

# The Secrets of Successful Stoners

An interview with  
Weed author  
David Schmader

BY KELSEY ANNE RANKIN



**I**f renowned astrophysicist and admitted pot smoker Carl Sagan could take up before expanding our grasp of the known universe, who's to say you can't lead a successful career while relishing the latest indica strain?

*Weed: The User's Guide* — A 21st Century Handbook for Enjoying Marijuana author David Schmader, who wrote at Seattle's alt weekly *The Stranger* for 15 years — and has penned three plays and recorded an annotated version of Paul Verhoeven's *Showgirls* that has a cult following all to itself — tells *Eugene Weekly* how to find the sweet spot of being a successful stoner without the lazy, dropout stigma stopping you from achieving your fully baked dreams.

**Would you consider yourself a successful stoner?**

Yeah, yes. I would think so. I got paid to write a book about something I love and that is controversial. There's still such a weird stigma about it.

**Where do you think the lazy, dropout stoner stereotype originated from?**

I think it was the racism. It was like another way to say, "Mexicans are lazy. They love this weed that makes them lazy." It was such a crude maneuver: A non-white culture moves to America, so you criminalize something that is specific to their culture. The thing I hate is the idea that it's

a weak escape from actual life. I feel like if you're someone who it agrees with, it can be a really great crutch and fast-track to being present.

**What's the difference between someone who's just stoned at work versus a successful stoner?**

I think someone who can enjoy it exactly as you would enjoy alcohol, and not be an alcoholic about it. Instead of, "I live in high land all the time and now that's normal." I mean, where do you go for fun when your pleasure is normal?

**What would your list of steps to success for stoners look like?**

Ugh, set a budget. Set a schedule and set times. With alcohol, I feel like we all learned about happy hour and "quit-tin' time" — there's a social structure. With weed, it's something that most people learn about with peers in junior high behind a dumpster. Just treat it like booze. You're robbing it of its specialness if you turn it into "all day every day."

**Do you know any successful stoners personally?**

Oh yeah, yeah. There are surgeons, *New York Times* best-selling authors and business owners. And a ton of really good parents that are not shy about partially crediting their familiarity to weed — especially around young kids. I mean, what grown up wants to go play with a truck in the park for an hour? A stoned parent.

**Do you think that smoking weed and having a successful career is a privilege? The McDonald's worker probably doesn't have as much leeway as Mark Zuckerberg.**

Yeah, you kind of have to luck your way into it. I had to be in a creative job to be able to have the life I've had, which is definitely a privilege. That would be terrifying if the market crashed — I'd have to stop smoking weed to get into half of the decent jobs.

**Why do you think that smoking herb makes employment more difficult?**

I think it's tied to the stereotype that it's not an equivalent of alcohol — as something you can enjoy as an adult pleasure — but it's a statement on your way of living in the world. It also means you're willing to break a law in most states. I grew up when drag was illegal, and if you're gay, you know that some laws are just not respectable. You have to translate them to your own experience.

**Is being stoned a hindrance in some careers?**

Absolutely. Everyone reacts to it differently. Like any intoxicant, relaxant or escape, you just have to keep your priorities and be honest with yourself about what's being lost. Especially with weed — it's more subtle. It's not, "I lost my home, I lost my job, I lost my teeth." It's, "Oh, I don't return phone calls very well."

**Does weed have benefits for the workaholic?**

Oh yeah. People don't have much time to get their grooves on or settle into their non-work mode. Weed is a come-down. Just try weed. Give it a try, and you'll know right away whether you like it or not.

**How do you feel about the advice, "Go to an interview stoned, so your employer thinks you're always like that?"**

Ahhhhh! That seems pretty high-wirey. That's the kind of thing where you're planning your life around a pleasure. That would be a red flag for me, kind of like getting a second job to support your weed habits is a red flag. Don't go to your interview high.

**Which successful stoner would you want to smoke with, and which successful person do you think could really just use a joint?**

If he were still alive, I'd really love to smoke with Carl Sagan. Before election season came, I would have smoked with Susan Sarandon, but now I'm mad at her about her Bernie stuff, so I don't want to get high with her anymore. And, ugh, I would say Trump [needs to smoke a joint], but I really don't want to feed into his mania.

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