

February 2017

Verdadera truthfully *drugs*



Drugs

We all experience stress. It's a part of life. But how we deal with our stress--that's our own decision. For some, drugs provide a welcome escape, if only temporarily. but what are the consequences of temporary relief?

We asked readers to submit their experiences, or lack thereof, with non-prescription drugs. Many explained feelings of relief, which provided a motivation to continue the practice of drug usage, while others commented on the stigma and potential myth of peer pressure which surround it.

As a gentle reminder, Verdadera remains a neutral publication when initiating conversation around such controversial topics. We choose to neither advocate for nor antagonize any practice; instead we shine light on the stories of the individuals themselves, and we invite you to do the same.

Editor In Chiefs,
Maddie Park & Adriana Getman

Furthur Resources

Monta Vista Student Advocate Richard Prinz is an available on-campus resource for students seeking guidance in any areas, extending to personal well-being, close relationships, and more. All conversations remain confidential unless doing such compromises safety.

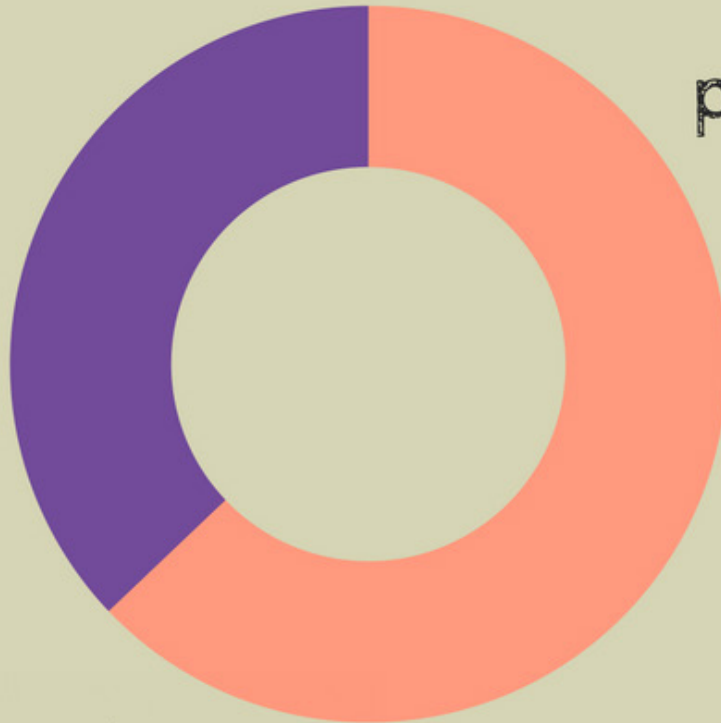
Drug Hotline: 1-877-684-4048

Refer to Scott Henrywestwood interview



Have you ever
taken non-
prescription
drugs?

