

DRUGS, A SHORT INTRODUCTION

VARIOUS PROFESSIONAL CONTRIBUTORS

The taking of illegal drugs and drugs not prescribed by a doctor can cause serious emotional and physical harm; it can lead to addiction and create social problems and put a burden on Health services, ruins relationships and breaks up marriages and friendships.

Drug addicts must not be unfairly condemned. Nor should well-intentioned Christians and other people seek to help users and tell them what to do since professional help is required which is beyond the scope of those who are not qualified since addicts require specialised treatment.

The most serious drugs are:

Heroin also known as smack, skag and junk. As with most illegal drugs these causes euphoria (a high), affects the nervous system almost immediately after taking it. Users can fail to use sterile equipment which can cause infection to the heart, liver and kidneys

Cocaine also known as snow, flake, coke, crack and blow. Cocaine affects the chemicals to the brain and the chemicals associate with pleasure and movement. Causes euphoria, increase in body temperature and heart rate, constricts blood vessels; can result in paranoia and hallucinations and disconnection with reality. Can cause coma and death.

Barbiturates also known as yellow jackets, red, blues, Amys and rainbow They cause light-heartedness, dizziness, drowsiness and unsteadiness can result in bleeding mouth sores, chest pain and depression which could lead to coma and death.

Street Methadone. Methadone can be prescribed by a doctor as a treatment for narcotic addiction. Street Methadone has a high risk of coma and death. It can cause breathing difficulties, affects the eyes, ears nose and throat, constipation, damage to heart and blood vessels, low blood pressure and disorientation

Alcohol affects body and mind as well as talking and walking. Causes saying and doing things you do not mean; produces nausea, sickness and diarrhoea; creates hangovers; can seriously damage lungs produce cancer usually of the oral and digestive system, pancreatic and diabetes as well as serious mental health problems and depression. It is the major cause of cirrhosis of the liver.

Ketamine a powerful hallucinogen known as Special K. Hallucinogens can be psychedelics which alter perception and can cause trances; they can be dissociates which blocks signals to the brain; they can be deleriants which affects the nervous system causes delirium with acute confusion and rapid changes to the brain. It causes dizziness, hearing impairment, hypertension, tachycardia, vomiting. euphoria, vivid dreams and nightmares, illusions and hallucinations. It is used with humans and animals often as a general anaesthetic

Benzodiazepines powerful sedatives/ it is used to treat alcohol dependence, seizures, anxiety, panic. agitation and insomnia. It is a muscle relaxant and can cause drowsiness, dizziness and a lack of concentration and alertness. The lack of co ordination can lead to falls and injuries. It impairs driving because of its calming effects. Addiction can lead to coma and death.

Amphetamines increases wakefulness and focus and limits fatigue and appetite. It enhances performance but can produce constriction of the blood vessels, blood shot eyes, flushes, tachycardia, hypertension, fever, diarrhoea, constipation, twitching, insomnia, palpitations, convulsions, stroke, coma, heart attack and death.

Tobacco is said to be the greatest cause of preventable death and can lead to heart and lung disease with smoking a major risk. It can produce pulmonary disease, emphysema and cancer of the lungs, larynx and mouth and pancreatic cancer. It can shorten life, cause renal failure, impotence, infertility and serious psychological problems

Buprenorphine is used to treat addiction and particularly detoxification. It is akin to methadone and has similar side effects.

Cannabis which includes marijuana produces relaxation and euphoria but also introspection, paranoia, anxiety, increased heart rate, liver damage and increased hunger.

Solvents the inhalation of glue, nail polish, paint, hair spray etc. This can cause intoxication, drowsiness and confusion. People can become aggressive, take risks and have accidents which can be fatal. Gas fuels are a major cause of death. Butane gas in lighters can cause irregular heart beat.

4-MTA 4-Methylamphetamines is a strong drug that can cause hyperthermia and death because of resultant organ failure

LSD Lysergic acid diethylamide causes many problems such as pupil dilation, numbness, weakness, nausea, elevated blood sugar, increased heart rate, jaw clenching, perspiration, sleeplessness and tremors. The Beatles had a song Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds which made no sense until you take the first letter of each noun and come up with LSD

Methylphenidate such as Ritalin stimulates nervous system. It is a treatment for ADHD but can cause abdominal pain, chest pain, anxiety, blood pressure, dizziness, euphoria, headaches, nausea, tachycardia and skin disorders

Anabolic steroids produce hypersexuality but also produces aggression, hypomania (unstable moods with over-excitability), severe depression and even suicide.

GHB Gamma hydroxybutyrate stimulates nervous system known and is known as the date rape drug. It is yet another illegal drug causing drowsiness, nausea, agitation, visual disturbance, poor breathing, amnesia, unconsciousness and death.

Ecstasy is an amphetamine drug with hallucinogenic power. It produces energy and awareness and develops temporary feelings of love for strangers and produces anxiety, panic attacks, confusion, paranoia and psychosis.

Alkyl nitrates referred to as poppers are used to increase and enhance sexual activity. It increases heart rate, euphoria and eye damage. Swallowing it in liquid form can cause death.

Khat an amphetamine-like stimulant which makes you more alert, happy and talkative. Causes insomnia and mental health problems and being out of touch with reality

Painkillers are not always regarded as addictive but they can be

Those who are addicted to pain killers can live a life described as hell on earth as described in some medical videos.

Several Detox units and from the medical profession that all, or most painkillers are derived from heroin and that the painkiller Fentanyl is more powerful than heroin.

There are some painkillers that you can only take for up to eight a day and only have them for three days at the most, since they are addictive. Such warnings are on the packet.

