

Why do teens do drugs? Here are some answers

By Ken Moffatt and
by Dennis Bernardi

A recent survey (1985) conducted by the Addiction Research Foundation reports that 71.8 per cent of Northern Ontario students in grades 7 to 13 use alcohol, 26.3 per cent use tobacco, and 25 per cent use cannabis.

The percentages for other drugs are smaller; for example, medical barbiturates (11.3), speed (3), glue (1.6), medical tranquilizers (5.1), LSD (8.8) and cocaine (4.5).

These 1985 figures differ very little from the survey results published in 1983. Nevertheless, there is considerable concern voiced by virtually all categories of the adult world regarding drug use by teens.

Why are they using drugs? How much and when? Where? Is it serious? What can be done about it? In the next several articles of this series we will examine these and other questions related to youth and drugs.

Let me introduce the subject by making two statements off the top: (1)

our society is heavily oriented to drug use and influences its citizens, young and old alike, to resort to drug use of various kinds--to go for the quick fix; and (2) drug use by young people is heavily influenced by the drug-using example of older generations. There is not much difference in the reasons for and the extent of drug use by youth and adults.

That having been said, let's look at a half dozen reasons why teenagers use drugs and in the process, gain some perspective on adult drug use. (Alcohol is included as a drug in these deliberations.)

(1) Curiosity

Adolescents tend to be very curious people. They like to experiment with adult behaviours and are constantly exposed to the examples of the adult world through their family and community interactions and by way of the media.

Experimentation with drug use does not by itself indicate an addiction problem. Consistent use of drugs with accompanying degeneration of behaviour and relationships, does!

(2) Family Problems

A teenager's drug consumption can be influenced by family turbulence caused by divorce, death, parental conflict, discovery of an extra-marital affair and parental drug problems as well as many other anxiety-provoking situations.

(3) Peer Pressure

Teenagers generally have a profound need to belong to a peer group. Some of these groups almost require drug use as a pre-requisite for membership and may reject someone who does not, for example, drink alcohol.

Getting drunk sometimes constitutes a requirement for belonging. Not all peer groups go to this extreme of course, and some emphasize abstinence.

But heavy media advertising reinforces the connection between drinking and belonging, social status, attractiveness, and power among peers.

(4) Adolescent Problems

Adolescence is a transitional time between childhood and adulthood. Every teenager struggles with: trying to establish his or her identity; maintain membership in a peer group; determine career goals as well as intellectual, moral and spiritual beliefs.

Sometimes the struggle for individuality entails a degree of rebellion. In a nutshell, adolescence is a naturally turbulent time often fraught with conflict and stress. Some young people abuse drugs in an effort to cope.

(5) Building Confidence

Being stoned removes a person mentally from daily struggles. Both stimulants and depressants help many users gain the illusion of being capable of resolving the conflicts and problems which they face. They feel a sense of power over their destinies which is absent when they are not under the influence.

This conferring of a sense of power is an extremely enticing aspect of drug consumption which, over the long haul, undermines the willingness and ability to deal concretely

and directly with problems. It is a killing thing.

(6) Hopelessness

Some teenagers feel so depressed, disorganized and helpless that they become severely isolated and disturbed. Alcohol, valium, PCP, barbiturates, and narcotics take away the individual's agonized feelings for a time.

The severely disturbed teenager often takes drugs,

not to feel good, but to avoid encountering chronic nightmarish negative emotions like anxiety, fear, inadequacy, and helplessness.

In the long run, the use of drugs multiplies the problems and the emotional nightmares, even leading some individuals to seek peace in death.

Conclusion

Adolescence has always been a difficult time for some. But in the past, family units in our society were generally stronger.

A strong family unit is the greatest source of support for an adolescent. Within that family unit, the youngster should be part of a secure environment, featuring positive adult mod-

els. This does not mean perfect or permissive, adult models. When parents are concerned, and take the time and trouble to act on that concern, their efforts are usually rewarded.

Do you have questions or comments? Write to the Addiction Research Foundation, 104-1265 Arthur Street East, Thunder Bay, Ontario, P7E 6E7 or call 622-0607.