YES
37%

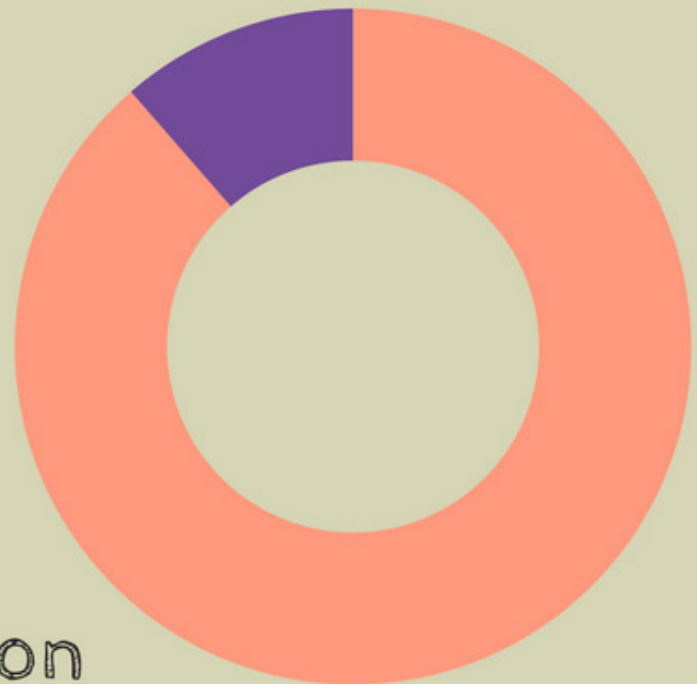


NO
63%



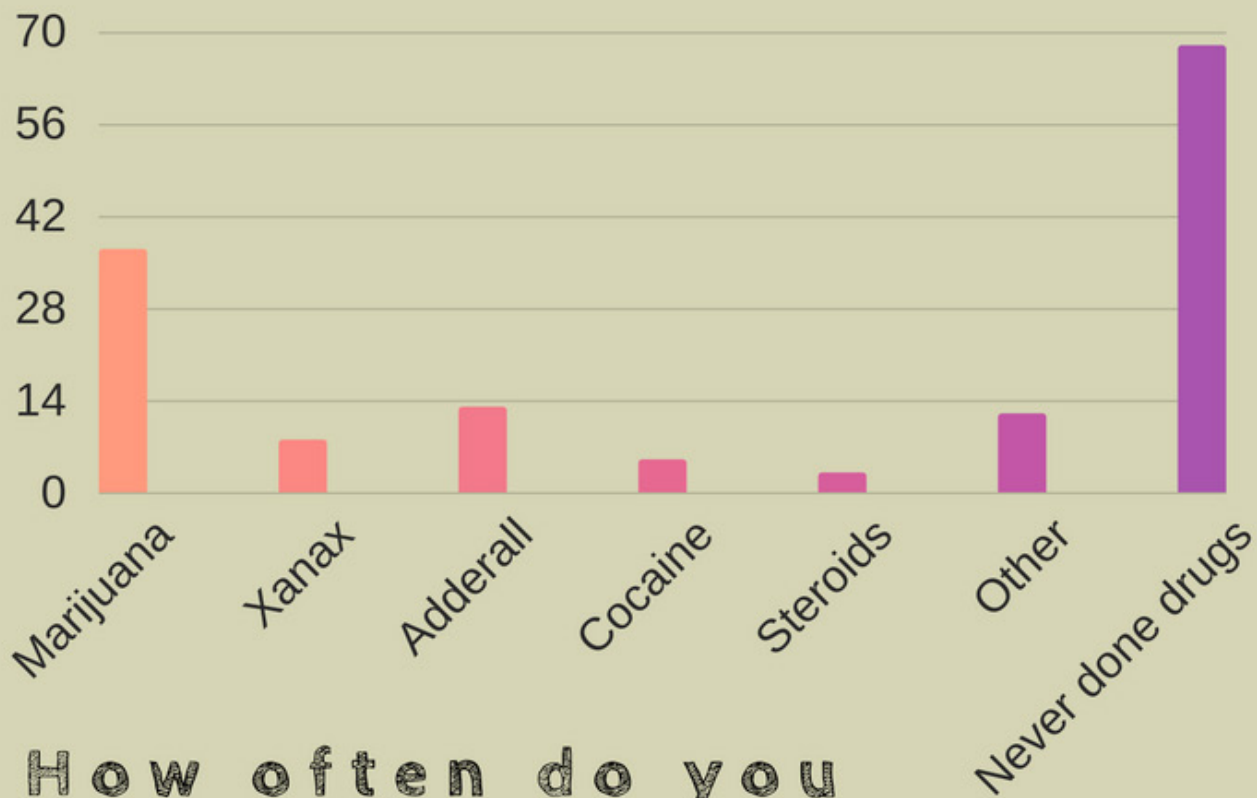
NO
11%

Do you know
someone
who has taken
non-prescription
drugs?

