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**Drugs and their effect**

**There are various drugs which are abused by teenagers and adults. Most of these are addictive and have adverse health effects to users. The common drugs of choice are alcohol, cigarettes, speed, prescription drugs, heroin, cocaine and marijuana. Alcohol is the most abused drug, and it inhibits judgment among users (Stimson 34-48). Long term use leads to liver and kidney failure. Tobacco, or cigarettes are one of the most addictive drugs and their long term use leads to development of cancer, impotency, lung collapse and others. Cocaine and heroine are drugs which are injected, smoked or taken orally. They are very addictive and they distort reality among users. Long term use may lead to heart problems, mental disorders and high blood pressure. Sharing of needles may transmit STDs while drug overdose may be fatal. Marijuana is another common drug abused and it distorts reality among users. Long term use may lead to mental damage, and some researchers have linked it to development of schizophrenia. Prescription drugs are also commonly abused by the old and young alike. Although done innocently, these drugs may cause sudden death due to overdose or fatal combination of drugs, as has been witnessed**

**Causes of drug abuse**

**There are various causes of drug abuse. Drug abuse can be blamed on parents, friends, individuals and society at large. These causes will be briefly discussed to show how everyone is responsible for the problem of drug abuse.**

**Lack of parental supervision**

**Parents have an important role in their child’s upbringing. They serve an important purpose of instilling values in their children through socialization at early age. Parents should ensure that their children are morally upright and that they do not engage in social vices. However, in the modern world, parents have put professional lives ahead of their families and delegated the role of raising children to nannies and teachers. As a result, the children do not acquire much needed guidance on life’s issues, and many end up taking drugs through peer influence. Lack of supervision from parents, who pursue their careers at the expense of their families, can therefore be blamed for the high number of drug abuse cases among teenagers. Parents should supervise their children at all times to avoid negative influence from peers.**

**Poor communication between parents and teens**

**Lack of communication between children and parents, especially during teenage years is also another causality of drug use. Many teenagers are unable to effectively communicate with their parents since neither group understands the other’s needs. Parents appear too harsh to teenagers while teenagers appear to demanding to parents. When parents and teenagers are unable to effectively communicate about issues teenagers face, teenagers are left to seek advice from peers, who may influence them to take drugs. Parents should understand children’s needs and vice verse, if drug abuse is to be eliminated.**

**Mental & Physical abuse**

**Domestic violence and abuse has been one of the most common triggers of drug abuse. When people are emotionally or physically abused, and they do not seek help, they may engage in drugs to forget their problems. Since most abuse cases are perpetrated by close family members, this makes it harder for victims to overcome, and many opt to try out drugs, which they perceive will distort reality and make them forget their concerns (United States Department of Justice Website 2000). Drugs of choice in such circumstances include alcohol, tobacco and marijuana. However, victims are unaware that use of drugs increases their problems since it leads to addiction, which needs to be treated. Publicizing abuse, passing tough laws and offering free help to victims will help reduce abuse cases and thereby reduce drug use cases.**

**Media influence**

**Media influence is a major causality of drug abuse, especially regarding drugs such as alcohol and tobacco. The media makes it appear “cool” to use such drugs through flashy advertisements in the media. However, less emphasis is placed on adverse effects of such drugs; hence teenagers are influenced to use them without enough information on repercussions faced due to drug use. This leads to addiction, and by the time victims realize, they cannot do without drugs. This influence from media can be stemmed through use of warning labels and bans on certain forms of drug advertising which targets the youth.**

**Warning signs**

**There are various symptoms and warning signs which are associated with drug use. These symptoms vary according to drugs used, genetic make up of users, quantity used, personality and other aspects. It is important to note that presence of a particular symptom does not automatically means that the individual abuses drugs, rather that it shows that further investigation should be done to ascertain drug use by the individual. Some of these signs are discussed below;**

**Dropping Grades**

**Sudden drop of grades without clear reasons may indicate drug use. This may be linked to missing of classes when taking drugs, or harmful effects of drugs which affect the brain and cause poor academic performance. This behavior is usually accompanied by disrespect for school authorities and fellow students.**

**Missing Curfew**

**Missing curfews without adequate explanation of one’s whereabouts may also indicate drug use. When teenagers are unable to explain their movements, this shows that they are secretive, and drug use may explain this situation. However, teenagers’ movements should be established before accusing them of drug use.**

**Disrespectful to parents**

**Drug users are usually disrespectful to other people. This is due to the label which society gives them of “drug addicts”, which makes them harbor hatred towards society. Teenagers who use drugs are unable to explain their “odd” behavior to parents and much resort to disrespect as a means of covering up drug use (Giannini 69-73). Others are influenced by drugs to make irrational choices leading to disrespect of family, friends and the community.**

**Stealing & lying**

**Stealing is a common trait amongst drug users and it emanates from the need to purchase drugs. Drugs are expensive to purchase and drug users may be forced to steal from family and friends to maintain the vice. When questioned about it, they are likely to lie about it. This makes it a symptom of drug abuse, and parents should be careful to note such behavior from their children.**

**Who to blame**

**Various discussions have centered on who is to blame for the problem of drug abuse. However, there is consensus that everyone is to blame for the problem. Parents have neglected their children and left nannies and teachers to raise them, as they pursue professional goals. Teachers have also neglected students since they focus on academic curriculum at the expense of social development. The society has tolerated drug abuse and perceived it as “normal” behavior without taking action against drug users (Roleff 39-44). This has left adolescents to seek advice from peers, who may influence them to abuse drugs. Teachers and parents ought to give attention to teenagers and advice them on harmful effects of drug use. The society should also condemn and punish drug users, since this will deter them from practicing the same.**

**Risks involved**

**There are many risks which are involved in drug use. These risks affect the health of the user, their relationships with family, society and friends, and their ability to achieve full potential in later life. In addition to this, some risks may be potentially fatal to users. Risks associated with drug abuse include addiction, health problems, transmission of STDs, accidents, mental disorders and problems with law enforcers. These risks will be discussed below in more detail;**

**Addiction**

**Most drugs are addictive to users. The degree of addiction varies according to several factors including specific drug used, genetic make up of user, quantities used and other factors. However, since most drugs are addictive, users become dependent on the drugs for performance of everyday activities. Drug addiction is the most harmful effect of drugs since it ensures that users are unable to quit drugs, and instead use more quantities of drugs to achieve the state of intoxication over time. Some of the most addictive drugs include cocaine, heroine and tobacco. However, other drugs such as alcohol, prescription drugs and marijuana are also addictive and may make users dependent on them. This makes it expensive to sustain abuse, and users may use illegal means of getting money to satisfy the addiction. Drug manufacturers use the aspect of addiction to ensure they have a steady supply of cash from addicts.**