They may cause constipation and then some people might take purgatives as a result. The painkillers can also cause back pain similar to wanting to go to the toilet when there is no need.

They have dreadful side effects like wanting to run away and to move to start afresh somewhere else. That does not solve the problem. The drugs can cause sufferers to misinterpret comments made to them and to be hateful and violent to their friends. They can become and remain confused, muddled and even aggressive to those they love and even say that they do not love their friends. They are often unable to commit to a relationship even with someone that loves them deeply and will treat them badly.

Some addicts in the USA have been prosecuted at law for forging doctors prescriptions to obtain drugs. Drugs containing codeine can be purchased over the counter and these can be especially very dangerous.

Many women take such painkillers for menopausal problems and, thereafter, they cannot shake off the use of such drugs having become addicted to them.

Some of these drugs are used for pain control for patients with cancer. The suggestion that only morphine is used in the treatment for cancer is not so.

Dependence on painkiller drugs can cause both emotional and physical pain and suffering. It can cause irrationality and personality changes and is not only hell for them themselves, but also for the people close to them who may suffer abuse and rejection. The sufferer may change their minds about some issues in a very short space of time and be at odds with what they have said before, thus causing loved ones and friends to despair. They can have illusions and believe in things that have not happened and falsely accuse people and persist in these false accusations.

Sadly, sometimes the addict will choose to have no further contact with a loved one and treat them with disdain perhaps accusing them of not understanding them or interfering or controlling them when they are only trying to help.

The taking of such drugs is really self-harm being self-inflicted abuse.

There are Detox programmes some of which apparently have a good success rate.

Drug addiction is a mental problem although sufferers may refute this.

In Christian circles, there are those who believe that they are competent to help when they are not qualified to do so and they can increase the problems. Well-intentioned Christians do not realise that addicts need professional help. Prayer and support is not enough.

There are also those who say that they are helping the addict by supplying them with these dangerous drugs and encouraging them to take them. They are certainly not friends of the addict and, to say the least, they are acting irresponsibly.

Often the addict will attach themselves to other people with problems such as loneliness and being misunderstood. They may become involved in a variety of subjects which may engender other problems.

We know of many who, in their childhood, had problems perhaps with a family member and, consequently, take drugs believing that these drugs will take away the emotional and physical pain,

but it does not. People with depression can take drugs, not necessarily painkillers, in the belief that these drugs can alleviate their symptoms.

Sleeping tablets are not said to be addictive although some doctors will disagree. If patients forget to take them they can experience some of the problems mentioned above. It is therefore necessary that they keep to the prescribed amount.

The question is asked, Why do people take dangerous and harmful drugs?

The answers are:

They are fun

Others are doing it and I do not want to miss out and be considered different.

My favourite pop group takes drugs and I want to be like them. I will do anything they say and do what they do.

They give a sense of being high, a real feeling of euphoria.

They are a way to get real excitement and pleasure.

They dispel inhibition and give a sense of freedom. It is a buzz.

Have seen the pleasure that others have experienced from taking them.

Children and young people are more confident after taking them.

But what about the risks?

I could die tomorrow and be knocked down and killed in a road accident.

If I am caught in possession and go to Court, so what ?

Where this becomes grossly immoral is the amount of money traders accumulate in the sale of such drugs and that they do not care about the consequences and the dreadful deaths drugs caused.

Drugs are classified. Class A drugs are the most dangerous

Class A ecstasy, LSD, heroin, cocaine.. possession of which can mean up to seven in prison

Class B amphetamines, cannabis, methylphenidates.. possession of which can mean a prison sentence of up to five years

Class C tranquillisers, some painkillers, GHB, Ketamine.. possession of which can mean a prison sentence of two years.

Some drugs are used for recreational purposes and the word recreational is a misnomer. Even some Class A drugs are used recreationally such as cocaine, sometimes called crack, ecstasy and LSD but if you are caught in possession of them you can still be charged with the offence of possession.

Perhaps we should mention magic mushrooms which have hallucinogenic effects when eaten resulting in similar effects as LSD with a risk of poisoning and death.

Caffeine is found in coffee, tea, soft drinks, chocolate, nuts and certain medicines. Caffeine is a stimulant which can affect the body's metabolism. Two to four cups a day will not harm you but too much caffeine can make you restless, anxious and irritable. It may prevent you from sleeping and cause headaches, abnormal heart rhythms and other problems.

The dealing in illegal drugs is a global black market. In 2003 the drug trade was estimated at worth six billion pounds.

The effects of the drug trade are damaging society and the nations economies. The cost of dealing with drugs and resultant crime in the UK is estimated at 16 billion pounds a year.

Among dealers and addicts there is serious crime including murder especially in the third world.

Pop stars and their fans are often drug addicts.

In the USA, it is said that 10% of murders are said to be drug related. In the UK it is claimed that 85% of shoplifting crime is drug related and 75% of burglaries and 54% of robberies.

To pay for drugs is the main reason why such crimes are committed and why many women are prostitutes.

This is all immoral.

As we have said drugs are linked to pop music. Consider the pop stars that had serious drug problems: Whitney Houston, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Elvis Presley, Amy Winehouse, Jim Morrison, Kurt Cobain, Johnny Cash, and, at least, three members of the Rolling Stones namely Mick Jagger, Keith Richards and Brian Jones. Ossie Osbourne and The Beatles

Many pop stars have died from overdoses and suicide because of drugs.

Is it possible to calculate the effect that such pop stars have on their young audiences ?

Many drug addicts develop serious mental health problems. 2 % of people in the UK have serious mental health problems.

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