

REACH FOR SUCCESS

> **Ashley Wagner,**
Olympic Ice-skater
and *Ask, Listen,*
Learn Superstar

> Choices That
Lead to Success

> Alcohol and
Your Body

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A 2014 WINTER OLYMPIAN—
FIGURE SKATER **ASHLEY WAGNER**—
REFLECTS ON THE JOURNEY OF
TURNING HER DREAMS INTO REALITY.

Fly
^
Fall

Learning to Fall

Ashley Wagner was only 5 years old the first time she laced up a pair of skates, now at 22 she is a two-time U.S. ice-skating champion. After a childhood dedicated to her training and her health, Ashley is set to compete for the gold at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia, and her lifelong dream of becoming an Olympic champion is within reach.

For Ashley, it's all about the ice. Like any serious skater, her training has included falling during practice more times than she can count. But every time she falls, she gets back up and does it all over again. While she loves the feeling of speed and flow as she glides along the ice—"It's like you're superhuman!" she says—learning new moves can be intimidating. "At first, I was really scared to learn the 'death drop,'" she says—a type of horizontal flying spin. "But once I felt how cool the spinning feeling is, it became one of my favorite moves."

Learning the spins and jumps is only part of the challenge, though. Off the ice, Ashley has had to make deliberate choices. "I had to give up the normal teenage life," Ashley says. "I couldn't stay out late with my friends, because I had practice in the morning. I also had to always make sure I was making healthy choices for my body and make sure I was always in really good shape."

In addition to skating three or four hours daily, Ashley trains off the ice: exercising at the gym, swimming, doing yoga, and running. "I spend a lot of time working out for my sport," she says.

Ashley's success has come after great disappointment. In 2010, she didn't qualify to compete in the Vancouver Olympics. She was so frustrated about not reaching

her goal that she made a drastic decision: In 2011, she moved across the country to train with a new coach.

"The biggest risk I've ever taken was packing up all of my bags and moving to California," she says. Relocating to a new state was nothing new to Ashley. Growing up in a military family, she moved nine times as a kid. But this time, she was leaving her family behind. "I was away from everything I had ever known," she says.

The risk paid off. In 2012, Ashley became the national champion. She remained committed to her training and was named the U.S. ice-skating champion again in 2013. "When I was standing on top of that podium, looking up at the arena, I knew that everything I had given up for this was completely worth it," she says.

Ashley may have Olympic-size goals, but

"The biggest risk I've ever taken was packing up all of my bags and moving to California."

she's not so different from other young people. She loves ice cream—"I have a huge sweet tooth!" she says—and is addicted

to Twitter and Instagram. (You can follow her: @AshWagner2010.) In her free time, she likes to hike, paddleboard, and hang out at the beach. She also enjoys helping design her skating costumes and choosing the music for her skating routines. "I have to love the music, because I have to listen to it every single day for a full year!" she explains.

Ashley knows that her success as a skater has everything to do with the choices she made throughout her life, and she's not going to stop now!

Devoted to Her Dreams
Learning to soar on ice meant learning to fall—and making the healthy life choices that prepared her for the Olympic spotlight.



A 13-year-old Ashley Wagner, left, puts in her time on the ice at one of her two daily practices.

Going for the Gold

Since she was a little girl, Ashley Wagner has dreamed of being an Olympic athlete. Achieving that dream has meant hard work, determination, and smart choices.

Ashley may not get to eat burgers and fries as often as she'd like. (Though she does indulge in her favorite all-American meal from time to time!) And she can't skip the long training hours if she wants to land her jumps. Yet those sacrifices don't seem like such a big deal when she keeps her goals in sight. Would she rather drink a milk shake or become a national champion? Go to a party or skate at the Olympics? For Ashley, the choice is clear.

All big goals require trade-offs. Want to play in a band? You might need to turn off the Xbox and practice your drums instead. Want to become a doctor or a pilot? Finishing your homework is more important than going to a football game. No matter what your goal, saying "YES" to a healthy lifestyle and "NO" to underage drinking will help you get there.

