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English 127

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Background Essay

The Small, but Mighty Pill

Drug use “kill[s] around 570,000 people a year” (Futures of Palm Beach, n.d. para. 1). Many of these 570,000 people were once just like us. They had parents who loved and cared about them, a job, friends, a home, and maybe even children. These people who have become addicted to drugs not only have affected themselves, but also their loved ones. Drug addiction has spread all across the world. It has become a normal characteristic for cities and towns to have drugs and addicts. Drugs date all the way back to 5000 BCE in Mesopotamia. Back then drugs were called the “joy plant”. Ever since drugs have been discovered people all over the world have misused them. Infoplease (2012) explains, “Legal measures against drug abuse in the United States were first established in 1875, when opium dens were outlawed in San Francisco” (para. 2). Drugs started to cause issues in society forcing law makers to create laws. This paper includes historical background, statistics, laws, stakeholders, debates, and news articles. With this knowledge people will better understand that drug addiction affects body functions, has multiple warning signs, causes conflicts in relationships, and can be triggered by doctor’s prescriptions and marijuana.

Our bodies keep us balanced and functioning when we provide proper nutrition, exercise, and rest. When drugs invade our body they create a harmful imbalanced system which is susceptible to illness and disease. For example, Drugs + your body (2013) explains that with “methamphetamine”, which is a type of drug that is usually injected, “abusers often report

feeling like they have insects crawling under their skin, which causes them to pick at their skin, creating sores” (p. 22). Skin on people’s body protects people from bacteria. When meth users open up the skin from picking at it the bacteria gets in their immune system very quickly. Drugs + your body (2013) also states that “snorting cocaine can destroy cartilage in the nose, like the septum...this can lead to nosebleeds and can decrease the ability to smell” (p. 23). Abusing your body with drugs is very harmful and often deadly. Many people almost die from the abuse they put their bodies through. In Szalavitz’s (2016) book, she explains the appearance of her body when she was addicted to drugs. “[Her] cocaine and heroin addiction...left [her] weighing 85 pounds, with angry tracks dotting all four limbs, [her] hair a thin...and [her] eyes distant and blank” (p. 9). Being so low in weight is very hard on people’s bodies. There is little fat to protect vital organs and keep people warm. People experience heart problems due to not enough fat and nutrition. Weight loss is one aspect of addiction that others can see.

There are many warning signs to addiction. The hard part is knowing what to look for. Many people facing addiction start isolating friends and family, moving away (so they don’t have to see family), taking lots of money out of bank accounts, dropping out of school, skipping school, stealing, lying, weight changes, coughing, eyes are blood shoot or glossy, lack of motivation, withdraw from sports/ activities, stop doing the activities they use to love, not answering phone calls, and having no fears. In Kelley’s (2015) article she explains about a girl named Jamie. “[Jamie] got in a fight at school at [the age of] 13 and was arrested for the first time. At 14, Jamie overdosed on Dramamine. That same year, she was caught shoplifting and smoking weed” (para. 11). Jamie became addicted to heroin and meth. Her choices weren’t really hers. It was the drugs deciding to make these harmful decisions. Addiction is like having two heads. One wants you to be clean and the other doesn’t want you to stop taking drugs. The

one wanting drugs is much louder so people listen to the drug brain more. This can make people angry.

Relationships with people who have problems with drug abuse often do not go well. Drugs make many people irritable and angry. This causes lots of fighting and arguing. One article Narconon International (2015) explains “drugs like methamphetamine and cocaine often make users paranoid, which easily leads to anger and abuse. Any addict who feels threatened may feel compelled to fight back” (para. 8). This is where a lot of abusive relationships start. The same article Narconon International (2015) states, “Drugs and a loving relationship mix as well as dynamite and a match- the combination can be explosive. And the destruction can be widespread” (para. 1). The main point is when people are using drugs there is going to be lots of violence, screaming, yelling, and fighting until the drug brain gets what it wants. So expect your love one to be mean and unpredictable until they receive help.

For families of drug addicts there is an organization called Nar-Anon to help cope with the challenges that come from drug addiction. Many people go to Nar-Anon to help with understanding what the addict is going through. When the family member and the addict both go to meetings about drug addiction their relationship tends to get better. This is because they both have more knowledge about the addiction. (Nar-Anon Family Groups World Services, 2015).

Doctors have prescribed drugs to individuals to relieve pain. These prescriptions are often a lead way to addiction. In her article Mitchell (2016) explains that “I got my first taste of prescription opioids in the late 80’s. They had been casually prescribed for me after the extraction of my wisdom teeth” (para. 3). Individuals may not think or realize a drug prescribed by a doctor can be addictive. One small pill has the potential to cause a permanent addiction. Mitchell (2016) also states, “It wasn’t long before my college classes and work were replaced by

the search for more pills, which eventually led to [her] heroin addiction” (para. 4). Many drug abusers are led to heroin because of its high potency, low costs, and is easily obtainable on the street markets. Gillard (2013) explains, “Prescription drugs are the second most commonly abused category of drugs” (p. 68). Addicts have doctors prescribe them drugs because their insurance will pay for most of the cost and people make lots of money when they sell prescription drugs on the streets.

Marijuana also plays a part in causing addiction. Many people ask doctors to prescribe them medical marijuana due to its ability to relieve chronic pain such as: back pain, knee pain, hip pain, headaches, etc. Some states legalized marijuana to help with chronic pain. Office of National Drug Control policy (n.d.) stated in an article, “Voters in Alaska, Colorado, Oregon, and Washington state also passed initiatives legalizing the sale and distribution of marijuana for adults 21 and older under state law.” There are many debates about legalizing marijuana. Some people believe the problem is marijuana has the potential to led to drug addictions. “Marijuana: Breaking down the buzz” (2014) states that “Marijuana users are more likely to use other drugs and develop drug problems” (p. 19). Marijuana causes people to develop addictions to other drugs because marijuana is less potent then other drugs. When someone takes marijuana and feels the feeling of being high they want to experience it again at a higher level. Farlex states, “addiction is usually accompanied by a compulsion to obtain the drug, a tendency to increase the dose, a psychological or physical dependence, and detrimental consequences for the individual” (2013 para. 2). The only way to feel a greater high is to use a more potent drug like heroin, cocaine, or meth. This starts a major chain reaction.

Drug use is very powerful and addictive. Drugs alter body functions, have many warning signs to addiction, adds conflicts to relationships, and could be caused by doctors and marijuana.

Drugs alter a person to become someone they don't want to be. Many people go to drug rehabilitation seeking help to stop their drug use and start to live a clean and sober life. Not all places have the right knowledge and experience to treat drug addictions. What type of rehabilitation centers are effective? What type are ineffective? If you know what does and doesn't work you will be able to find the best rehabilitation center for you or your loved one.

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