

ALCOHOL AND DRUG DEPENDENCE TWO – MARIJUANA Copyright 2024, Paul F Spite

(This is based on belief in God. If that offends you, stop reading now)

In this presentation, we will look at the seemingly harmless use of marijuana.

When I was in college, something hilarious (?) happened to an exceptionally good student, living next door to me. Another student convinced him to eat brownies his mother had supposedly made over break. They contained marijuana. When my neighbor ingested them, he went inexplicably crazy. The cook's friends had a great laugh at the expense of the victim. It would be hard to say though, that a good time was had by all. (To be continued)

General Description of Drugs in this Class:

Marijuana is a green leafy plant with a special chemical ingredient. THC in marijuana is rapidly absorbed by fatty tissues in various organs. Generally, THC can be detected by standard urine tests several days after smoking it. In chronic heavy users, traces may be detected for weeks after they stop using. Pot is used for different reasons with the strange characteristic of producing many differing effects. Until recently, the use of pot was illegal, for many reasons.

Common Street Names: Marijuana, reefer, Mary J, pot, joint, grass, weed

How Marijuana Affects Users:

Marijuana users span all age groups. The drug's effects depends on several factors that include; the user's previous experience with the drug, how strong the variety (*how much THC*, what the user expects to happen, where it is taken, how it is ingested and whether the user is also drinking alcohol or using other drugs.

Some users feel nothing at all, while others feel relaxed or high. Sometimes users feel thirsty and very hungry, an effect called "the munchies." Some undergo bad effects from marijuana, suffering from anxiety and paranoid thoughts. This is more likely when a more potent variety of marijuana is used or the pot is laced with another drug.

Legitimate Medical Uses:

There are limited medical uses for marijuana to treat pain, anxiety and mood disorders. But it isn't a medicine, unless prescribed by a doctor to correct a specific imbalance.

Reasons Behind Marijuana Use:

Use of this drug is being normalized by governments. They hide damaging long-term studies in their eagerness to tax users becoming become dependent on it. Meanwhile, peer pressure to use it within certain social circles is growing.

Besides limited medical uses, pot is used to simply escape reality for a while. Users self-medicate for stress relief, sleeping problems, to feel good, relieve tension, relieve boredom, temporarily escape dealing with problems and increase or decrease effects of other drugs taken in tandem. They use marijuana in isolation or groups, including within families. When its use becomes routine, not using it feels like something is wrong. Marijuana use requires little or no paraphernalia and as use becomes common, fewer members of society view it as a problem.

In short, marijuana seems to offer a relatively inexpensive, easily obtainable way to feel good and relax, while reducing anxiety and stress in a socially acceptable fashion.

Consequences for Abuse of Marijuana

Physical Health

- Short term effects include; loss of motor coordination, dizziness and trouble walking, bloodshot eyes and an increased heart rate. When early effects fade after a few hours, users can become very sleepy. Effects are even greater when other, sometimes unknown drugs, are mixed with marijuana.
- Long term use may promote some kinds of cancer and problems with respiratory and immune systems. Marijuana contains the same and sometimes more of the cancer-causing chemicals in tobacco. But few who smoke marijuana use filters. Users develop the same kinds of breathing problems as cigarette smokers: coughing and wheezing, more chest colds and more frequent pneumonia. Animal studies have found THC damages cells and tissues in the body, protecting against disease. With weak immune cells, other sickness occurs easily.

Mental Health

- Mental effects include: problems with short-term memory and learning, distorted perception (*sights, sounds, time, touch*) and trouble with thinking and problem solving. Situations may seem hilarious for no reason.
- Taking a longer view, studies show smoking large amounts of marijuana for years takes a toll on mental functions, affecting memory, attention and learning. A working short-term memory is needed to learn and perform tasks calling for more than one or two steps.

Probability of Addiction / Dependence

Long-term marijuana can lead to a type of addiction. Some users cannot control an urge to seek out and use marijuana, despite it negatively affecting family relationships, school performance and recreational activities. A few heavy marijuana users also develop “tolerance,” needing larger and larger amounts to get the same effect.

Social or Societal Consequences

Even without social stigma, if unable to do your job when showing up high, expect to be rapidly terminated. If you cannot meet your obligations as a spouse or family member, expect to find yourself alone in short order, facing resentment from friends and loved ones tired of being dumped on, by self-centered lives made empty of purpose and significance.