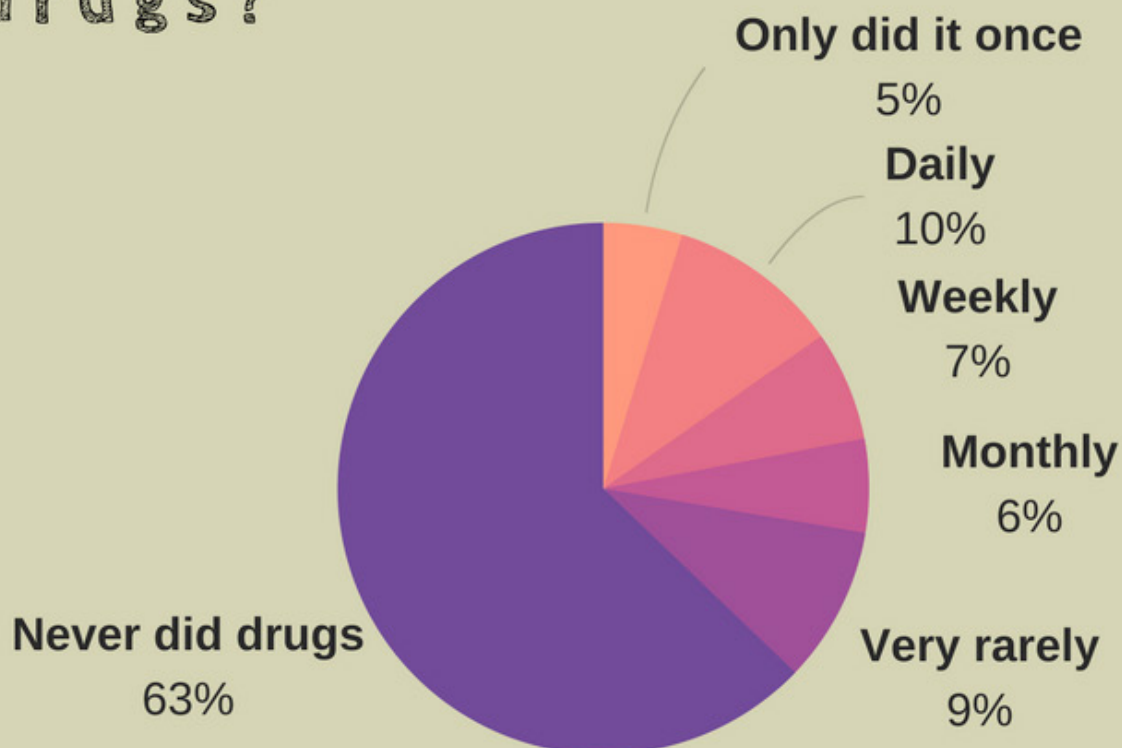


YES
89%

If you have taken non-prescription drugs, what drugs have you taken?



How often do you do non-prescription drugs?



non-prescription drugs: your experiences.



“Marijuana is a wonderful substance when taken in controlled amounts. Euphoria and relaxation are usually the outcomes, and there’s no hangover or side effects to deal with. Taking too much can make me paranoid though. Xanax is being drunk on alcohol, but without the disgusting hangover. MDMA is my favorite and makes me extremely happy, probably the happiest times of my life is when I’ve rolled on MDMA/Ecstasy. The week-long depressing come-down is worth it.”

“I think weed has taught me to appreciate the present because i used to stress out so much about the future and tests and grades which i still think are important but like now it’s more about having fun instead of always being focused on school, and like i definitely appreciate the moments i spend with friends more too. I always have really deep talks when i’m high and also like appreciate life and nature”

“My main exposure to drugs came through my friend group. A lot of my friends started smoking weed to deal with stress or just for fun. My first boyfriend smoked often, but I didn’t find out until after we broke up that he was also snorting cocaine. When I was with him, him and some friends of mine tried pot brownies, which honestly weren’t that great because the person who made them can’t bake for shit. It was so dumb, we weren’t feeling it after one, so we kept eating them and then it went from sober to holy crap I’m gonna die in about an hour lmao. Lesson learned: don’t jump the gun with weed brownies.”

