

To Whom It May Concern,

In regards to synthetic drug use, I am a twenty year old infrequent user, but I know people who use on a much more frequent basis, and amongst these groups it seems to me that there is little fear of what damage drugs will do. Most are aware of the dangers but claim either that they 'don't care' or simply that 'some people can handle it and others can't'. They use these drugs because they don't see any real reason not to.

Amphetamines and other 'party drugs' are the ultimate hedonistic activity, used in order to ensure a good time. They are an escape from the mundane reality of real life, and especially the day to day monotony of the generally banal positions of employment young people occupy.

While these drugs have a huge stigma amongst mainstream society, for the vast majority of environments that stimulants are used there is no stigma at all. What has been created for both sides is an 'us and them' dynamic, whereby mainstream society perceives drug users as the degenerates in the government ad campaigns, and the users themselves scoff at these portrayals as the misperceptions of the establishment.

While there may be people that are not functional within society because of their habits, this is most certainly not true of the vast majority; and even less true of the users young people encounter, people that form the happy example of drug takers in the minds of potential new users.

Part of the us and them dynamic stems from the duality of what is experienced firsthand: happy users; and the mainstream stereotype: the degenerate. The vast majority of people in clubs are only weekend users, and eventually grow out of their habits without ever really becoming heavy users. The heavier (problem) users are generally less social and are not experienced firsthand.

This duality needs to be combated through a more acceptant, less judgemental education. For example, if people never come into contact with someone whose brain has been 'burnt out', then let one of these people spread the word in schools. Let them spread the word of why they used, why they didn't stop, and what effect drugs have had on their life.

There needs to be a perception of the law as understanding and trying to help, rather than an unnecessary restriction of liberty. The key to this is in not merely providing the reasons against, but also the positive side. People will find out why people use drugs one way or another, it may as well be from a controlled source, and at that it may as well be from someone who has used, and is able to communicate firsthand the problems associated.

I don't have a problem with occasional users (I only take pills maybe 2 times a year, i am just lucky enough not to have got addicted) infact I think to a certain extent psychotropic substances can be helpful in understanding, or at least acquiescing with one's lot in life. If someone needs a release, then I think it is fair enough to give it to them, the problem is

when their life becomes a continuous 'release' in the form of an, even weekly, addiction. In the case of addiction, if a person is willing to admit that they have a problem, then I think that rehabilitation should be available to them, and I am not sure that it is practically available at present.

Harsher penalties for users will do nothing to deter them, and will only exacerbate the use and the market. Increased prices might somewhat deter, but only in the direction of cheaper, more dangerous drugs. People must not just hear stories of how drugs are bad, they must understand the drugs and what is actually happening, as well as experience firsthand what drugs can do.

[Name withheld]