

Think Twice

Discussion of the drug issue is sometimes filled with emotion, inaccuracies and wishful thinking. In many cases, what is represented as "fact" is really fiction, and it's hard to notice the difference. Some people downplay the dangers of drugs, their effects on society and their effects on our bodies and brains. Others claim that restrictive government drug policies have harmed our country. Still others tell us that drugs should be plentiful and legal.

Not so long ago, big tobacco companies sold Americans a bill of goods, telling us through advertising and official statements that cigarettes were not harmful—that in fact, they were healthy for us. They denied that certain groups were being targeted for cigarette sales—young people, women, minorities, people in other countries. It's clear now that they simply lied. Millions of Americans are paying the price for these lies—with their lives.

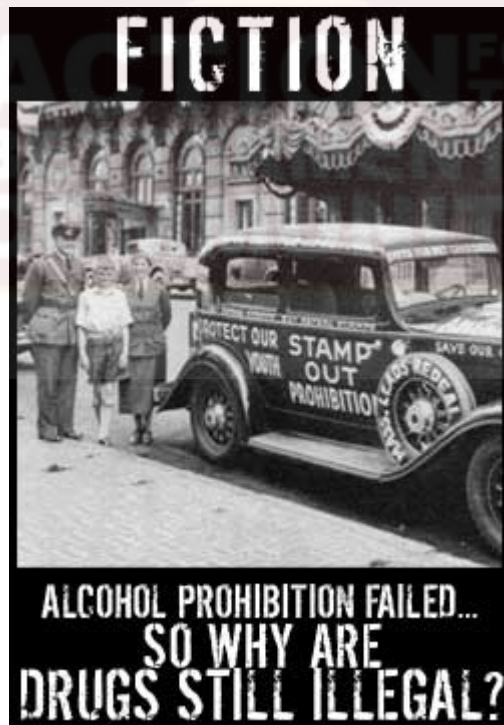


While the illegal drug market is not controlled by a handful of corporate CEOs with large advertising budgets, we are still bombarded with messages telling us that drugs aren't really that bad, and that marijuana is really medicine, that everyone does drugs. The drug market is controlled by greedy individuals and organizations who believe they can make a living off your choices. Their advertising is word-of-mouth, glamorization of drugs through our culture, and dissemination of bad information.

Much of the bad information relates to the legalization of marijuana. Legalization proponents claim that our country is moving towards legalizing all drugs within the foreseeable future. They want you to believe that such a move will take the profit out of drugs, and that legalizing drugs will ultimately benefit society. They also say that marijuana is medicine, and that sick people are being denied relief as a result of Government policy to keep marijuana illegal. Some will tell young people that marijuana is harmless —after all, it's a plant, a natural substance. You will also hear that people can use marijuana without any consequences to their health or their lives.

Think about these claims before you buy into them. Ask some questions:

- Do we need more drug problems than we currently have? Don't alcohol, tobacco and prescription drug use cause enough harm already? Wouldn't legalizing drugs —like marijuana, heroin, cocaine or methamphetamine—make things much worse?
- Do I want to jeopardize my future by getting involved with drugs? Don't I want to get into a good college, get and keep my driver's license, play sports, get a good job?
- Do I know all I need to know about how trying drugs —even once —has affected kids my age? And how do I know what drug use can do to me?



A word about prohibition: lots of you hear the argument that alcohol prohibition failed—so why are drugs still illegal? Prohibition **did** work. Alcohol consumption was reduced by almost 60% and incidents of liver cirrhosis and deaths from this disease dropped dramatically (*Scientific American*, 1996, by David Musto). Today, alcohol consumption is over three times greater than during the Prohibition years. Alcohol use is legal, except for kids under 21, and it causes major problems, especially in drunk driving accidents.

It's up to you to get the facts. To know the difference between fact and fiction. ***To think twice.*** Information provided by DEA Demand Reduction Street Smart Prevention, for more information please contact A.B.C. at 347-2991 or go online to www.justthinktwice.com