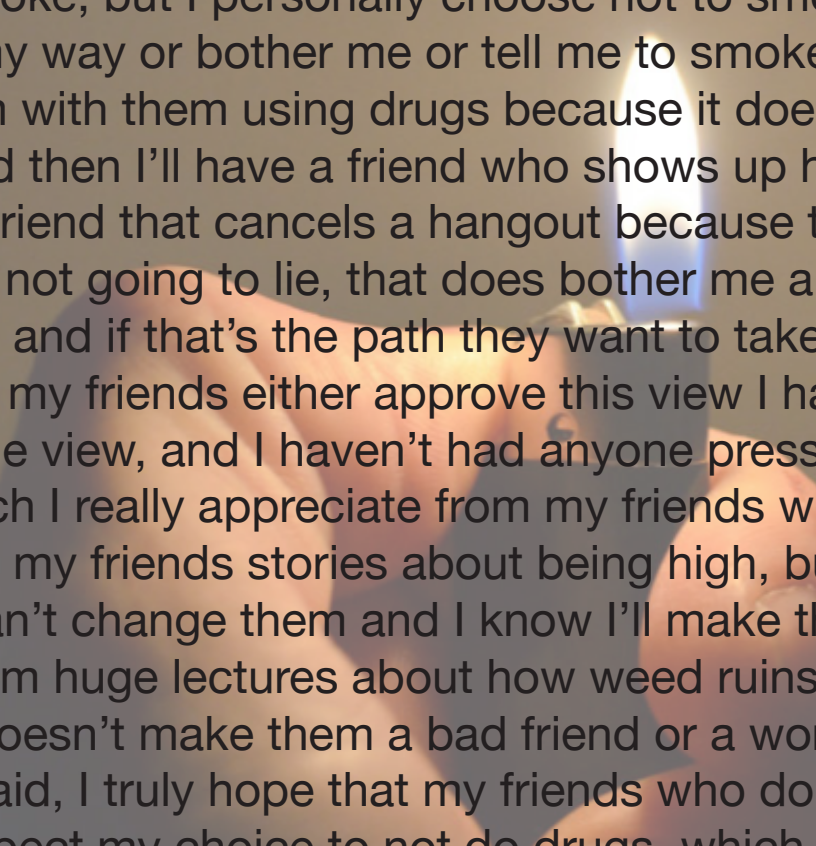
“Got hooked on painkillers to overcome sports injuries because of demands, now my pain tolerance is so low that I have to take painkillers very often.”




“A lot of drug users I know act pretty normal and I usually don’t even know they take drugs unless they bring it up. I haven’t had any bad experiences since a lot of them can also be kind and friendly. I’ve been offered drugs before but everyone respects my decision if I decline their offer.”

“I buy adderall and Ritalin from my friends for the ACT. I used them when studying for it and when I took a full practice exam which was proctored at the prep course I was taking. Later that day I felt like I was getting anxiety (at least what it felt like) i had feelings iv never experienced before, my heart rate was racing for 2 hours straight, my stomach was turning, and was extremely nervous. Side effects of adderall hit me hard. I started feeling guilty as my sibling told me how i wasted a test and wasted time, felt really bad about myself and got brief suicidal thoughts.”

“Once I had some friends who do drugs a lot and it’s weird I noticed the people known more for drugs usually are nicer to me about it than those who are less known for it. They asked if Id like to, I just said nah, and we spent the evening just chilling. No pressure. Great experience and I didn’t feel like an outsider for not doing substance. That’s hard to find, even if people don’t try to pressure you, there’s still a feeling to cave into anyways. I didn’t have that feeling, though these people were more heavily known to be on those drugs for fun. Happened multiple times. Some people I know who have gotten more of a reputation for it have often been nicer to me about it. Their usage has become nothing to do with their friendship to me or how we hang out. They’re very respectful. I guess the difference that I’ve seen is that while everyone else may see it as part of their identity, they don’t. It’s just fun for them. But then the people less known for it sometimes let it become something defining. It’s a weird concept.”

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a person's hand holding a lit cigarette. The cigarette is held between the fingers, and a small flame is visible at the tip. The background is dark and out of focus.

“I have never taken nonprescription drugs nor did I even truly understand what they were and what they did until about sophomore year of high school. Growing up, I was extremely sheltered by my very religious parents and although I had heard of people using “drugs” in middle school and freshman year, I never knew what it even looked like and what kinds of “drugs” people used. To this day, I still really haven’t seen anyone “smoking a joint” in front of me; I’ve only smelled what weed smells like and I’ve only witnessed my friends high, and that’s about the extent of my experience with drugs. To be honest, I never really approved of drugs, I just got more okay with the fact that almost everyone I knew smoked. I had heard millions of arguments both for and against drugs. Because I was raised in a conservative environment, I had pretty conservative views about drugs, but growing up in a school environment where people smoked to destress and growing up in a liberal place like the Bay Area, I knew I had to change my views. So I did, at least a little bit. Now, I’m realizing that there is a good chance that at least half of my friends smoke weed and use recreational drugs, but now, I’m okay with it, as long as they don’t pressure me to smoke. I am okay if I know of people who smoke, but I personally choose not to smoke, and if they don’t get in my way or bother me or tell me to smoke then I don’t see a problem with them using drugs because it doesn’t affect me. Every now and then I’ll have a friend who shows up high to a hangout or I’ll have a friend that cancels a hangout because they’re going to smoke and I’m not going to lie, that does bother me a bit, but ultimately it is their life and if that’s the path they want to take, then it’s up to them. Most of my friends either approve this view I have on drugs or have the same view, and I haven’t had anyone pressure me to use marijuana, which I really appreciate from my friends who do use it. I’ll sit and listen to my friends’ stories about being high, but ultimately I know that I can’t change them and I know I’ll make them more mad if I give them huge lectures about how weed ruins their body, and doing drugs doesn’t make them a bad friend or a worse person. With that being said, I truly hope that my friends who do use drugs understand and respect my choice to not do drugs, which most of them do.”



