

# Essay: Drugs - A Beginners Guide...



On this, I admit defeat! Trying to treat drug addiction with hypnosis is as pointless as trying to paint the Eiffel tower with a toothbrush so don't waste your time. However, if this type of mission of mercy appeals to you, here are a few pointers...

Addiction is difficult to treat because in the main, addicts don't want to get better... they need their drugs in the same way that you and I need air to breathe. However, if you are mad enough to have a go, there are three things to bear in mind should you attempt to treat the untreatable.

First, the person before you is not the same person they were before they started on drugs – that individual has long ceased to exist. Chemicals in drugs have a physical effect on the human brain that is irreversible because drugs destroy brain cells and addiction creates new neural pathways. The individual with their uniqueness and their own special experiences of life, their special memories and their individuality has ceased to exist. That person, whose mother cradled in her arms and loved and cherished through childhood started to commit suicide the day they took their first dose. It was a slow death and in all probability no one knew or cared until the moment the police came knocking at the door.

The person standing before you now is someone who has become skilled in the arts of guile and deception. First, it was a few coins from mum's purse and then their sister's music system that went missing. Before long they had moved on to shoplifting and credit card fraud to feed their habit. Eventually they took to mugging or prostitution – "just one more fix and I'll give it up tomorrow." But for the addict, tomorrow never comes.

The second thing to remember is that as therapists and hypnotists we can only do two things to help those who genuinely wish to come off drugs. We can help with the pain of the physical withdrawal, which is something we have just looked at; the technique is the same because withdrawal from heroin is punctuated by recurring and severe stomach cramps.

But that is not even half the battle. We then have to instil the addict with a sense of self-respect and give them a structure to their lives and that is by far the most difficult aspect of the work. Much of this part of the treatment will have to involve others – it simply cannot be attempted on your own unless you plan on moving in with them and watching them twenty-four hours a day. Drug addicts require many sessions and often miss appointments because they are still trying to find their dealer.

The third thing to remember is, never leave anything valuable lying around because it will disappear in the twinkling of an eye.

Taking Heroin (Diamorphine) either by injecting it or smoking it (known as ‘chasing the dragon’) makes the subject drowsy. It affects fifty types of transmitters in the brain. To counteract the heroin, which in itself is a poison, the body produces the opiate morphine. The morphine floods the brain’s transmitters and over time receptors become less sensitive. As the transmitters become less sensitive, the addict needs more and more heroin to achieve the same effect or ‘high.’ As the body becomes more tolerant, the addict needs to take more all the time and the amount needed grows at an exponential rate.

At first, it’s enough to ‘chase’ it on a piece of silver foil, but usually within just a few weeks, smoking is no longer enough to satisfy the addict’s physical need. The addict then has to inject the drug directly into the bloodstream to achieve the same effect, something which in itself is indicative of their desperation. It is precisely because of the need for ever increasing amounts of the drug that trying to solve the problem by distributing heroin to registered addicts in a legal fashion simply will not work. Its substitute, methadone, which registered addicts can get prescriptions for, isn’t as good apparently, and is often sold to other users so the addict can use the money to buy more heroin.

The drug slows down breathing and there is a danger of overdose, particularly as users have to constantly increase the dosage. Occasionally, addicts score heroin which is more pure than the usual stuff which is often mixed with talcum powder or kitchen cleaner by the dealers. Discovering too late that the new stuff is more potent than usual, the body gets a massive shock and this also brings about overdose. There are branded antidotes such as Narcan, used by paramedics, but these are only any good if the user gets treatment in time. Heroin addiction is a slippery slope where overdose and death is most often the end result.

Finding the money to buy heroin is for most addicts a twenty-four hour a day operation and quickly replaces the subject’s normal daily routine. Habits that cost £300 a day are not unusual - in fact they are the norm. This money has to be generated somehow and this is usually from the proceeds of crime. There is no day off for a drug addict. Every day is the same and the monotony of this daily routine completely takes over their lives.

