

OUR DRUG ASSIGNMENT – SUBTLE SEDUCTION DOWN A SLIPPERY SLOPE

Name: _____

OUR DRUG CULTURE

Drugs have been part of our culture since the middle of the last century. Popularized in the 1960s by music and mass media, they invade all aspects of society.

An estimated 208 million people internationally consume illegal drugs. In the United States, results from the 2007 **National Survey on Drug Use and Health** showed that 19.9 million Americans (or 8% of the population aged 12 or older) used illegal drugs in the month prior to the survey.

You probably know someone who has been affected by drugs, directly or indirectly.

The most commonly used—and abused—drug in the US is alcohol. **Alcohol-related motor accidents** are the second leading cause of teen death in the United States.

The most commonly used illegal drug is marijuana. According to the United Nations 2008 World Drug Report, about 3.9% of the world's population between the ages of 15 and 64 abuse marijuana.

Young people today are exposed earlier than ever to drugs. Based on a survey by the Centers for Disease Control in 2007, 45% of high school students nationwide **drank alcohol** and 19.7% smoked pot during a one-month period.

In Europe, recent studies among 15- and 16-year-olds suggest that use of **marijuana** varies from under 10% to over 40%, with the highest rates reported by teens in the Czech Republic (44%), followed by Ireland (39%), the UK (38%) and France (38%). In Spain and the United Kingdom, cocaine use among 15- to 16-year-olds is 4% to 6%. **Cocaine** use among young people has risen in Denmark, Italy, Spain, UK, Norway and France.

"My goal in life wasn't living . . . it was getting high. Over the years, I turned to cocaine, marijuana and alcohol under a false belief it would allow me to escape my problems. It just made things worse. I kept saying to myself, I'm going to stop permanently after using one last time. It never happened." —John

*"It started with the weed, then the pills (**Ecstasy**) and acid, making cocktails of all sorts of drugs, even overdosing to make the rushes last longer. I had a bad trip one night . . . I prayed and cried for this feeling to go away, I had voices in my head, had the shakes and couldn't leave home for six months. I thought everyone was watching me. I couldn't walk in public places. Man! I couldn't even drive.*

"I ended up homeless and on the streets, living and sleeping in a cardboard box, begging and struggling to find ways to get my next meal." —B

WHY DO PEOPLE TAKE DRUGS?

People take drugs because they want to change something about their lives.

Here are some of the reasons young people have given for taking drugs:

- To fit in
- To escape or relax
- To relieve boredom
- To seem grown up
- To rebel
- To experiment

They think drugs are a solution. But eventually, the drugs become the problem.

Difficult as it may be to face one's problems, the consequences of drug use are always worse than the problem one is trying to solve with them. The real answer is to get the facts and not to take drugs in the first place.

HOW DO DRUGS WORK?

Drugs are essentially poisons. The amount taken determines the effect.

A small amount acts as a stimulant (speeds you up). A greater amount acts as a sedative (slows you down). An even larger amount poisons and can kill.

This is true of any drug. Only the amount needed to achieve the effect differs.

But many drugs have another liability: they directly affect the mind. They can distort the user's perception of what is happening around him or her. As a result, the person's actions may be odd, irrational, inappropriate and even destructive.

Drugs block off all sensations, the desirable ones with the unwanted. So, while providing short-term help in the relief of pain, they also wipe out ability and alertness and muddy one's thinking.

Medicines are drugs that are intended to speed up or slow down or change something about the way your body is working, to try to make it work better. Sometimes they are necessary. But they are still drugs: they act as stimulants or sedatives, and too much can kill you. So if you do not use medicines as they are supposed to be used, they can be as dangerous as illegal drugs.

DRUGS AFFECT THE MIND

Normally, when a person remembers something, the mind is very fast and information comes to him quickly. But drugs blur memory, causing blank spots. When a person tries to get information through this cloudy mess, he can't do it. Drugs make a person feel slow or stupid and cause him to have failures in life. And as he has more failures and life gets harder, he wants more drugs to help him deal with the problem.

DRUGS DESTROY CREATIVITY

One lie told about drugs is that they help a person become more creative. The truth is quite different.

Someone who is sad might use drugs to get a feeling of happiness, but it does not work. Drugs can lift a person into a fake kind of cheerfulness, but when the drug wears off, he or she crashes even lower than before. And each time, the emotional plunge is lower and lower. Eventually, drugs will completely destroy all the creativity a person has.

