



More than ever our children are looking for ways to relax, feel numb, and free of stress. Sadly, they've developed a culture of self-medicating to deal with problems. This attitude endangers their well being and future. Without considering the heavy risks involved with self-medicating, they put their lives in danger. More alarming are the pharmaceutical companies that benefit from the increase of unnecessary drug sales. The hard fact is that doctors do not use proper discretion when prescribing drug-related medications. Practically anyone complaining of symptoms, regardless of age, can gain access to hazardous and addictive prescription medication.

Drug education should begin at home with parents. Our children are growing up in a digital era where misinformation about substance use is often wrong. It's time for families to come together and fight the drug epidemic. With our children's lives at risk, we can't allow the media, drug culture or pharmaceutical companies to hijack, brainwash, and destroy our children's brains and futures. As a parent, you must become knowledgeable about drugs in order to speak with your children on the real "WHY" of drug abuse. Drug addiction, overdose, accidents due to alcohol and drug use, irreversible body and brain injuries...with drug abuse the #1 problem among our youth...how far will you go to save your child's life?

MARIJUANA

Marijuana is the most commonly used drug. Medical marijuana is legal in 18 states. That translates into removing **state-level criminal** penalties for those possessing a "written or oral recommendation" from their physicians stating they "would benefit from medical marijuana." BUT the amount of marijuana a person is allowed to possess is strictly outlined by the law and limited to an amount deemed appropriate **ONLY** for personal use. State laws regarding the use of marijuana have nothing to do with the Federal law. Regardless of state laws, there is no such thing as "medical marijuana" under Federal law. Marijuana is a Schedule I substance meaning that it has no accepted



"It's Only Weed, Mom!"

In my 30 years of practice as a psychotherapist and 10 years as a NeuroIntegration therapist (balancing the brain cells), I have never seen this much attraction and desirability to abuse drugs and medications amongst our youth. America has the highest rate of adolescent drug use among all industrialized nations.

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"medical use" and is considered a high potential for abuse. Marijuana remains illegal under Federal law and can be prosecuted for use, selling or growing.

Marijuana and Hashish (Cannabis) are made from an Indian hemp plant. Children argue that marijuana is a plant and not harmful. But the true answer is: yes, it is a plant BUT no, it is not safe. Marijuana is a drug, a hallucinogen (a psychedelic distorting reality, perception and awareness). More than 400 chemicals create the distortion and alteration that occurs in the brain. The main ingredient, THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol) varies from plant to plant, but percentages of THC has greatly increased in the past 20 years, making marijuana more harmful. THC remains in the body for many weeks gradually destroying organs and damaging the immune system.

YOUR CHILD MAY NOT KNOW...

- Marijuana is highly addictive with side effects more than any other drug. It destroys brain cells and body organs and is as poisonous to the brain and body, as tobacco is to lungs.
- Marijuana smoke has 50%-70% more cancer-causing substances than tobacco smoke (one Marijuana joint can damage the lung as up to 5 cigarettes that are smoked in sequence). Regular use and/or early use of Marijuana before age 18 increases risks of developing severe mental illnesses, psychotic symptoms, schizophrenia-likely up to 7 times more and depression-likely up to 4 times more, to name a few.
- Side Effects to the Brain and Body heart short and long term: increased rapid heartbeat-risk of heart attack, disorientation, sore throat, lack of physical coordination, distorted perception, hallucination, confusion, sleepiness, sedation, severe impact on lungs and immune system, poor memory, learning disabilities, temporary sterility in men, interruption to the menstrual cycle, severe hereditary defects-premature babies with birth defects, mental abnormalities, and increased risk of Leukemia), lack of motivation, poor grades, inability to understand clearly, extreme anger (hitting, kicking, breaking, pushing), mood swings, panic attack and coma.

SCARY STATISTICS

- Among 12-17 year olds, over 9% use Marijuana. Use before age 18 increases probability of psychosis by 35%. Marijuana use from teenage years (12 and up) interrupts and changes the connectivity of the brain cells forever.
- Over half a million emergency room visits are due to Marijuana use. Majority arrested for DUI: first cause is alcohol, second Marijuana); 11% of youngsters who die in car accidents use Marijuana.
- Marijuana users may decide to use stronger drugs to mask problems. Some 80% of high school children think drinking on weekends with friends and smoking pot is ok.

WHY OUR YOUTH USES DRUGS

The old world order is changing rapidly to a new way of life, learning and connecting. Technology has changed our lives and made it comfortable, exciting, and resourceful to use the internet, facebook, twitter, video games, and texting. We are bombarded with massive amounts of information and little time for human contact, communication, and affection. Technology has hijacked our emotions and we live in an era of brain

hecticness, chaos, and confusion resulting in anxiety and stress. Drugs and alcohol have become a way for people to escape reality, calm their brains and release stress. Marijuana, other drugs and alcohol, can mask problems for a few hours, but reality and unsolved problems return more intensely making us more sad, mad, and fearful. People use drugs and alcohol not necessarily to feel good... but to keep from feeling bad! As our children become more over-indulged, stressed out, impatient, anxious, and restless, the need for instant gratification increases as does self-centeredness and isolation. Human, personal, one-on-one communication is a way of the past. Children are in minimum contact with their families verbally, mentally and physically. Technology replaces human touch, feelings and connectedness. Another reason our youth abuses drugs and alcohol is a growing need to get high and feel nothing. Parents must pay attention and immediately take action if you suspect your child is struggling with drug or alcohol abuse. I see too many parents who stay in denial for years—until it is too late. ●

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