Because of the lack of normal social interaction, the brain develops abnormally. The subject’s only meaningful contact is with others who are also on the drug or their dealers, so normal everyday experience is denied. The effects of this aberrant lifestyle manifest themselves as antisocial behaviour, disregard for others and an increasingly insular view of the world. Because of the repetitive nature of the subject’s lifestyle; crime, visiting the

dealer, oblivion, followed by more crime, a visit to the dealer, oblivion, more crime... there is an abnormal allocation of neurons and pathways related to these, their only activities.

Because of this, addicts become less and less aware of the real world and more and more comfortable with the underworld of drugs and crime, even stealing from each other. There is nothing so terrifying for a drug addict than the prospect of not being able to 'score' or running out of drugs. When arrested, their first concern is to get bail because as soon as bail is granted they will be straight round to their dealer...

As if all this wasn't bad enough, the latest research shows that habitual use of heroin and crack-cocaine actually causes certain parts of the brain to rot away leaving holes where normally there would be healthy tissue. These facts have only recently come to light because heroin and crack are relatively new drugs — they did not come into widespread use until the 1970's and 1980's respectively.

Medical researchers are only just getting the chance to examine the physical brains of people who have been life-time addicts. Most disturbingly, it is the areas of the brain that are thought to contain the conscience that are worst affected by this wasting away of neurons. So next time you are forced to ask a druggie the question "have you no conscience?" the answer will be obvious... "No," they will say, "now please hand over your cash and credit cards if you would be so kind. Oh and I'll take that wristwatch too if that's alright... and that nice cell phone..."

In the United Kingdom, where cool New Labour has downgraded cannabis in a supremely cynical attempt to lower the crime figures, its use has increased, particularly among young teenagers. Psychologists are beginning to see a related rise in the number of teenagers suffering from paranoia, even years after they have stopped using the drug.

In South Africa, at the University of Stellenbosch's psychiatry department, brain shrinkage caused by drug addiction is being studied by a research team headed by psychiatrist Dr. Bonga Chiliza. Just like any other place in the world, Dr. Chiliza's drug addict recovery programme is desperately short of already stretched resources, but two things are beyond doubt. The first is that there is definite shrinkage in certain areas of the brain as certain types of neuron are targeted by the drugs. The second, and more frightening, is that addicted teenagers whose brains are naturally in an extremely vulnerable developmental stage are much more likely to end up with severe forms of mental illness later in life once they start messing with drugs.

The bottom line is, teenagers who experiment with drugs today are destined to become the apprentice criminals of tomorrow, certain to be marginalised by the rest of society because they lack the communication and interaction skills learned by normal teenagers. Add to that social disenfranchisement the probability that most will graduate to the inevitable life of crime, a career move that makes life so much more difficult for the rest of us, and one begins to realise that New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's 'three strikes and you're out' system has a lot to offer.

Personally, after the third home invasion (burglary) or car theft, I'd gas them, but try and get that one past the human rights brigade. The problem with the human rights brigade is that they habitually ignore the fact that decent, non drug-taking members of society have rights too, for instance, the right not to be mugged or raped or murdered by these thieving, rapacious, murderous fuckers. It has become too fashionable to blame the rest of society for the failings of an extremely tiny minority. So who do I blame for the crime? Why, the criminals. And of course the people who sell them their drugs. Drug dealers are no better than murderers; they just kill their victims a lot more slowly.

A lot of research has gone into finding out whether some people are born with an addictive personality. Most of the rest of the community seems to adopt the attitude that they would no more take drugs than they would hurl themselves under a bus. Drug addicts come from every walk of life and from every section of society although in the main, they are poorly educated or come from broken homes and generally speaking hail from poorer areas and it is these same areas that are targeted by the dealers.

