

## CAMPUS

# Exposing the Straightedge lifestyle: What it is and where it came from

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University life is very often characterized as a drinking culture, with alcohol consumption accompanying many students favorite pastimes, or being a pastime in an of itself.

While it is false to assume that the majority of students are heavy drinkers, it is undeniable that drinking can sometimes be a hard thing to escape for students who have an active social life.

One particular subculture of (primarily) young people, who refer to themselves and their lifestyle as "straightedge," have made the choice to stand out and they aren't shy about it.

The term straightedge and the ideals and choices behind the lifestyle is the subject of some confusion, however. It's certainly not a new idea, but it is still misunderstood by many.

And, although straightedgers may not constitute a particularly large or identifiable group around the UPEI campus, there are a few and it's worth noting that their label doesn't simply mean that they don't drink.

The origins of straightedge (often abbreviated as sXe) can be traced back to 1980 when the Washington D.C. hardcore punk band Minor Threat identified the lifestyle in their song "Straight Edge," with vocalist and lyricist Ian Mackaye proclaiming "I'm a person just like you / but I've got better things to do / then sit around and fuck my head / hang out with the living dead / ... I've got the straight edge." In their song "Out of Step" the straightedge lifestyle was defined by the lyrics "(I) Don't smoke / Don't drink / Don't fuck / At least I can fucking think."

These "rules" formed the basis of the straightedge movement, and typify the



lifestyles of modern straightedgers who have made a commitment not to drink alcohol, smoke, use recreational drugs or have casual sex.

Straightedge has come to be symbolized among practitioners by the letter X, which used to be marked on the hands of those who couldn't drink at wet/dry events at clubs.

Two straightedge UPEI students were willing to talk about their lifestyle, including Matt Dixon, a third year student.

"I got into straight edge when I was 15. I started off as a real asshole about it but kind of grew up and gained a better understanding of what it was all about. Five years later I'm still defining what straight edge means to me. I go by the three fundamental beliefs of straightedge (as expressed) by Ian Mackaye of the band Minor Threat."

Kenny Lingley, a first year student, has different reasons for choosing this

lifestyle.

"Because there is a problem with drugs in our society and it is not correct, and there is also addiction in my extended family."

Dixon shared a similar sentiment in explaining his reasons for the decision.

"I saw how all my friends were getting fucked up and making fools of themselves every weekend. I made the decision that I never wanted to embarrass myself like that, and I figured it'd be awesome if I got through my youth and could actually remember it."

When asked about the stereotypical University drinking culture, Dixon and Lingley explain that they're both comfortable with it, saying that they have some friends who drink, but it's simply just not for them.

"I don't drink or do drugs but I don't shove it in peoples faces like I have some sort of moral superiority. I took up edge

for myself and my own health. I have a lot of friends who do that shit and I party with them and it's great. But when it gets late and the party starts to drag, I'm the dude who's holding your hair back while you puke, or driving people home who are too fucked up to drive," Dixon said.

Lingley explained that he doesn't feel overly pressured to drink.

"It's not to say that all of this drinking is binge drinking, but a large number of students I know do drink often enough. There is pressure to join in, I believe, because students want their friends to do what they are doing. I myself do not feel any pressure to drink. I am lucky enough to have friends who are cool enough to respect my decision."

Dixon said that lately he hasn't received too much pressure for his choice to be straightedge, though it was a little different in the past.

"I used to get peer pressure when I was in high school but it was always in a joking fashion because everyone knew I was nailed to the X. The only occasion I can remember of someone making a big deal about it was when some drunk dude poured his whole beer on me at a party because he didn't like that I was straightedge. After I stomped him to the ground he apologized the next day and we were cool."

Lingley said there is a lack of awareness of the straightedge lifestyle.

"People need to be a lot more aware of what straight edge is and not assume that because a person doesn't drink, they are straight edge."

As stated previously, the lifestyle is about more than simply not drinking. Dixon summed up his take on straightedge as "simply living a drug-free, positive lifestyle."

## Tattoo choices either haunting or liberating

Whitney Rose  
Reporter

Perhaps what is one of the most popular forms of permanent self-expression is the tattoo. From the age of 16, people everywhere are permitted to brand their bodies to make a statement or engrave a memory.

The unfathomable amount of intellectual growth between ages 16 and 20, however, has left some premature tattooees in severe states of regret.

Randi Doyle, 20, finds herself in such a state.

"I have a new theory and it's this: if you want to get a tattoo, you should save up the money to have it put on and also

to have it taken off."

Doyle, like many, got her tattoo on her sixteenth birthday. It's a strawberry on her hipbone.

"I picked it out like a pair of socks. 'I'lllllll taaaaaaake.....that one. That one right there, scrawled onto my innocent hip forever and ever. Thanks! Brilliant. The funny thing is, strawberries symbolize innocence and purity. Innocent and naive is what I was."

Although Doyle regrets her tattoo of choice, she doesn't think the age of which a person can get a tattoo should be raised.

"I just think there should be a mandatory consideration period. Everyone,

not only young people, should be given a period of time to make sure that their tattoo of choice is what they really want. They should be made aware of the gravity of what they are about to do." Tattoos don't only serve as regrets, they can also be a heroic form of self-expression.

Joanna MacKinnon, whose name was changed for privacy, also got her tattoo around her sixteenth birthday. She remains an advocate of the body art.

"I was a really quiet teenager and had a hard time expressing myself. Getting my first tattoo was not only a sigh of relief, it was the liberation I had so been longing for."

MacKinnon has since gotten more tattoos and admits to wanting even more. Despite her recent additions, she claims that her first tattoo remains her favorite to date.

"Sixteen is not too young to get a tattoo. We have been through enough shit at sixteen to know what it is we want. We have a rough idea of who we are at that point in our lives." Despite the above mentioned excessive intellectual growth between 16 and 20, tattoos are contingent to the individual. And if nothing else, a tattoo can serve as a great conversation starter. It is, however, advisable to have something intelligent to say.