

## Marijuana Legalization

What's not being said

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## Reasons for legalization

- 1) The state benefits from increased taxes and jobs.
- 2) There are medical benefits from marijuana use.
- 3) It's harmless.
- 4) It's natural.
- 5) Other countries have legalized it.
- 6) It's a cheap renewable base product. I.e. hemp products.
- 7) Famous people use it so it must be OK.
- 8) Using promotes creativity.
- 9) It enhances experiences.
- 10) There will be more peace in the world.

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Has everyone heard these arguments?

- As with any argument, there's some truth to these statements.

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Marijuana is not a drug.

- True or false?

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**TRUE**

- Marijuana is a plant.
- It contains a drug called Delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol which we Refer to as THC.

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**How THC works in the brain.**

- THC attaches to cannabinoid receptors, disrupting mental and physical functions.
- It effects memory and attention.
- It also effects functioning of the cerebellum and basil ganglia resulting in impaired balance, coordination and reaction time.
- It also causes psychosis in longterm users and some new users who unknowingly ingest large amounts.
- It activates the reward system to release high levels of dopamine.
- It effects all of our senses, decision making reactions, and light sensitivity.

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As professionals, we need to respond with the facts.

- 1) The state benefits from increased taxes and job growth.
- That argument has been used for gambling, alcohol, etc. Remember the promise of better schools by legalizing gambling? Still waiting. Meanwhile, the problems associated with gambling; increased suicide, bankruptcy, crime etc.
- When someone successfully completes substance abuse treatment, they return well over what was spent on treatment.

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2) There are medical benefits to marijuana.

- No, but there are medical benefits of THC. THC is available by prescription by physicians who know how and when to prescribe. The medication comes in specific amounts, it's regulated, and prescribed. There are also medical benefits for opium, and amphetamines, but Physicians don't prescribe smoking either of those.

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3) It's harmless.

- Marijuana and THC are not harmless. Smoking it increases risk of cancer and emphysema.
- There is also the psychological effects (depression, anxiety, psychosis etc)
- There are the harmful effects on family and friends.
- THC levels today are between 25-30 % potency. In the 70's it was 2-3% potency. 10 times as potent. If you drank 3 beers a few years ago, and decided to try it again, but the beer now contained 50% alcohol, I think that might affect you.

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4) It's natural.

- So is the Colorado river toad, hemlock, cocoa leaves etc.
- Just because something is natural, doesn't make it safe. And it doesn't mean you should ingest it.

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5) Other countries have legalized it.

- Yes, a few countries have.
- That doesn't make it OK.
- Does that mean they haven't had problems?

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6) It's a cheap renewable base product.

- True, but no need for the leaves.
- The plants could be bred to have little or no THC.

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7) Famous people use it so it must be OK.

- Famous people also have used heroin, crack, alcohol, etc.
- Famous people have also abused children.
- Famous people have committed crimes.
- By this logic, if famous people do it then it's OK.

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8) Use promotes creativity.

- Use might promote relaxation, which might enhance creativity.
- Relaxation and creativity can be attained in healthy ways.
- Use actually inhibits creativity.

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9) It enhances experiences.

- Again, many healthy practices enhance creativity without negative side effects.
- Mindfulness meditation.
- Yoga

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10) There will be more peace in the world.

- First comes anhedonia. No joy, so I have to “up the ante”.
- This could lead to more violence, not less.
- Anger and irritability are part of withdrawal.
- The subjective addict doesn’t see it, but the families do.

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