Coming off heroin is like having a bad dose of flu which lasts for about three or four days, by which time the chemicals in the brain have had chance to rebalance. These withdrawal symptoms are known as going 'cold-turkey' and the best thing parents or loved ones can do is to lock them up in a room for at least a week. That way, the addict has a sporting chance of coming off and not chickening-out at the first sign of discomfort. I'm not absolutely sure that this is legal, but if it's not, it should be. Addicts who find themselves arrested will usually spend a few hours in the cells, sometimes being kept in overnight before an appearance in the magistrate's court where they are almost certain to get bail pending a further court appearance.

Most addicts admit that they were sorry they ever started in the first place but this does not seem to be sufficient motivation for them to do anything about their reduced circumstances. The general consensus is that heroin makes you feel so good; you don't even want to try it once. It certainly bestows an inflated sense of confidence on the user which is why addicts take unnecessary risks and always end up getting caught sooner or later.

Drug addiction is a vicious circle of highs and lows, arrest and incarceration. In the end, an addict will end up in prison which would be the best place for them if it were not for the fact that these drugs are also available inside most prisons in the UK anyway. The system therefore does not work and needs to undergo drastic change. If there were special units where addicts could be held for three weeks immediately they were arrested, this would give them time to get over withdrawal and leave some time left over for a little re-education. It would also give the rest of us a break and we would be able to walk the streets at night again without fear of being mugged or bashed over the head. There are over a quarter of a million addicts using heroin in the UK so the cost of this exercise is simply too much for the government, especially considering that the prisons are overflowing as it is, although in the long run it would be cheaper. Extermination is another solution but I doubt if that would get past the European Court of Human Rights. Pity.

Cocaine has the opposite effect of Heroin. Cocaine puts the user on war mode. It works on the synapses and remains in the brain for an abnormally long time. It causes both physical and mental hyperactivity and as a consequence puts great strain on the heart thereby increasing the risk of heart attack and stroke. It is not as addictive as heroin and users are much more likely to be able to sort themselves out given the right motivation. Cocaine is a rich man's drug and does not represent quite the same nuisance to society as heroin does.

Ecstasy works on the brain's neuro-transmitters and contains strychnine which is a poison. Ecstasy produces an explosive amount of released transmitters which swamp the brain creating a sense of mood enhancement. Like heroin, ecstasy permanently kills off brain cells. It encourages repetitive behaviour, including physical movements and there is a risk of overheating, particularly in the hot sweaty clubs where it is taken. One of the long term effects is bad-temperedness in the periods when the user is not taking it. Often, ecstasy use starts as a treat once a week but within a few months is being taken on a daily basis.

Experiments done on rats clearly show how behaviour becomes repetitive. Whereas a non-drugged rat will roam freely around the cage exploring, the drugged rat will go over and

over the same ground. This exact behaviour can be observed in humans at rave parties where the drug is openly sold and consumed.

Cannabis, or marijuana, has recently been downgraded in the UK from a class 'B' drug to a class 'C' drug. This has proved to be a huge mistake as increasing numbers of teenagers and younger children are now trying it. Although not nearly as addictive as heroin, long term use can cause bouts of paranoia and antisocial behaviour. Prolonged use can also cause bad temperedness and short term memory loss. This short term memory loss is permanent because cannabis destroys the brain cells that assist short term memory. Cannabis users tend to be quiet and go out less, preferring to smoke the drug at home. It stuns ambition and kills conversation, users preferring to go off into their own little dream world.

Youngsters who start smoking cannabis before the age of sixteen do not develop properly because all learning is suspended while they are on the drug. Users who start early literally do not grow up mentally — they get stuck in a time warp and are unable to learn anything new apart from how to roll a nine-skinners on special occasions.

It is virtually impossible to overdose on cannabis as the user ends up too stoned to roll another joint. Because joints are smoked without the usual protection of a filter, smoking one cannabis cigarette is roughly equal to smoking twenty ordinary cigarettes. Need I go on?

Overall, drugs are really quite moreish, so better not start taking them in the first place. There are a million other, more healthy things in life that are also moreish and much better for you. The best results come when the addiction to drugs is replaced by a more healthy addiction to something like a hobby. Even religion would be preferable to the slow, pointless waste of life that is the inevitable result of drug addiction.