"Think about what your goals are and what you want to accomplish in life, then from there, realize that you'll need to decide whether you want to give in to peer pressure or keep working toward your dreams," Ashley says. "Be confident in what you want to achieve and how you're going to get there—and I can tell you, underage drinking is not the way to go!"

Brain Drain

Did you know that scientists have found changes in brain cells as little as six minutes after the consumption of alcohol? These changes can create permanent damage, especially in the teen brain. Because your brain isn't fully formed, staying away from alcohol can help protect your growing brain.

BAD DECISIONS

Alcohol can permanently damage the **frontal lobes** and make people more prone to developing depression. The frontal lobes control emotions and impulses, and are responsible for planning, forming ideas, and making decisions.

LEARNING AND MEMORY

Drinking alcohol can permanently damage the **hippocampus**, which is key for learning and remembering. Of all the damage that alcohol can do to a developing brain, underage drinking harms memory the most.

SLUGGISH SYSTEM

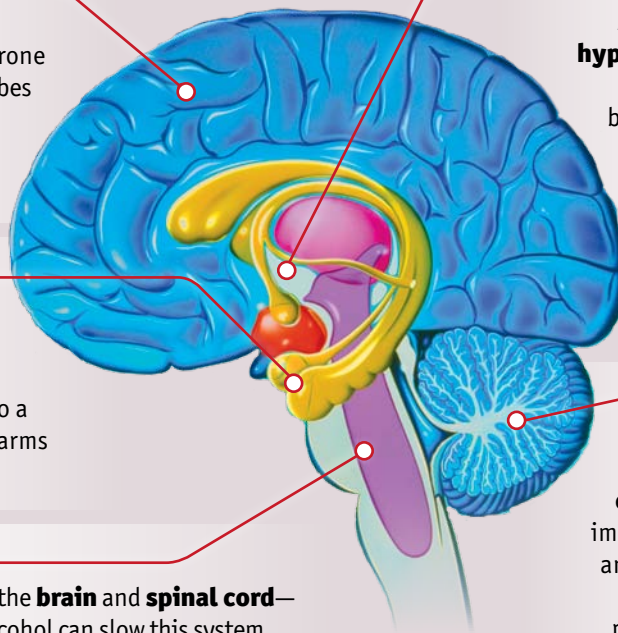
The central nervous system—made up of the **brain** and **spinal cord**—sends messages throughout the body. Alcohol can slow this system, making people think, speak, and move more slowly and more clumsily.

BASIC FUNCTIONS

Alcohol can impair the **hypothalamus**. This part of the brain controls basic—and important—body functions like blood pressure, body temperature, and heart rate.





SLOWED SENSES

Alcohol affects the **cerebellum**, which is important for awareness and coordination. After drinking too much, a person might be shaky or unbalanced.



A Work in Progress

Adolescence is a time of rapid and dramatic development—teen girls can grow as much as 9.5 inches, and boys up to 20 inches. That's why it's important for teens to make healthy choices that support their developing bodies. Whether you want to excel at sports, attend college, develop as a musician, or travel the world, drinking alcohol while underage can rob you of the things you need to reach your goals.

| What You Need | Why You Need It | How Alcohol Interferes |
|--|---|--|
|  Water | Water helps with digestion, circulation, and transportation of nutrients. It also energizes your muscles. | Alcohol increases urine output and causes dehydration, making it more difficult to build muscle. |
|  Nutrients | Vitamins and minerals boost the immune system, help organs work properly, and are necessary for growth and development. | Large amounts of alcohol can slow or stop the digestive process, robbing you of the vitamins and minerals needed for growth. |
|  Physical activity | Regular exercise strengthens bones, protects the heart, boosts mood, and can help prevent diseases such as diabetes and cancer. | Drinking can cause heart disease, mask depression, and contribute to weight gain, all of which impair physical activity. |
|  Sleep | Sleep is key for overall health. It supports your attention, mood, physical health, and performance in school and sports. | Alcohol can interfere with sleep patterns, preventing you from getting enough rest. |