

# Religious attitudes to drug abuse

## Types of Drugs

**Drug:** A substance that can affect the body or mind.

**Drug Abuse:** Using drugs in a harmful way.

**Prescription Drug:** Legally given by a doctor.

**Illegal drugs:** Drugs that are illegal to buy, sell or possess.

**Social drugs:** Legal drugs that are addictive (tobacco/alcohol).

## Drugs and the law

The legal status of drugs raises issues;

- Legal drugs like tobacco and alcohol can cause a lot of harm and have age restrictions but can still easily be obtained.
- Prescribed drugs are legal but only for the person prescribed them.
- Over the counter drugs are legal but amounts are limited.
- Household solvents (glue, aerosols etc) can be abused and cause death, all are legal.
- Caffeine-is legal but can cause effects like anxiety, panic attacks etc.

## Religious beliefs on Body and mind

All religions disagree with taking illegal drugs because of the **negative effects** they can have on the mind and body.

Rastafarians and a small group of Christians (Ethiopian Coptic Church) allow cannabis because its a herb given by God.

Generally **Christians** are against drugs because they damage the Body God created "**So God created mankind in his own image**".

**Buddhists** are against drugs because of the **5th Precept**- I will not take drugs or drink that confuse the mind.

## Rights and responsibilities

| Right  | Responsibility   |
|--|--|
| We all have the right to the NHS, a doctor when we need it and prescribed drugs to help control illnesses. | Ensure those drugs do not get into the wrong hands. Prescription drugs like steroids and tranquilisers are in demand as they can be sold.  |
| Some believe they have the right to take whatever drugs they want, if they can afford them.                | Some do not think about their responsibilities while under the influence. Those who sell drugs do not see themselves as responsible when someone dies. Their activity also costs the tax payer money in prisons and rehab. |

The Misuse of Drugs act in 1971, drugs have been graded as A, B or C depending on how addictive and harmful they are.

| Class    | Example                                      | Effects   | Law   |
|----------|--|---|---|
| <b>A</b> | Heroin, Ecstasy, LSD, Cocaine, Crack Cocaine | initial feeling of well-being, overdose can cause coma or death, increased heart rate, depression, anxiety. Very addictive. | 7 years for possession<br><br>Life for supply   |
| <b>B</b> | Amphetamines (speed), Cannabis               | Can cause depression, paranoia, long term heart defects, Schizophrenia,   | 5 years for possession<br><br>14 years for supply   |
| <b>C</b> | Steroids, tranquilisers                      | aggression, heart and liver conditions, hormonal imbalances, slow reactions,  | steroids: 14 years for supply<br><br>Tranquilisers: 2 years for possession, 14 years for supply |

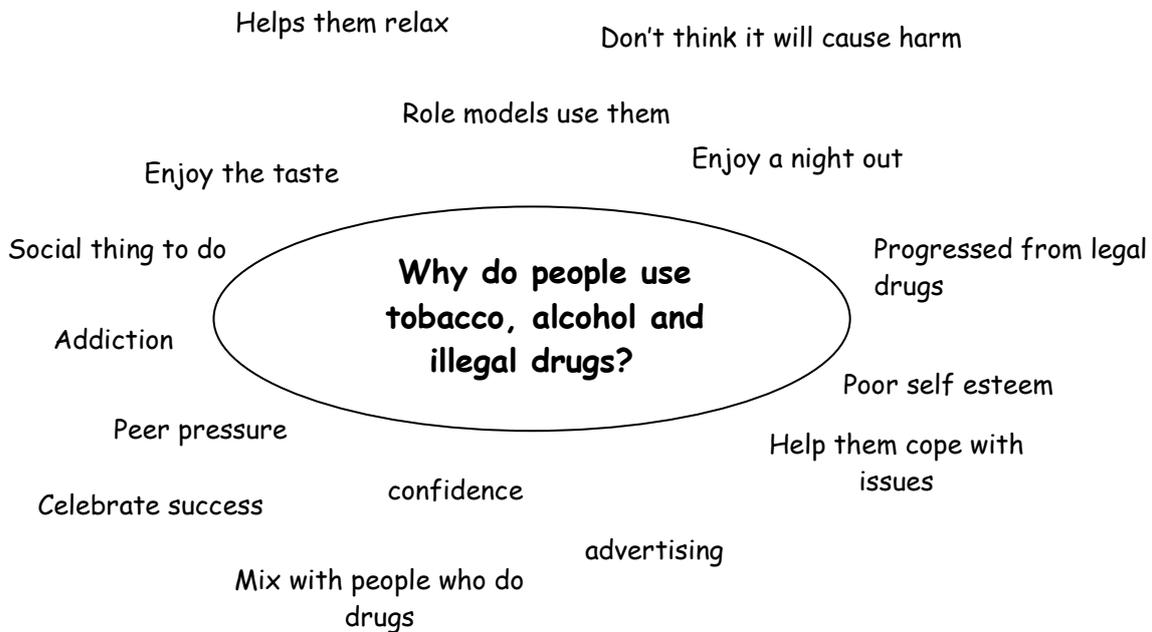
Cannabis started as a Class B drug, people argued that it should be downgraded as there was little evidence that it had long term effects and that alcohol was more harmful.

In 2004 the government responded and lowered it to a class C drug. Those in possession were unlikely to be arrested, young people would be offered rehab to prevent future offences.