Bench Donated

Jack Paterson of the local Disability Action Group recently saw a need for an outdoor bench at the McCausland Hospital in Terrace Bay, so he commissioned Harry Gusul to build it while Joe Marcella donated a plaque for it. The bench was recently don-

ated to the hospital and put up just outside the main entrance. Seen here are four members of the Action Group in a photograph taken on August 28. From left to right are Jack Paterson, Elizabeth McLean, Gertrude Cotton, and DAG Chairman Rod Thompson.

Protection Program

A new program designed to protect Ontario's inland lakes from further contamination and to restore environmentally damaged lakes was announced on August 22 by Ontario Environment Minister Jim Bradley.

The inland lakes management program, called Living Lakes Ontario, rep-

resents an increased effort by the Ministry to deal with specific problems in Ontario's quarter-million lakes, a Ministry release noted.

A wide range of studies will be undertaken on major lake systems affected by various forms of pollution. These include toxic rain, industrial and municipal pollution, and nutrients and contaminants in land runoff, the release added.

"The economic value and importance of these lakes as sources of drinking water is tremendous," the Minister explained.

He said the program will seek ways to identify and reduce contaminants entering lakes, and degrading their water quality and aquatic life.

"The ultimate goal is a specific management plan for each lake at risk, setting out what controls are needed to rehabilitate our inland waterways," he said.

Inland lakes and rivers serve as sources of drinking water for about two million Ontario residents.

The strengthened emphasis on abating pollution at source was recently demonstrated in the Ministry's Countdown Acid Rain Program which was announced by Bradley last year.

Measures contained in this program will, by 1994, slash by nearly two-thirds the amount of sulphur dioxide produced by Ontario's four biggest sources.

The Inland Lakes Program will be undertaken in co-operation with public interest groups and cottagers' associations, as well as other government agencies interested in lake management and development.

"The only purpose for which power can be rightly exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant...Over himself, over his mind and body, the individual is sovereign."

John Stuart Mill
"On Liberty" (1859)

MEMORIAL for GEORGE GOODCHILD

Passed away September 1, 1985
We did not know that morning
what sorrow that would bring
The bitter grief, the shock severe
To part with one so dear.
You bid no farewell or even said goodbye
For you were gone before
We knew it and only God knows why.
Ever remembered & sadly missed
by Wife Violet &
Sons & Daughters

IN MEMORIAM

RICHARDSON - In loving memory of our dear son and brother David who passed away September 6, 1985.

They say time heals all sorrow
and helps us to forget
But time so far has only shown
how much we miss you yet.
Our heart still aches in pain
and silent tears still flow
What it meant to lose you
no one will ever know.

Sadly missed forever remembered
Mom, Dad, Janet, Bruce,
Donna & Family

Schreiber Legion

Mixed Dart League

will be starting

September 12
at 8:00 p.m.

All people interested to join sign up at the Legion in Schreiber

Winner 50/50 Draw

Winner of the Ladies Golf Club 50/50 draw was
Bill Campbell Jr.
of Schreiber.

Thanks to all who bought tickets and supported the Ladies Golf Club.

The McCausland Hospital has a September 12, 1986 opening for:

CASUAL REGISTERED NURSE

The successful applicant must be registered in Ontario, and be willing to work rotating shifts. Previous experience preferred.

Closing date for applications **September 10th, 1986.**

Applications are to be forwarded to:

Mrs. Betty Anne Klassen
Clerical Supervisor
Administration
The McCausland Hospital
Terrace Bay, Ontario
P0T 2W0

The C.N.I.B. Mobile Eye Care Unit

will be at the McCausland Hospital in Terrace Bay the week of **September 22 - 26.**

If you would like an appointment to see our Ophthalmologist

Please Call
824-2413

Sponsored by the
Terrace Bay Schreiber Kinsmen

Attention:

All midget aged hockey players Terrace Bay & Schreiber.

There will be a meeting Friday, **September 5 at 6:30 p.m. at the Schreiber Arena.**

For more information contact:
John at **824-2411** or **824-3488.**