

# the Oneida Daily Dispatch

## **Motivational speaker and comedian Matt Bellace espouses the benefits of natural highs**

### **Matt Bellace visits area schools**

By Courtney Cook, Oneida Daily Dispatch

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ONEIDA >> Motivational speaker and comedian Matt Bellace made three stops at Madison County schools Tuesday, telling students how to find the natural highs in life.

Bellace spoke with grades 9-12 at Canastota High School; grades 7-12 at Hamilton; grades 9-12 at Oneida High School; and seniors at Holy Cross Academy.

“I enjoy bringing live comedy with a message,” he said.

Bellace has been a youth motivational speaker and stand-up comedian since 1995. He has a Ph.D. in clinical neuropsychology, is a member of the National Speakers Association and the author of the book, “A Better High.”

Bellace gave his popular ‘How to Get High Naturally’ assembly to students at the three schools. He begins his presentations with a trust and support exercise, asking four boys and four girls to participate. They start off by sitting in chairs and laying on each other. Bellace then begins removing the chairs, yet the volunteers remain entwined and supporting each other.

“In some schools, this demonstration doesn’t work,” he said. “I had one girl yell we are all going to die when I removed her chair.” The crowd erupted in laughter, which stopped only momentarily during the hour presentation.

The presentation focused on natural highs and how to be a healthy LEADer in high school. LEAD is an acrostic for Lean on others for positive support; Express yourself in a healthy way;

Achieve natural highs through mindful activities; and Don't be afraid to take a stand. Bellace combines stand-up comedy, interactive demonstrations, and inspirational stories.

"Most kids might come in and think this is going to be lame, boring, and stupid," Bellace said. "I want to transform their perspectives."

Students learn and understand some basic science behind natural highs, such as running, laughing and helping others; how to identify their own natural highs and the value of using them to cope with stress; understanding the importance of having friends who are alcohol, tobacco and drug free; being able to discuss the effects of marijuana and alcohol use on the brain when use prior to the age of 25; and having fun and associate having fun with prevention in high school.

Bellace discussed how to do breathing exercises to calm the nervous system down. He explained that you can go from an emotional state of mind to a logical state just by calming your breathing.

He ended the presentation with some science. "If you do exercise for 30 minutes, that raises your heart rate - it gives you the same high as marijuana - but the high couldn't be more different," Bellace said. Laughter has a similar brain image to a brain on cocaine, he added.

"Between the ages of 14 and 20 you make the most risks you will in your life," Bellace said. "If you take your first drink at age 14 there is almost a 50 percent chance that you will have alcohol problems later in life."

For more information on Bellace, visit [MattBellace.com](http://MattBellace.com) or [NaturalHigh.org](http://NaturalHigh.org).