



Opinion

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School Counselor Tackles Marijuana Abuse

By JOHN DUFF

As a public high school teacher I am faced with the enormous task of working to prevent my teenage students from becoming addicted to drugs, starting with tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana.

These three drugs are often referred to as the "gateway drugs" because these are the first drugs that young people use. They almost always precede the use of heroin, crack cocaine or "peedogs" — crack cocaine and marijuana smoked together — club drugs like crystal meth, ecstasy, and LSD, and the date-rape drugs Rohypnol and GHB.

When young people begin to experiment with drugs they usually begin with tobacco first, al-

cohol second, and marijuana third. Sometimes this sequence will begin with alcohol or marijuana or sometimes several of these drugs will be experimented with at the same time. But if your child has begun to use other drugs than mentioned above there is a very good chance that he or she has reached a more serious stage of drug use. A stage that probably means drug rehabilitation is needed.

I have noticed that many students feel that tobacco is more dangerous than marijuana. This poses an important question. Is tobacco more dangerous than marijuana? First I should say that tobacco and marijuana are really quite different types of drugs.

Why? When a student smokes marijuana, he or she becomes intoxicated, something that does not happen when a student smoke or chews tobacco.

The dangers to tobacco are primarily long-term health risks that include lung cancer and emphysema. I explain to my students that while people who smoke marijuana usually smoke less often than those that smoke tobacco, they smoke marijuana much deeper and hold the smoke much longer and harder in their lungs than tobacco smokers do.

Marijuana is sometimes smoked with bong or water pipes to get larger quantities of smoke into the lungs, which causes irritation, coughing, hacking along

with reddening of the face and watering of eyes. So I tell my students that the long-term health risk of smoking marijuana may well be as great as those found with tobacco smoking. For the person that smokes both tobacco and marijuana it could be doubly dangerous. It is important to point out that marijuana intoxicates. It alters one's consciousness. It affects the ability of the student to concentrate, recall and record what he or she is studying.

Marijuana temporarily alters the perceptions and the personality of the user, making classroom learning much more difficult. I tell my students that of all the drugs teenagers use, it is marijuana that poses the great-

est danger by distracting them from their primary in life as teenagers. That job is to find themselves and their direction in life.

They need to prepare themselves for further education, careers, and overall success in life. These are the sources of true life-long pleasure.

As a community, we must focus on prevention. This popular belief amongst students that tobacco is more dangerous than marijuana tells me we are doing a much better job in the education and prevention of tobacco use than we are marijuana.

John Duff is a public high school health teacher, co-author of *The Truth About Drugs, the Body Mind and You*.

Letters to the editor:

Live Together in Peace

We Portland Jews are horrified at the Israeli-sparked murder and terror in the Middle East.

Ariel Sharon's provocative visit to Al-Aksa with 1,000 troops set off a huge furor that has resulted in the deaths of over 100 Palestinians plus U.S. sailors and Jewish Israelis. Sharon, the man who led the massacres at Shatila, chose this means to bury the ill-fated peace process and challenge Benjamin Netanyahu for the leadership of the rightwing Likud Party. We are appalled that Ehud Barak would make a government with this man.

Rather than escalate the oppression, it's time for Israel to leave the West Bank and Gaza completely. After decades of persecution in their homeland, the enduring Palestinians will not, and should not, give up their just fight for recognition and to control their destiny.

We call on our fellow Jews to condemn propaganda that glorifies murder of hundreds by tanks and rockets, but feigns horror at rocks thrown in defense. We urge our Landsmen and women to reject the jingoisms of nationalism and Zionism from the U.S. State Department and American Jewish Committee and support the

right of Palestinians inside and outside of Israel to be free from domination and the hated status of refugee.

Only by speaking out now can we help forge an equitable solution that will enable Jews and Arabs to live together in peace, as they had for centuries past. History has taught us that the liberation of one oppressed group cannot be won at expense of another oppressed group.

Kris DeMaria, Gregg DeMaria, Marvin Surkin and Adrienne Weller.

Supports Dam Removal

The rumors with the people who "know" is that the Columbia/Snake salmon are returning in record numbers. Wrong! A look into the past shows these claims false. In 1971 over 65,000 salmon were counted returning to their spawning grounds. Now, in this "record" return year, less than 6,000 made it back. That's an almost 91 percent decrease in such a short time. Now, you tell me what records are being broken.

The worst part about these numbers is that the problems can be solved with partial removal of four dams, out of over 500 in the Pacific Northwest. It's the best, cheapest, and easiest way to save this valuable part of the world we live in.

Donna Shows
Southeast Portland

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