The Effects of Drug Abuse on the Brain

Drug abuse is an epidemic that seems to be attacking the teenage generation of today with deadly results. Drug use has destructive effects on teenagers’ lives at home and in school. The drugs bring about destructive behavior patterns, addiction, and harmful social consequences.

According to Esherick, “By broadest definition, the term “drug” can include any chemical substance that changes the chemistry or metabolism of the brain or body” (34). So when one speaks about drug abuse teenagers need to understand that a person’s mind and body will definitely go through changes when we use any drug—whether the drug is legal or illegal. For instance, if we have a headache, then we take a drug to change the chemistry in our body that is causing the headache to make the pain go away. If a person takes a drug and it does not make a change come about, then there is something wrong with the drug. And, illegal drugs or misuse of legal drugs can cause negative changes in behavior in any one’s life, especially teenagers.

Esherick states that substance abuse can cause teenagers to show the following behaviors:

- break promises
- neglect responsibilities
- blow off schoolwork
- start delinquent behaviors (lying, cheating, stealing, skipping school, etc.)
- run away from home
- have casual sex
- engage in prostitution
- commit crime
- vandalize property
• assault others
• commit rap
• try other, more dangerous drugs
• drive while high or drunk
• take dangerous physical risks. (39)

First, it is hard to keep a promise when one is sober because many people change their minds so often or even may forget what was promised. For instance, a teen could promise parents that he or she will be the first one to graduate high school in the family. But, when the teen starts using drugs with his or her friends, drug use could lead to skipping classes, failing classes, and/or dropping out of school because it takes night school, summer school, and extra years to make up many failed classes. Also, if the teen promises to be a virgin until he or she gets married but decides to drink alcohol and become drunk at a party, the virgin promise could become broken due to rape or simply having a blackout and never recall the sexual act.

Pinckney illustrates the pattern of drug addiction:

No matter the drug or the historical era, the patterns of addiction remain the same: the first encounters with the drug and the sense of blessed relief, or happy escape, are followed soon enough by an awareness of being enslaved to a habit, of having one’s life ruled by the necessity of acquiring the much-needed daily dosage of whatever. (69)

Good habits such as being punctual, responsible, and hardworking improve the qualities of our lives, but bad habits such as drug abuse destroys our lives. Drug abuse seems to also give our brain the illusion of happiness or stress release, but it actually creates a living nightmare of addiction that takes a person a lifetime to defeat! For example, D’Angelo states that Teens who use drugs might experience a rush of feelings, too, but in their brains something very different is happening. Once in the brain, drugs of abuse are similar in size shape to brain chemicals or neurotransmitters.
Because of that, drugs can create fake messages. They may also cause floods of neurotransmitters. Most drugs of abuse act on the brain's emotional center, so these fake messages and floods create intense feelings. That's how drugs, in a sense, trick the brain.

One hears of people tricking people, but who ever heard of drugs tricking the brain? So, when you think about it, it is like inviting someone into your home to have a good time, and then that person attacks you. It becomes a situation where you invite your own terrorists to invade you. In addition, the consequences of the drug addiction are equally disturbing.

Riggs explains that “When a person becomes dependent, the drug becomes so rewarding that it may drive the user to continue taking it despite harmful medical or social consequences. Such consequences include poor motivation, impaired judgment and memory, personality changes, and disrupted family relationships.”

When teens decide to abuse drugs, they do not consider that the usage will lead to the destruction of personal relationships with family and friends or professional relationships with educators. Nor, do they consider the effects of drug abuse on their academic goals that get interrupted or even eliminated. More importantly, teens do not consider the physical changes that affect their brain and the damages to memory caused by drug abuse—which can be problematic as they grow into adulthood. The brain, the ultimate computer, is a terrible thing to waste, especially because we cannot make a move without it!
Works Cited