why have/haven't you taken non prescription drugs?

“Why not? All my friends were doing it, and yes, of course, band-wagoning is bad, but it definitely felt like something I should try at least some point in my life.”

“In all honesty, I always felt that there was a specific type of person who takes drugs. As I progress through my years at MV, I meet more and more people, one or two of those people having taken drugs. However, I am more understanding of these people as of now because of how I feel regarding the classes I'm taking this year. As the stress level of my classes intensifies, I consider smoking/ingesting marijuana to calm my nerves when necessary. At this point in time, it doesn't seem like the worst idea.”

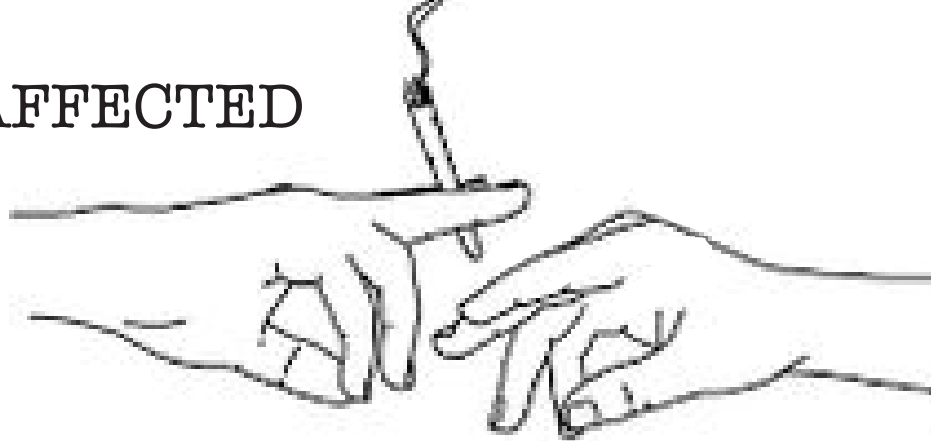
“Curiosity really. I wanted to see if drugs really were as bad as elementary and middle schools wanted you to think they were.”

“Teachers and doctors and parents say not to, and I respect their judgement. And I've seen what drugs can do to some people (pretty nasty). Also I feel pretty good about where I am in life, like I don't feel like I have to resort to something else like drugs to feel good. I also don't like spending unnecessary money.”

“I've never taken them because I don't feel a need for them; I have plenty of fun and I enjoy things without them. It seems scary to me to not be in control of yourself or to risk yourself to things like addiction. It just doesn't look appealing to me, so why try? And that's beside the whole fact of like my parents would kill me etc, plus I don't really sneak out and I really try to cherish a close trusting bond with my parents. Overall it just doesn't seem worth it enough for the rewards that aren't desired enough for me personally. “

“From what I hear, it is not very good for my health and as a swimmer, it is important to keep my body healthy and free of drugs that can have a very negative impact on my performances. It is also not a very good use of my time since I can do something productive to improve something I do or to bond with friends. A lot of these drugs from what I hear just stimulate and release certain hormones that relaxes you for a short period of time but really does not do anything to help me get to where I want to be in life and just health in general. If something bad happens, I think I would rather do something productive to set myself up for a better chance to be successful in the future rather than settle for temporary relief that wont make me any less miserable in the future. Also, a lot of people I know that do drugs dont have a great reputation since drug use is generally looked down upon so I would rather not be seen as a person that uses.”

