

Drug Use - Understanding The Mindset

Discussion on drug use clearly demonstrated that a number of soft drug users were present in all groups. As expected, the number of admitted drug users was considerably higher in the younger groups. In the older groups, most participants had smoked marijuana or hashish when they were younger and slightly less than half clearly indicated that they continue using it on occasion.

When asked how concerned they were with the problem of drug use, participants in all groups insisted that a distinction be made between soft drugs and hard ones. People were much less worried about soft drugs and most concerns expressed related to hard drugs. Problems associated with hard drugs included addiction, abuse, potential overdoses, health concerns and a range of issues associated with the underworld and organized crime. Its power of addiction was viewed as creating financial problems for many users and consequently forcing people into a life of crime. People were very concerned about its accessibility to children and this concern was also expressed for soft drugs.

Concern about the use of soft drugs was very limited and its accessibility to children and youngsters was viewed as the primary problem. A few participants were also concerned with cases of abuse and provided examples of a few "pot-heads" and how they became dysfunctional in society. Concern was also expressed about the high level of use of medications, the large amount of people abusing them and their overall costs to our governments.

Most participants felt that marijuana and hashish were comparable to alcohol although many also felt that they were less harmful. People generally viewed soft drugs as being less aggressive than alcohol. It was viewed that soft drug use generally leads to less violent behaviour than alcohol as it is used mainly for rest and relaxation. Soft drugs actually calm you down and provide an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of life. "Drugs are mellow whereas alcohol is rowdy." It does not appear to create as many social problems as alcohol and was generally viewed as being less harmful for society. Drinking and driving was often provided as an example illustrating the fact that marijuana is less of a concern than alcohol.

People therefore used drugs to relax, to get a "buzz" or simply as a right of passage while giving in to peer pressure. Smoking marijuana allowed people to "chill out", "experience other realms", "get away from it all". It was viewed a social activity and a lifestyle, and many stressed its positive medicinal effects. It was also viewed as being less addictive than coffee,