In 2008 cannabis was reclassified as a class B drug due to evidence of long term effects on mental health and a stronger form called skunk being more available.

**Social Drugs**

These drugs include tobacco and alcohol (which some people see as more harmful than cannabis). Although these drugs have age limits, it does not stop young people accessing them. Both cause serious health issues (heart disease, lung cancer, liver damage and obesity). Both are also very addictive. Tax is added to both tobacco and alcohol to encourage people not to use them, but this tax also helps fund the NHS which helps treat people who smoke and drink.



**Religious views on Tobacco and Alcohol**

**Buddhism** does not allow tobacco or alcohol because of its potential harm to people. They believe these substances cause **bad karma**. It also goes against the **5th precept** (not to take anything that confuses the mind).

**Christianity** does not forbid drinking alcohol (except for the salvation army and Methodist churches). Most Christians use **wine in Holy communion**. Many Christians believe **smoking harms the body God gave them**.

**"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple...If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him"**

## Personal Choice and Public Effects

It is a person's choice to drink, just as it is not to. Some people are tee total, maybe because of religious or social principles to do with how alcohol affects the body, or they may have had a bad experience (or know friends and family that have) that have led them to no longer drink. Most people drink socially and feel that helps them relax.

All packets of cigarettes now come with a health warning and it is widely known that smoking can be very harmful. There are now many products available to help people stop smoking. Unlike alcohol, smoking can affect the people around those who smoke, this is why it is now illegal to smoke in many public places. Smoking remains legal and is down to personal choice, many say it helps them relax and they enjoy doing it.

### Reasons for not using illegal drugs

Often the only real argument in the use of illegal drugs is **personal freedom**. However the short term buzz has to be weighed up against the long term **health risks, financial issues and the effect they may have on others**. Just because some drugs come from natural sources (Opium is the source of heroin) does not mean it is safe or should be used.

#### Supply

Maximum penalties for supplying drugs is 14 years in prison, **however these sentences are rarely given**. More often the drugs will be confiscated and the person fined. Often the dealers are overlooked to try and find the main source. This can have a knock on effect, if large amounts are confiscated, the price will go up of what is available and then addicts **have no choice but to find the money** to feed their addiction.

#### Social consequences

If an addict needs drugs, but cannot afford them, **they will often turn to crime** and it ends up being a vicious circle. Addicts also end up hurting those closest to them and many end up living on the streets because of family stress.

#### Religious views

All major religions forbid the use of illegal drugs, for Christians the main reason is the harm it causes to the individual, family and society. They also teach that compassion and help should be given to addicts "**Love thy neighbour**".

### What can be done about addiction?

There are many different attitudes about how to help people with addiction:

- **Nothing**, people made a choice and need to sort themselves out. Why should money be spent on those who do nothing to deserve it?
- **Rehabilitation**: help given to addicts for them to overcome their addiction. Without professional help this can be difficult. But rehab can be expensive and places are limited. Rehab is also a long process and patients make good progress while under treatment but there is no cure, so once a person is clean they need to resist temptation which can be difficult when back in their old environments.
- **Prison**: sometimes prisons offer free rehabilitation for offenders but this is not available in all prisons and often drugs are still used in prison.

#### Long term solution?

- More money to ensure drugs don't make it to the streets.
- Sentences to be increased and enforced.
- More money into rehabilitation.
- More money in socially deprived areas to stop people turning to drugs in the first place.
- Increased focus on drug education in school.

### Religious views on helping addicts

**Buddhists:** 'Right Action' from the eightfold path teaches to follow the 5 precepts (5th is not to take any substance that confuses the body or mind) and to help others, this shows **Metta** (loving kindness) and **Karuna** (compassion).

**Christians:** Christians follow teachings of helping those in need wherever possible; "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick" and "Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me", "Love thy neighbour".

## Past Exam Questions

### Knowledge Questions

Give 2 reasons why people might use illegal drugs. [2 marks]

Give 2 reasons why some people smoke tobacco. [2 marks]

Name 2 class A drugs [2 marks]

### Understanding Questions

Explain why religious believers disagree with drink driving. [3 marks]

Explain religious beliefs and teachings about the mind and body. [4 marks]

Explain why most religious believers think that taking illegal drugs is wrong. Refer to religious beliefs and teachings in your answer. [4 marks]

Explain the difference between legal drugs and medically prescribed drugs. [3 marks]

Explain briefly what is meant by rehabilitating drug users. [2 marks]

Explain why many religious believers are willing to use only some legal drugs. Refer to beliefs and teachings in your answer. [5 marks]

### Evaluation Questions

#### 3 mark question

"Religious believers should not smoke tobacco" what do you think? Explain your opinion. [3 marks]

"Religious believers should not drink alcohol" what do you think? Explain your opinion. [3 marks]

"Religious believers should agree that money raised through tax on alcohol must only be used to treat alcoholics" what do you think? Explain your opinion. [3 marks]

#### 6 mark question

"People who use illegal drugs should be punished" Do you agree? Give reasons for your answers, showing you have thought about more than one point of view. Refer to religious arguments in your answer. [6 marks]

"People who take illegal drugs should not be helped" Do you agree? Give reasons for your answers, showing you have thought about more than one point of view. Refer to religious arguments in your answer. [6 marks]

"The use of cannabis should be made legal" Do you agree? Give reasons for your answers, showing you have thought about more than one point of view. Refer to religious arguments in your answer. [6 marks]