
Marijuana and Its Negative Effects on People and the Environment

All Americans have their ideas on legalizing marijuana, yet they need to make sure they have done considerable research using past experiences the American people have already experienced from using this drug; also they need to take a good look into what the actual outcomes are of smoking marijuana, before making a final decision on whether or not to legalize marijuana for medical purposes or any other reason. They say marijuana is a helpful medicine, that it makes you calm down and feel good or also that it isn't as dangerous or harmful as alcohol and other drugs, these are some reasons why they want to legalize marijuana. But what they do not say is the bad consequences of smoking marijuana such as its negative effects on the physical and mental health on a human's body. This essay will discuss the negative effects that marijuana can cause, and why this drug should stay illegal in the United States.

First, Americans should know what marijuana actually is before they would even consider legalizing it. Marijuana, also known as pot or weed comes from an Indian hemp called the Cannabis sativa. The actual drug is primarily in the flower of the plant and much less in the seeds, leaves, or stems of the plant. Cannabis is used in three different forms which are marijuana, hashish, and hash oil. Marijuana is made out of dried flowers and leaves, this product is the least potent of all the cannabis products and is usually smoked or made into edible products like cookies or brownies. Hashish which is made from the resin of the cannabis plant, this is dried up and pressed into small balls and then smoked. And the most potent of all hash oil, which is a thick oil obtained from hashish. Marijuana contains many ingredients, however, the main active ingredient that gives the "high" is called delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol commonly known as THC, this creates the mind-altering effects that make a person feel some type of way such as pleasure and making the person feel good and forget about their problems while smoking it, this is why marijuana is classified as a drug. The plant is usually smoked in hand-rolled cigarettes also called "joints" or in special water piped also called "bongs". As of today, marijuana is one of the most abused drugs if not the most in the United States and worldwide. Those who support its legalization, for medical or general use, fail to recognize that the greatest costs resulting from marijuana use itself.

Marijuana is now legal in some states of the United States such as Colorado, California, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and others. After the legalization of marijuana in these states, there have been many negative consequences. As an example in the state of Colorado, after voters passed amendment 64 on Election Day in 2012 in the state. According to the Colorado Springs Gazette who published an editorial called the "embarrassing cautionary tale" of the

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policy and talked about the “increase in homelessness, a doubling, a doubling of fatal traffic collisions involving weed-intoxicated drivers, and a rise in drug violations in Colorado’s schools”. Legalizing marijuana could make society abuse of this drug and lead people to situations such as driving under the influence of marijuana this causing car crashes end up with people being injured or dead. If people have legal access to marijuana it would probably increase its use. People who support the legalization of marijuana use to say that the sales of this drug can contribute to the country’s finance, however, this point would be put in contrast with the side effects that this legalization will bring to public health and safety of the country.

The use of this drug has a lot of health concerns because of its ingredients such as the THC (which was previously mentioned). This component acts on specific brain receptors, causing possible mood changes, depression, suicidal thinking, memory issues, and disruption to normal learning abilities. In reference to this, here is an example where a person suffered from consuming this drug. The story of Levy Thamba, a college student who was under the influence of marijuana and soon enough had a panic attack which made him jump to death from a Denver hotel balcony, this type of situations may happen when someone consumes marijuana with high levels of THD which is quickly absorbed into the bloodstream, reaching the brain within minutes. With this and many other cases were the use of marijuana did not turn out as good as people it would be. According to a recent Northwestern University study found that “marijuana users have an abnormal brain and poor memory and that chronic marijuana abuse may lead to brain changes resembling schizophrenia. The study also reported that the younger the person starts using marijuana, the worse the effects become.” Many people start smoking marijuana from a young age this affecting their memory, thinking, learning functions as well as it affects how the brain build connections between the areas necessary for this functions. Smoking this drug from a young age can affects the brain since the brain is not well developed until the age of 25. According to data by the National Institution of Drug Abuse (NIDA), “marijuana remains the most commonly used illicit drug among kids. Roughly one in three high schoolers’ smokes pot.” Students who smoke marijuana may have poorer educational outcomes than their nonsmoker peers as well as students who smoke this drug regularly can also be significantly less likely than students who do not smoke the drug be less likely to finish high school or to obtain a degree. So, by saying this the use of marijuana can also affect one’s productivity in life making the user less capable of doing or finishing things.

The use of marijuana can also have a wide range of effects on physical health. The smoking of the drug can affect a human’s breathing problems since it can irritate the lungs, these problems include a daily cough and phlegm and a higher risk of lung infections. It can also increase heart rate since because after smoking marijuana the heart rate raises up to 3 hours after smoking, this can lead to a heart attack. Now, it can also have a problem with child development during and after a pregnancy. A study by the National Institution of Drug Abuse (NIDA) found that about “20% of pregnant women 24-years-old and younger screened positive for marijuana.”

