

Comedian and psychologist entertains in UC Ballrooms

Matt Bellace will be the first to admit that cocaine, marijuana and alcohol produce chemical highs; nonetheless, he argues that alcohol and drugs cannot compare to the natural highs of positive living and healthy choices.

Bellace, a motivational speaker with a Ph.D. in clinical psychology, performed Tuesday night in the University Center Ballrooms as part of National Collegiate Alcohol Awareness Week at UNC. He is the author of "How to Get High Naturally," and has performed stand-up comedy for more than a decade.



Matt Bellace, a motivational speaker and stand-up comedian, educates students in the UC Ballrooms about how to produce natural highs.

"The Internet has a great deal of unreliable information about drugs," Bellace said. "Many websites are pushing an agenda, and I wanted to write something novel that provided students with reliable, practical information that they would never hear in a health class."

Part of Bellace's mission as a motivational speaker is to encourage students to select healthy ways of dealing with their environment, which naturally encourages highs produced by chemicals in the brain.

A crowd of about 550 students could be heard laughing throughout much of Bellace's presentation. Throughout the event, student participation included everything from name-that-tune to battle of the sexes balancing acts.

Each audience interaction demonstrated how the human body creates different chemicals that mimic the same feelings caused by substance abuse.

For example, after only 45 minutes of running, an individual will feel reduced pain and an elevation in his or her mood, which is essentially a runner's high. This natural high is caused by the chemical dopamine, a substance also found in those using marijuana.

The Coordinator of the Drug, Alcohol and Tobacco Education Program, Emily Hedstrom-Lieser, said, "Not only can students run and listen to music, but Northern Colorado also offers a wonderful opportunity to explore the mountains, which provides a natural high."

Laughing, writing, movies and dancing all create highs. Bellace supports any activity that provides an individual with a way to take a feeling or emotion that's stressing him or her out and use that stress to raise his or her performance in school, work and life.

Karen Mariscal, a sophomore criminal justice major, said, "I enjoyed the way (Bellace) entertained but also provided his information tonight. I think that UNC does a great job of providing students with other opportunities to have fun without drugs or alcohol, but it is still an issue on campus."

Bellace's act, "Getting High Naturally," was co-sponsored by the Women's Resource Center, Greek Life, the Counseling Center, the Assault Survivors Advocacy Program, the Campus Recreation Center and the Center for Peer Education.