"During the whole time I was on drugs I thought I had control over my life and that I had it great. But I destroyed everything I had built up and fought for in my life. I cut ties to all my drug-free friends and my family, so I hadn't any friends but my drug mates. Every day revolved around one thing: my plan for getting the money I needed for drugs. I would do everything possible to get my amphetamine—it was the only thing in my life." —Pat

*"I felt that I was more fun when I was **drunk**. Soon after [I started drinking] I was introduced to marijuana Later, I was hanging out at a friend's house smoking **marijuana** when someone pulled out a bag of cocaine. **Snorting cocaine** quickly became a daily habit. I was stealing money from my parents' business and from my grandparents on a daily basis to support my alcohol, cocaine, marijuana and **LSD** habits. Then I was introduced to **OxyContin** and began using it on a regular basis. By the time I realized I was addicted, snorting OxyContin was part of my daily routine. I needed something stronger—and was introduced to **heroin**. I would stop at nothing to get high. My addiction was winning. And every time I tried to kick it, the physical craving would send me back for more." —Edith*

MARIJUANA

Marijuana is usually rolled up in a cigarette called a joint or a nail. It can also be brewed as a tea or mixed with food, or smoked through a water pipe called a bong.

Cannabis¹ is number three of the top five substances which account for admissions to drug treatment facilities in the United States, at 16%. According to a National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, kids who frequently use marijuana are almost four times more likely to act violently or damage property. They are five times more likely to steal than those who do not use the drug.

Marijuana is often more potent today than it used to be. Growing techniques and selective use of seeds have produced a more powerful drug. As a result, there has been a sharp increase in the number of marijuana-related emergency room visits by young pot smokers.

Because a tolerance builds up, marijuana can lead users to consume stronger drugs to achieve the same high. When the effects start to wear off, the person may turn to more potent drugs to rid himself of the unwanted conditions that prompted him to take marijuana in the first place. Marijuana itself does not lead the person to the other drugs: people take drugs to get rid of unwanted situations or feelings. The drug (marijuana) masks the problem for a time (while the user is high). When the "high" fades, the problem, unwanted condition or situation returns more intensely than before. The user

may then turn to stronger drugs since marijuana no longer “works.”

SHORT-TERM EFFECTS:

Loss of coordination and distortions in the sense of time, vision and hearing, sleepiness, reddening of the eyes, increased appetite and relaxed muscles. Heart rate can speed up. In fact, in the first hour of smoking marijuana, a user’s risk of a heart attack could increase fivefold. School performance is reduced through impaired memory and lessened ability to solve problems.

LONG-TERM EFFECTS:

Long-term use can cause psychotic symptoms. It can also damage the lungs and the heart, worsen the symptoms of bronchitis and cause coughing and wheezing. It may reduce the body’s ability to fight lung infections and illness.

ALCOHOL

Alcohol depresses your central nervous system (brain and spinal cord), lowers inhibitions¹ and impairs judgment. Drinking large amounts can lead to a coma and even death. Mixing alcohol with medications or street drugs is extremely dangerous and can be fatal. Alcohol influences your brain and leads to a loss of coordination, slowed reflexes, distorted vision, memory lapses and blackouts. Teenage bodies are still growing and alcohol has a greater impact on young people’s physical and mental well-being than on older people.

SHORT-TERM EFFECTS:

Feeling of warmth, flushed skin, impaired judgment, lack of coordination, slurred speech, memory and comprehension loss. Heavy drinking usually results in a “hangover,” headache, nausea, anxiety, weakness, shakiness and sometimes vomiting.

LONG-TERM EFFECTS:

Tolerance to many of the unpleasant effects of alcohol and a resulting ability to drink more. This leads to a deteriorating physical condition that can include liver damage and increases the risk of heart disease. A pregnant woman may give birth to a baby with defects that affect the baby’s heart, brain and other major organs. A person can become dependent on alcohol. If someone suddenly stops drinking, withdrawal symptoms may set in. They range from jumpiness, sleeplessness, sweating and poor appetite to convulsions and sometimes death. Alcohol abuse can also lead to violence and conflicts in one’s personal relationships.

COCAINE & CRACK COCAINE

Cocaine and crack cocaine can be taken orally, through the nose (snorted), injected with a syringe or, in the case of crack, through inhalation of the fumes from heating it.

The terms used to describe ingestion include chewing, snorting, mainlining (injecting into a large vein) and smoking.

4. Why do people think drugs are the answer to their problem? What is the real answer? Why?

5. How do drugs make a person feel and why do they want more drugs to help him deal with the problem.

6. How does drugs effect a person that is taking them to feel happy?

7. Why does the user turn to stronger drugs since marijuana no longer "works."

8. Alcohol depresses your central nervous system (brain and spinal cord), lowers inhibitions and impairs judgment. What are two ways drinking alcohol can be lethal?
 - a.

 - b.

9. Next to methamphetamine, what drug has the greatest psychological dependence

10. Coming down from this drug leads to what? Ultimately why can this lead to someone committing suicide?

11. Pick 2 External assets and tell me why you think they would help you deal with your problems and drugs in a better way. (refer to 40 developmental Assets chart)

a.

b.

12. Pick 2 Internal assets and tell me why you think they would help you deal with your problems and drugs in a better way. (refer to 40 developmental Assets chart)

a.

b.

Bonus:

13. Why are drugs a subtle seduction down a slippery slope?