out of addiction.

- **Counselling and support**

We offer addiction counselling, coaching, crisis intervention, self-help groups, support for relatives, emergency accommodation, daily structure and assistance with administrative and financial matters.

- **Community and integration**

Through events such as the Street Christmas, we promote community, solidarity and social participation for people in need. [...]

Source: <https://endlesslife.ch/leitbild/>