HOW HAVE DRUGS AFFECTED YOUR LIFE?



“It has not directly influenced me since I am not a user of drugs but I have learned how to not let others influence the decisions I make like whether or not I take the drugs even if a lot of people do. So it just taught me to stick to what I think is right.”

“I’ve never taken drugs, so they haven’t really [impacted my life]. The people who instill some sort of pressure for them aren’t a part of my life. The people who are in my life don’t have enough of an identity connection to it to affect me, whether they do it or not, it’s not important to our relationship, so it doesn’t affect me. Maybe a few times I’ll opt out of a party cause I don’t want to be around drugs, but I would barely call that an impact. I want my clothes smelling like Victoria’s Secret, not weed.”

“No harm. I still have good grades, I’m still what people call a “Monta Vista student”, and tbh, the drugs give me a more wide variety of experiences. Sometimes I need to get a little loose to have fun, so I don’t think there’s any harm in that. Plus it makes me less judgemental if I hear someone smokes weed. Right now there’s a stigma that if you smoke or drink, you automatically don’t get good grades or you’re not smart. Like it’s that black and white. I’m not saying it’s right to do drugs, obviously it’s better if you don’t do them at all, but I’m saying we need to be better at judging people for their actions.”

“It’s opened my eyes a bit, because I understand what frequent users feel and their reasons behind doing it, but since I do it so rarely it hasn’t had any detrimental affects on my life or my school whatsoever.”



Scott Henrywestwood

Drug & Alcohol Counselor
San Jose, (408) 337-0530

The following is an excerpt from an article written by Scott Henrywestwood for the Monta Vista student body in regards to drug use. To read the whole article, go to the Verdadera facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/montavistaverdadera/>

Are soft drugs like marijuana ok?

NIDA funded research shows that long-term marijuana use is associated with impaired intellectual functioning and IQ decline when usage starts during the teen years. It can also impact a number of mental conditions, including schizophrenia, psychosis, depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts or attempts. Currently, the strongest evidence is for the link between marijuana and psychosis. Marijuana may be a means of self-medicating an existing or mild mental illness; it may be a marker of other problems (abuse, trauma); it may contribute to the development or worsening of the mental illness; or it may reflect combinations of the above (NIDA, 2015).

Is it ok to drink alcohol since it's not illegal?

While alcohol is legal, its usage is restricted: The drinker has to be above the legal age, and in an appropriate location. You cannot drink while driving, and many employers will not allow you to work while under the influence of alcohol.

The consequences of alcohol misuse are serious in many cases, often life threatening. Heavy drinking can increase the risk of certain cancers, especially those of the liver, esophagus, throat, and larynx. Heavy drinking can also cause liver cirrhosis, immune system problems, brain damage, and harm to the fetus during pregnancy. In addition, drinking increases the risk of death from automobile crashes as well as recreational and on-the-job injuries. Furthermore, both homicide and suicides are more likely to be committed by persons who have been drinking (NIDA, 2015).

Is it ok to experiment?

That's similar to asking "Is it ok to play with fire?" You can, but you risk setting the house on fire. If you live in California, you risk setting the entire state on fire. Illicit drugs are like all drugs, different people can have varying reactions to them. For example, some people can quickly develop a craving for a drug while others are content to binge on occasion. Certain complications appear for people with mood disorders such as depression or bi-polar disorder. Therefore, it's not ok to experiment, and risk your future and well-being in order to pursue a quick high.

Helpful resources for those struggling with addiction and their loved ones.

There are several resources and free services for those who are struggling with addiction. Alcoholics anonymous (AA) hosts regular meetings in many locations; more information can be found at <http://www.aa.org>. Narcotics anonymous (NA) holds similar meetings but focuses on all substances in addition to alcohol; more information can be found at <http://www.na.org>. There are also services for those who have loved ones struggling with addiction; Al-anon hosts regular meetings targeting alcohol abuse, while Nar-anon hosts regular meetings for all substance abuse; more information can be found on their respective web sites at: <http://www.al-anon.org>, <https://www.nar-anon.org>. Additional resources can be found on my web site at <http://www.counselingandintervention.com> by selecting the Addiction menu item at the top of the page, and following the Resources sub-menu item.



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