Legal Consequences

- There are just a few. Selling pot without paying the government for a license can result in a fine. Just as with alcohol, you can be charged with a DUI for driving under the influence of marijuana.

The Trap Associated With Marijuana Use:

A basic skill learned by adulthood, is reducing stress by prioritizing daily and recurrent tasks encountered in life.

Avoiding stress and just checking out when life becomes difficult, does nothing to teach that important skill. It just increases unavoidable stress levels with unfinished tasks piling up to await the marijuana user, once they come back down. Using pot is not a coping mechanism. It is avoidance and failing to handle normal human responsibilities.

In addition, at places and events where pot is in use, there are often other drugs available. With inhibitions already lowered and judgment impaired, more dangerous drugs may be sampled. Marijuana is often referred to as a gateway drug, leading to more problematic drug use. This gateway claim is often met with some level of scorn. But in every setting I discussed drug use, almost everyone using pot as their first illegal drug, went on to use other drugs.

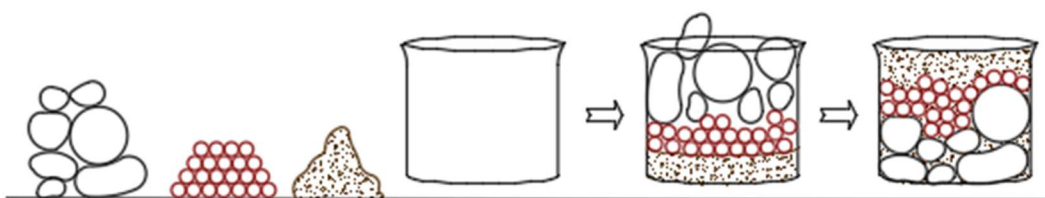
The Rest of the Story:

In the opening story, it was subsequently discovered that the dealer who supplied pot to our brownie prankster, had laced the pot with PCP. The victim, with his college career over, was hospitalized in a mental institution. The prankster, with his college career over, spent years in prison. The course of two lives was irreversibly altered. But at least a few people got to laugh.

Even without chemical tampering involved, I personally knew very few students, who used marijuana heavily and still managed to graduate from college. For whatever reason, it grew to consume their lives. And destroyed their ability to pass tests.

A Practical Application:

This simple illustration regards fitting tasks into daily living, instead of avoiding them. If we prioritize by fitting our bigger tasks in first, there will still be room for the smaller ones. With a pot-induced inability to accomplish important tasks, we get further behind and more stressed.



A Historical Application:

Finding ways to avoid responsibilities and stress is a basic human failing.

One judge in ancient Israel faced a difficult problem, with a terrible enemy oppressing his nation. If Barak had access to marijuana, he might've smoked it. He surely had no idea how to free Israel from their oppression by the Canaanites.

God sent word to Barak on how he should handle the task for which he had been appointed, to defeat the Canaanites and free Israel. Faced with an admittedly stressful task, Barak began looking for a way to avoid it. When he would not do as commanded, God gave the job of freeing His people to the woman named Yael. Now, few even remember Barak or his legacy as a coward. Which is one word for those who run and hide from problems, even in a cloud of smoke.

Much earlier in human history, all Cain was expected to do was bring an acceptable sacrifice to God. But doing as expected or commanded, did not suit Cain. He created his own solution, an alternate sacrifice also using plant life, to offer to lieu of what he had been assigned.

Like many others, Cain quickly discovered that alternate solutions never eliminate actual obligations. But avoiding them can surely wreak havoc within families. His man-made solution to his problem, led him to kill his brother to ease his frustrations. The last thing we knew, Cain was sentenced to wander the Earth until he died, cut off from everyone he loved.

Trying Out a Better Way:

If God is the way-maker as described in scripture, and all things work together for good to them that love the Lord, then there is no problem set in our path, no obligation we must meet, that is not intentionally placed there by God and intended for our good.

Running from such obligations by intentionally entering a marijuana-induced haze, seems to be a poor way to deal with them. Especially since they will still be waiting, likely with added complexity and pressure, when the haze clears.

What if instead, we relied on God for strength and wisdom? The one who promised we could do all things, when He strengthened us?



Yael Killing Sisera - Lombard

