

IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT DRUGS

The more you know about how drugs work and the effect they can have on your body and mind, the more you will be able to protect yourself against them.

FACT 1: DIFFERENT DRUGS CAUSE DIFFERENT FEELINGS AND PHYSICAL RESPONSES.

Caffeine, alcohol, dagga, heroin, ecstasy, mandrax and cocaine are all drugs but they have little else in common. Whereas caffeine and alcohol are legal drugs, drugs such as dagga, heroin, ecstasy, mandrax, and cocaine are illegal. Further, you could experience a very pleasant response to one drug, yet another drug could have a very frightening response - it could even kill you.

Drugs such as dagga and heroin are derived from plants. Others drugs such as ecstasy and mandrax are and man-made. Pure drugs are far more expensive than drugs mixed or "cut" with less expensive substances. Like any business the illicit drug industry is profit-driven. Therefore drug dealers use a variety of substances to cut drugs. Some of these substances may be more harmful than the drug itself. The drug you are offered tomorrow may look the same as the drug you were offered yesterday, but you can never be sure of what it contains. The only way to be sure that you don't ingest it is to avoid taking drugs!

Drugs can be swallowed (pills), smoked, inhaled or injected. You can never anticipate the effect that drugs will have on you. It is a mistake to think that experience increases your tolerance levels or that nothing will happen to you if you take a drug that you have used before. It is a well-known fact that seasoned drug addicts often die of overdoses.

Drug addiction seduces you into wanting more and different and stronger drugs, against your will and the natural tolerance of your body. No matter how good you may feel when using drugs, your body suffers. Drugs are dangerous. If you take drugs, you are at great risk of becoming addicted.

- **UPPERS** (cocaine, ecstasy, speed, crack-cocaine)

Uppers are designed to make you feel great. You make you feel alive, dynamic, and energized. Depending on your personal response to the drug, you could, however, also feel anxious, nervous and paranoid. You could even die. Uppers put a terrible strain on the heart. Long-term use destroys your nerves, takes away your appetite and causes sleeplessness. You will end up taking a downer as your body suffers withdrawal symptoms when the drug wears off. You will feel depressed and, sometimes, suicidal.

- **DOWNERS** (alcohol, dagga, heroin, mandrax)

Downers make you feel relaxed or laid back. Unfortunately, you cannot control just how relaxed you will be. Long-term use of downers causes lethargy and

makes it harder for you to do the things you need to do as a functional member of society. Schoolchildren and students who use these drugs find it hard study or complete assignments, and relationships inevitably suffer. Too much of a powerful downer like heroin causes the systems of the body to shut down, eventually leading to death.

- **HALLUCINOGENS** (LSD, mescaline)

These drugs cause powerful hallucinations or dreams in which your reality is changed. You cannot predict whether the dream will be enjoyable or be a hideous nightmare. A "bad trip" can haunt you for the rest of your life, with flashbacks occurring at any time.

FACT 2: DIFFERENT PEOPLE RESPOND DIFFERENTLY TO THE SAME DRUGS.

Drugs cause different reactions in different people. Never take a drug based on someone else's reported experience of using that drug. Never persuade someone else to take a drug based on your own experience of using it.

FACT 3: THE MORE DRUGS YOU TAKE, THE MORE YOU NEED.

The first time you take a drug, you will probably experience an exhilarating high. As your body gets used to the drug, you will need more and more of it to experience the same intense reaction. This increasing tolerance to a drug is actually a growing addiction. Addiction comes with a big price tag. The more drugs you want, the more money you need to "feed the habit". Drugs are expensive and their effect on you makes it unlikely that you will be able to earn enough money to afford them. Some drug addicts turn to crime and other high-risk behavior. Many are arrested and go to prison. Others turn to prostitution and live tragic and tainted lives, almost inevitably die young.

Some people take drugs for a while and then manage to escape before they become addicts or before irreparable harm is done. Do not rely on being one of those people - being strong is not enough to withstand the horrors of drug addiction. **It is not weak people who become drug addicts, its drug addicts who become weak people. No addict takes that first drug believing that he or she will be addicted.** All addicts start out believing that they could give up drugs any time they wanted to. Every addict is sad proof of how wrong that belief is.

FACT 4: LIFE IS TOUGH ENOUGH - DRUGS ONLY MAKE IT TOUGHER.

When you feel that you cannot cope with life's challenges, you may feel tempted to take a drug to make you feel vibrant and confident, or to change your sense of reality - even if only for a short while. Instant gratification, a sense of peace, a wonderful trip, or a feeling of power - all these things you are promised by

those who offer you drugs. Such persons often describe the effects of drugs in glowing terms. But they do not tell you:

- **that you cannot control your response to a drug;**
- **what a drug contains;**
- **the more you like a drug, the more you will want it and that you will eventually become addicted;**
- **when the drug wears off, reality will still be there with all the problems , from which you were trying to escape;**
- **uppers make you need downers and a combination of the two can kill you; and**
- **drugs let you lose control, which, in turn, makes you -**
 - **lose the ability to do certain things (for instance, to drive your car); and**
 - **more vulnerable to sexual or physical assault.**

However tempting it may be, using drugs to take a break from reality will not make your problems disappear or make life better. If you feel that things are spiraling out of control and you are overwhelmed by problems, seek real help from someone who cares. People who try to sell you drugs are not interested in your well-being. You may have already used drugs and you may be scared of becoming addicted. But remember: **No matter how much trouble you think you will be in if you ask for help, you will be in worse trouble if you do not.** Even if you know that your partner or guardians will be angry or disappointed that you have taken drugs, it is better to seek help now before it is too late.