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The effects of a drug like marijuana can be rough on a pregnant woman and the fetus because when a pregnant woman uses this drug, this may affect certain developing parts of the fetus's brain as well as when a child is exposed to marijuana in the womb they may have an increased risk of problems with attention, memory, and problem solving compared to unexposed children. Also after pregnancy, a child can still be affected because if a woman smokes the drug the amount of THC can be excreted into the breast milk of nursing mothers, this could affect the baby's developing brain. This stating another reason why marijuana should be illegal because it can not only affect someone's health but it can also affect an innocent life because of people's desire to smoke weed.

Marijuana advocates would have people believe that the drug is organic and harmless, in short words make them believe that the use of marijuana does not cause any addictive problems whatsoever. Unfortunately, that is not the case since marijuana can lead people into a substance use disorder which is a medical illness in were people cannot stop using the drug even though it's causing health and social problems in their life. Many people who have used marijuana for a long time and try to quit the use of it end up on having symptoms such as grouchiness, sleeplessness, decreased appetite, anxiety, or cravings for the drug this making it difficult for them to quit it. As of today, there are no reports from young people or adults that have had an overdose from this drug, however many people have reported symptoms such as paranoia, anxiety, and in some rare cases, an extreme psychotic reaction that can include delusions and hallucinations, all these side effects can lead a person into an emergency room. Therefore one would say that the use of marijuana can be addictive at some point of its use, making people want more and more of this drug every day this driving into a crisis where is difficult to get out of. To this day there are no medications to treat a marijuana use disorder, however, there are practices that can help people stop the use of marijuana, for example, going to therapy or also called rehab where the goal for this is to provide people the ability to avoid the use of the drug in certain situations. Going to therapy can help people who a disorder to the use of this drug because it can provide problem-solving skills and lifestyle management so people can learn how to build a pleasant life where they do not think they need the use of marijuana.

The legalization of marijuana can not only affect people but it can also affect the environment, this is because growing plants need a lot of resources such as water and space to cultivate the product and as the recreational and medical use of marijuana becomes more legalized and widespread across the United States so does the scale of its production. Farming to provide for millions of people needs a lot of land and space to grow the crop, this can contribute to the deforestation of trees to make more space for farming as well as the destruction of wildlife habitats. The legalization of marijuana can also lead to a lack of resources because when it comes to massive farming like these were water is one of the primary resources for a plant to grow, this would drive farmers to use an extensive amount of water for to accomplish their goal. According to an article by CNBC, after the legalization of marijuana in California "marijuana is

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grown in the hidden corners of California, in undeveloped, remote watersheds that are also home to sensitive animals like endangered salmon, steelhead trout, and northern spotted owls. Marijuana growers often tap streams directly and take water exactly when fish need that water in streams.” The legal sales and demanding of marijuana in legalized states are increasing the destruction of habitats and wasting tons of water just because people want to get “high” or want to use this drug for medical purposes when there can be many other types of medicines out there. Also, let’s not forget about indoors marijuana farming which is a silly way to grow plants because it replaces the sunlight for lamplight. Indoors marijuana growth extremely affects the environment because of the amount of electricity that it needs not only to power the lamps but also dehumidifiers, heating, and ventilation systems these using about eight times the amount of energy per square foot like a normal commercial building. However, this method is mostly used to illegally grow this drug which is worst because growers will often use diesel or gasoline generators to avoid pulling power from the grid and being detected. Therefore, the legalization of marijuana would just damage the environment and if these actions stay unchecked on the states that have legalized this drug it will be too late to make a change.

People say that marijuana is a natural drug that does not affect one’s health or anything else, agreeing that marijuana should become legal in the United States because of what they believe. However, as seen from this essay, they are wrong because marijuana can definitely affect one’s mental, emotional, physical, and emotional life. Why say so? Well because marijuana contains many ingredients such as the THC which is what makes people “high” from smoking this drug and can lead people into serious side effects such as loss of memory, suicidal thinking, mood changes, and or disruption to normal learning abilities. As well as the drug can lead people into a point where they get used into smoking marijuana and then cannot get out of the habit, this driving them into a marijuana use disorder. If marijuana becomes legal in the states it could also affect the environment since the demanding of the drug would increase making an increase on the cultivation of the plant this leading to the deforestation of trees and to the destruction of wildlife habitats. So why take the risk of legalizing marijuana, when this drug can only put teens, adults, and families in a bad position in life as well as contributing to the damaging of the environment.

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