

Speaking of Drugs

By Tony Harris
Jasper Ormond

Editors note: The writers of this article are former Drug Addicts. They are now attending a major university and work for a successful drug program.

Our acceptance of certain life-deteriorating indulgences, often allows a very deady situation to exist, unchecked. Society defines what a drug is, and the social definition shapes our attitudes toward the substance described. Cigarette smoking has become a socially and culturally established habit and is a prime example of society's acceptance of a major health hazard. Alcohol is another very good example of this. Of all the available drugs, it is a slight margin of difference between cigarettes and alcohol as the major cause of death in the United States. Cigarettes, which contains the powerful and toxic agent, nicotine, and alcohol satisfies the major criterion for classification as a drug, both being psycho-active substances.

Cigarettes are generally classified as stimulants. Nicotine, the psycho-active agent in tobacco, taken in sufficient dosage can be as hazardous as any currently available black-market drug. About half of all adults in the United States, or close to 80 million people, smoke regularly. About 50,000 Americans die each year from lung cancer, the major cause of which is cigarette smoking.

In a survey made this year for the National Clearinghouse for Smoking and Health, it was found that teen-age cigarette use is on the rise. The 1974 survey of 2,553 boys and girls show that 15.8 per cent of boys ages 12 through 18, said they smoke regularly. The figure for girls is 15.3 per cent, a sharp increase from past years. The Clearinghouse estimated there are about 4 million teen-age cigarette smokers in the country today.

In a report prepared for the North Carolina Drug Authority, from a study directed by Dr. Carl J. Chambers, it was emphasized that the best means of projecting the number of future drug users is by the number of teen-age cigarette smokers.

Alcohol is classified as a depressant because of its depressant action on the central nervous system. It is also an anesthetic, deadening pain in the body.

The effects of alcohol is highly dependent on the dose taken. A dose is determined by blood-alcohol concentration and directly dependent on: the concentration of alcohol in a given beverage, the amount of food in the stomach, and the size of the drinker. At a .1 per cent alcohol-blood level the following effects occur: a serious drop in the natural ability to react quickly, a decrease in coordination, somewhat slurred speech, a depression of sensory and motor functions, and a reduction of sensory discrimination.

Alcohol is one of the most serious problems in the country today. In North Carolina, alone, a recent study reported there are nearly 2 million drinkers of which 200,000 are listed in the heavy usage category. The heavy users appear to be males age 25 to 34 and females 18-24 years of age. According to a study conducted for the North Carolina Drug Authority, there is a heavy usage by ratio in the 14 to 17 year old age group.

Dr. Arthur McBey, a toxicologist with the state medical examiner's office stated last year that alcohol was the chief cause of death among teenagers in the 15-19 age group and alcohol is involved in nearly all violent deaths in groups over the age of 15.

There have been several studies that attempted to make a correlation between drinking and cigarette smoking. All of the studies seem to agree with each other that cigarette smoking and drinking were separate conditioned behaviors. One such study conducted at Fort Ruckers, Ala. Alcoholism treatment program pointed out that the more the alcoholics drank the more they smoked. The alcoholics averaged 49 cigarettes a day compared to non alcoholic drinkers who smoked only 12.5 cigarettes a day.

The final test of the study showed that the alcoholics who had stopped drinking for at least one month continue to smoke just as heavy as before they stopped drinking. Alcohol addiction is running rampant throughout all levels of society. Alcohol addiction is growing at an unbelievable pace. Alcohol has always been considered the drink of the older person, but this belief is rapidly changing because of the number of young persons who are now heavily involved. Rehabilitation from alcohol addiction is a very long and painful process, but it is not impossible. One of the main threats of individuals seeking rehabilitation is the fact that alcohol is legal and socially accepted. Practically everywhere you go socially there are alcoholic beverages. This fact means that the individual must control his social contacts to the point of not setting himself up in a situation that test his will power and concentration constantly, especially during the first year of rehabilitation. These facts make it very important that the person seeking help get involved with persons or groups having similar problems.

Why do people in this society experience so many problems with alcohol and other types of drug addiction. Meaningful employment is one major problem for most people. Not only is it hard to find a job, but it is even harder to find a job you like. Working everyday on a job you do not like increases the pressures of living, which are already affected by maintaining your family, keeping good health and paying bills. One problem area rarely talked about is leisure time. If you have a job you do not like, this makes you tense and strained just simply trying to deal with it everyday. Once you leave work and begin to operate on your own time, what you do with this time is very important. Many people prefer to do nothing or very little after work, often calling this lack of activity relaxing.

People who seem dedicated to their jobs because they seem to be working all the time, and never seem to have time to play are very frustrated people and are very non-living. Extreme business whether at school or college, or market, is a symptom of deficient vitality. Some people have dwarfed and narrowed their lives to all work and no play. It is not by any means certain that a man's business is the most important thing he has to do. Unless we have the right values, interests, skills, and opportunities to use increasing free time constructively, there will be more boredom, despair, and pessimism as well as submission to destructive stimuli like alcohol and tobacco.

For too long now, we have approached cigarette smoking and the drinking of alcohol from the basic principle of "diverted gaze" in their relevance to other drugs. If we would stop a minute and look around us at our family, friends, and the community, we will see the evidence of human destruction caused by these two negative human dependencies. The black community has especially been plagued by the alcohol problem. Any comparison of the number of black lives that have been destroyed and are being destroyed daily by alcohol opposed to the more publicized drugs, such as heroin, would show the destructive effects of alcohol in our communities overshadows all of the other drugs. It is time that we as human beings divert our gazes in the direction of those negative factors that have been accepted by society.

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What Can You Be Arrested For?

1. A Felony - A serious crime which may be punishable by death or imprisonment in the state prison for more than one year. For example, murder, robbery or burglary are considered felonious offenses.

2. A Misdemeanor - any other crime punishable by imprisonment for less than one year, for example, disorderly conduct, trespass, assault and battery.

3. Violation of a City Ordinance, for example, violation of the housing code, or violation of zoning ordinances.

4. A Traffic Violation - for example, speeding, reckless driving and drunken driving.

Do you know that a policeman may arrest you:

a. When he has a warrant for your arrest?

b. When he sees you commit a felony or misdemeanor?

c. When he has reason to believe that a felony misdemeanor has been committed and that you are the guilty party.

What is a warrant?

A warrant is an order for your arrest by a judge or clerk of court. If a policeman has a warrant for your arrest, he must tell you that he has it.

Can the police use force to arrest you?

If you resist arrest, a policeman can use as much force as is necessary to arrest you.

However, once you have been restrained, he cannot continue to use force. An officer may break open a door or window to make an arrest or to serve a warrant, if you refuse to admit him.

What if you are innocent? Even if you think you are not guilty, it is a crime to resist a policeman who arrests you.

Do you have to submit to a search?

A police officer may search you and your automobile, if you are in your automobile: a. When he arrests you. b. If he stops you for questioning because he reasonably believes that you are committing or about to commit a crime, and he has reason to believe that you are armed and dangerous.

But remember that a police officer does not have the right to go your home and make a search, unless he first gets a SEARCH WARRANT, issued by a proper court.

What happens after you are arrested?

After you are arrested, you are taken to the police station. You have a right to talk with a lawyer immediately and in most cases to be released on bail.

What if you do not have a lawyer?

If you do not have a lawyer, and do not know how to find one to help you, you can call the Legal Aid Society of Forsyth County, Telephone: 723-4301.



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