

“Marijuana

According to a 2011 study, daily marijuana use among high-school seniors is currently at its highest level in thirty years. In a survey conducted in 2008, 42 percent of teens twelve to seventeen years old said they could buy marijuana in a day or less; 23 percent said they could buy weed in an hour or less. Marijuana smokers now include people from just about every demographic. Marie Claire magazine ran a story about “stiletto stoners,” professional women who wind down after work with a joint instead of a martini. “They’ve got killer careers and enviable social lives. They’re also major potheads.” Use is up, and so are health problems attributed to pot smoking. In a recent year, nearly four hundred thousand of the nation’s two million drug-related ER visits involved marijuana. There’s widespread misinformation about all drugs, but pot is the most misunderstood. Some say it’s evil; others maintain that it’s harmless. Warnings about the dangers of marijuana are confusing, because they belie the experience of many people who enjoy smoking, whether occasionally or frequently, and feel that there’s no downside. Those users defend it as natural, harmless, and safe, or at least safer than[

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The first thing to say about[...]

“na causes in the brains of adolescents. Susan Tapert’s research has shown the dramatic diminution in the white matter. What does it matter if the white matter is changed, especially if the changes are subtle? Tapert’s and others’ tests have shown that the fact that messages between brain regions don’t flow as efficiently has significant repercussions. Retarded communication between these regions explains functional deficits found in marijuana smokers. It explains the fact that marijuana has been shown to impair attention, judgment, coordination and balance, learning

skills, reaction time, and the ability to organize and integrate complex information, and it compromises memory.

For her studies, Dr. Tapert and her colleagues recruited children as young as twelve years old. In one of her studies, a control group of nonusers (they consistently tested negative for drugs) was compared to a group of heavy pot smokers. The researchers examined the differences and changes in brain tissue and determined how the changes correlated with cognitive abilities, specifically their learning and memory. In another study, they worked with twelve-year-olds who had never smoked pot and followed them. Over the course of the study, some of them began smoking. The researchers measured the differences[...]"

"the past, it was generally accepted as fact that the human brain is more or less fixed after a person is twelve or so, but scientists now understand that the brain continues to develop, and, after the first few years of life, human neurobiology is most plastic—able to adapt and change—during adolescence and into one's early twenties. Drugs—including marijuana—can wreak havoc on developing brains precisely at the time they're supposed to be maturing. According to Dr. Schepis, "This is a period of strong change in the brain. We're very concerned that marijuana alters the ways in which adolescent brains normally mature, particularly among heavy users."

"And the younger, the more impact it seems to have," says Dr. Jacobus. Younger smokers—twelve, thirteen, fourteen—"consistently have a poorer outcome in the long term compared to those who start when they're older." The impact isn't limited to cognitive functions like memory. It's inseparable from the psychological and emotional development that occurs during adolescence.

"An eighteen-year-old who walks into my office and asks for help with his addiction who's been using since he was twelve years old is twelve years old," Fred Holmes says. "That's when[...]"

"chosis or some psychotic symptom, but they aren't the only ones whose pot smoking triggers mental illness. Kids struggling in school or experiencing stress at home are also highly vulnerable, Large said. "There's probably something in marijuana that triggers schizophrenia," he told Reuters. "What that is isn't clear yet, but there's a connection." It's important to emphasize that this is rare, but it's also important to emphasize that it happens—using is a risk. To protect the vulnerable from this, some proponents of marijuana use would agree that kids with mental illness, behavioral disorders, learning disabilities, or similar problems shouldn't smoke, but they're missing an essential point. When people say that pot's fine, they can't also caution, "It's fine if you don't have mental illness"—most children who begin using don't know if they have mental illnesses. Their parents probably don't know either. Every kid who starts using thinks it's not a big deal and it'll never be a problem.

Beyond the cause-and-effect relationship between pot and mental illness, it's clear that many people with psychological disorders use pot and other drugs to escape from the confusion and pain associated with mental illness and whatever else is[...]"

"users can build up a tolerance to them, so more is required to achieve the same effect. This is true of marijuana. Addictions also cause withdrawal symptoms. People

trying to quit marijuana report irritability, sleeping difficulties, craving, and anxiety. They show increased aggression on psychological tests.

It's estimated that 5 percent of people who use marijuana will become dependent on it. The number goes up among those who start using in their teens, and among daily users. But it's true that the odds of becoming addicted to pot are lower than the odds of becoming addicted to alcohol and other drugs.

MARIJUANA CAN KILL

Some people defend marijuana by claiming that it's never killed anyone, whereas the truly dangerous drugs, including alcohol, have taken countless lives. It's a misleading assertion, because it doesn't take into consideration the likelihood that pot has caused or contributed to fatal accidents. Research shows that "behavioral and cognitive skills related to driving performance [are] impaired in a dose-dependent fashion with increasing THC blood levels," according to the summation of a meta-analysis of approximately sixty studies of marijuana and driving. A thorough recent study, published in the British Medical Journal, reviewed nine studies[...]"

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