Teen Runaways Essay, Research Paper

Just An Easy Fix?

“How does it feel, to be on your own, with no direction home, like a rolling stone?” -Bob

Dylan

Lois Stavsky quotes, “It can’t feel good. Especially when you’re only a teenager, barely

past the years where life should be a comforting cocoon, and just before the age when you are

ready to take on the world.” (Stavsky xiii)

In most states, a runaway is a young person under 18 who leaves home or a place of

residence without permission of parent or legal guardian (Connors 18). All different kinds of

children run away; there is no one “type.” Runaways can be younger, but the average age is

around 15 or 16, which is 47%. Most of these are girls, 57% (18). These kids come from all kinds

of life backgrounds.

What causes a teenager to runaway? There are many reasons for this question. Broken

homes, broken bodies, and broken spirits have driven many of these kids to the streets. Some kids

leave home because they feel that they have to. Some feel that they have no choice but to run

away. Many leave home because of family problems. Some examples are divorce or separation,

new marriage, new baby, death, financial problems, or even as little as minor disputes at home.

Another reason for teenage runaway is peer pressure, such as sex, drugs, and friends. Many teens

are even kicked out of their own homes by parents and/or legal guardians.

Teenagers leave home in order to get away from child abuse, also. There are three main

types of child abuse, physically, sexually, and emotionally (“Runaways and Throwaways,

general”). Child abuse also includes neglect, molestation, and even non-accidental injury.

Sometimes this can get so severe that the risk of running blindly into the unknown seems less

threatening than facing another day at home. All too often, these kids are wrong.

Where do runaways run to? It has been studied that more than half of runaways (52%)

travel less than 10 miles from home (Connors 18). The problem is, the longer that they stay out

on the street, then the harder it is for them to find a way to return back home. Two-thirds (68%)

of runaways run to the home of a friend or relative (18). Many people think that when teenagers

run away, that they are alone, and that they are just running away from their problems. Well, 82%

of runaways are accompanied by others when running, whether they’re friends or loves, to

whether they met someone on the street (18).

Are runaways bad? No, they are not bad, although many people consider them

bad-behaviored. They have only made a few bad decisions and think that they have no other way

to deal with it than to run away. They got themselves caught up in pressures that they feel the

need to escape. And instead of facing their problems and trying to solve them, they choose to run

away from them. I think that we need to teach teens how to face their problems. When they have

the right tools to fix some of the things that may be going on in their lives, the pressure lessens,

and there is no more need for them to escape. Our world today is very tough to live in, but if we

support our children and try to help them, then maybe they will understand that there will be

problems, but that you’ve just got to be strong and you’ll get through them.

About seven in every ten teen runaways (90%) return home or are reunited with their

families (“Runaways and Throwaways, general”). And as for the other three, they fall victim into

violence, crime, prostitution, child pornography, rape, drug addictions, or starvation. On our

streets, the luckier runaways face hunger, homelessness, and extreme poverty. Far too many are

less fortunate. Of the one million runaway teens, over 200,000 may become involved in some of

these high risk behaviors (Madison 9).

How do runaways survive in America? Over 5,000 a year don’t survive, they die,

they’re murdered, diseased, brokenhearted, and alone. Up to one million engage in prostitution.

Others deal drugs. Most find themselves caught in a daily struggle to beg, borrow, hustle, and

steal what they need. Today, another 15 of these kids will die.

I think that the problem of teen runaways is a big social issue, considering the fact that 1

to 1.5 million kids run away from home each year “(Runaways and Throwaways, general”). The

government estimated that number will increase continually. Since 55% of runaways see no social

service agency as helpful or appealing (“Runaways and Throwaways, general”), I think that we

should advertise these programs more, like on billboards and TV’s. I know that I personally don’t

see them as much as we need to. And we need to let kids and teens know that running away from

home is not the answer and that it can only get worse. Trying to runaway from their problems can

bring on more life-threatening issues than a new mother or father, or trouble at school. You can

get help and fix these small problems, but you cannot get rid of an STD, or even death. Running

away can cause homelessness, which is presented as the social crisis of the decade (Stavsky 166).

These are a few stories in which I came across while doing my research, and I thought that

they were really sad, and so I wanted to add them in this paper.

\*Stacey Artiz Carron (15) has lived in a dozen welfare hotels and city shelters since she

was eight years old. She knows that the “security” guards are more dangerous than the pushers

outside. She prefers to sleep in the bus station where it’s safer. She has three brothers and two

sisters. Her mother left when she was four, and her father is now somewhere in jail. And she’s an

honor roll student at school (Stavsky 23).

\*13 year old Anita Santos is lying on the living room floor eating corn chips and watching

late-night reruns of “The Honeymooners.” In comes her drunk father to end her innocence and

her ability to live at home (Stavsky 11).

“It was the best of times,

It was the worst of times.

It was the age of wisdom,

It was the age of foolishness.

It was the season of light,

It was the season of darkness.

It was the spring of hope,

It was the winter of despair.”

-Charles Dickens

(Connors 97)

I think that this poem means that you go through many stages in your life,

happiness, sadness, darkness, etc. It says to me that even though you may be sad at times, it will

always get better, unless you don’t want it to, then things can only stay the same. It won’t get

better, or worse. So, don’t run away from your problems, face them and everything will turn out

alright, maybe not the way that you want it to, but anything can be better than living out on the

street, homeless, with no where to go at night. Be thankful for what you have right now. There

are hundreds of teens the same age as you who don’t have a warm bed to sleep in, who don’t get

a full meal a day, or even get to wash and bathe properly. So, the next time that you think that

running away would be the “answer”, then think again, this time about this question: “Is it really

the answer, or just another easy fix?”

Sources

Connors, Patricia. Runaways: Coping at Home and On The Street 1989: 18-24

Madison, Arnold. Runaway Teens 1997: 29-38

Stavsky, Lois and Mozeson, I.E. The Place I Call Home: Faces and Voices of

Runaway Teens 1990: 1-21; 166

“Runaways and Throwaways, General” Microsoft Corporation, 1997-2000

\*http://parentingteens.mining.com/parenting/parentingteens/library/weekly/aa

040798.html\*