

A: White Paper

When The Antidote Becomes Poison: A People-Made Declaration, Outlawing Addictive Substances

Writing for Survival Assignment

Written By: Nikoletta Abel, Mikelena Bouzy, Emily Lugo, Victoria Morris,
Jonathan Sattaur, Zuzia Smolaga, & Vallery Taveras

November 14, 2025

Executive Summary of White Paper

By Victoria

We the People, are hereby eliminating the existence of harmful and addictive drugs.

Since the dawn of time, humans have used their resources around them in order to survive. One of the most abundant resources that surrounded early civilizations were plants. Over time we turned these plants into herbs to create medicine— medicine that was intended to heal humans of their numerous problems. Yet, as time went on, these “medicines” that we created turned out to be one of humanities’ greatest difficulties. These early medicines turned into addictive drugs: humanity’s greatest weakness. In this paper, we hope to address relevant policy makers, researchers, and the general public. This paper is intended to do the following: persuade the government into helping us (which is what they are supposed to do anyway), call attention to researchers and medical facilities, and to heal the general population of drug users within the United States. While many people in today’s world accept and partake in drug usage, it still doesn’t change the fact that drugs have become one of the most harmful aspects of society. People become sick over drugs, peoples’ lives change because of drugs, and some people even die all because of bad drugs. It is, undoubtedly, within our best interest as a society to move forward into the future without drugs. In our contributions to research on the effects of drug usage, we hope to gain the support of government officials and policy makers of the United States in order to implement drug education into the next generations, as well as rehabilitation

and therapy services for current drug users. In teaching the youth about the harmful impact of drugs, we strive to decrease the number of adults who use drugs for a brighter future.

Introduction and Background

By Victoria

In today's society, everyone has—in one way or another—consumed a drug. Don't believe us? Check your medicine cabinet. Tylenol, Adderall, even the innocent Hydrocortisone. Perhaps you indulge knowingly. A purchase from your local dealer to get a fix of your weekly or daily cannabis, or something stronger. Drugs aren't new to anybody. The Oxford languages dictionary supports this, defining a drug as, "A medicine or other substance which has a physiological effect when ingested or otherwise introduced into the body." This strength and appearance of drugs cover a wide range of substances. Though Tylenol and Hydrocortisone pose very little risk if consumed responsibly (in moderate doses regulated by the FDA), the reasoning behind the stigma is mostly due to the abuse of opioids—a class of drugs characterized by their delivery of highly effective pain relief.

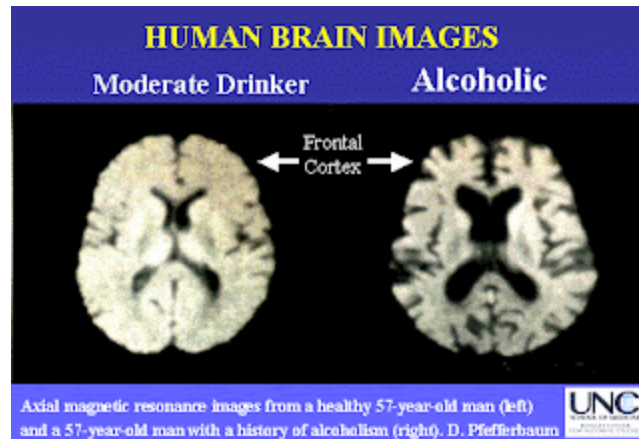
Being the malleable and adaptable beings that us humans are, we have adapted to use drugs to change our bodies. Whether that change is for better or worse depends on whether or not you've become addicted. The reason why society views the term "addiction" as something harmful in the first place is because of the word's close connection to drugs. Even saying the phrase "doing drugs" would get you many judgemental stares, even if all you are doing is taking some allergy medication. When the terms addiction and drugs are combined together, they create an even more specific umbrella term for the existence and use of drugs that provide their user with feelings of reward and reinforcement. It produces its own reward that makes you want to keep taking them again, regardless of the consequences. These drugs aren't meant for the faint of heart and can typically only be found in underground illegal markets. For the purposes of this paper, we are aiming to discuss the negative effects of addictive drugs and how they can be eliminated for good.

As we have seen throughout history, the term drugs did not always have a negative connotation to it. Many drugs were discovered by mere chance by curious scientists. Others were discovered by doctors looking to heal their patients. Ironically enough many addictive drugs were discovered in order to stop other previously existing addictions. But these creations and inventions ended up leading to more drug options for people to become addicted to. The addictive drugs we wish to eliminate exist in a variety of forms. These include, but are not limited to, alcohol, pills, powders (like cocaine), and smoked substances (tobacco, weed, and vapes). To be specific, the most commonly abused drugs are alcohol, club drugs, cocaine, heroin, inhalants, tobacco/nicotine, and molly/ecstasy. What makes these drugs common is not only the fact that they can be found on the streets, but also the fact that some of them are prescribed. Although these drugs are prescribed to patients to help them with a particular problem, they can become addictive when used improperly. This creates a line between properly prescribed medications vs drugs, that typically need to be evaluated on a case by case basis. Medications such as opioids and fentanyl are prescribed for pain relief, but are often abused due to their relaxing and euphoric effects. It is arguably controversial to try and get rid of drugs that are medically prescribed, however these drugs are known to be highly addictive in which their harm outweighs their medicinal benefits (if any).

In its nature, drug addiction is a biological, psychological, and social occurrence. It can also be viewed through a historical lens. Cocaine is one of the longest standing drugs in the United States, originating from the coca plant in the Andean regions of South America. In the early 1880s, cocaine began to become popular in Europe due to its support from doctors and researchers, including the infamous Sigmund Freud. In 1886, Dr. William Alexander Hammond (the Surgeon General of the U.S. Army) supported the use of cocaine for medicinal purposes, leading to it becoming one of the most rapidly imported plants in the United States in the 1900s. It was viewed as a miracle drug that could cure morphine addictions and other depressive symptoms. Neurologically speaking, cocaine releases dopamine in the synapses of the brain, giving you a feeling of joy which can help people with feelings of extreme depression. This positive view of cocaine led to unregulated smuggling of cocaine in America. Eventually, the use of cocaine was outlawed by the Harrison Narcotic Act in 1914, causing the usage of the drug to decline. This lasted up until the 1970s, where its popularity reemerged in big cities such as

Miami and New York. Around this time, cocaine begins to evolve into a new, easily accessible (or at least easier) form. Crack cocaine (or crack for short) is a form of cocaine that can be made by boiling water, cocaine, and baking soda together until it becomes a solid substance that is later broken down into a powder. This DIY drug made a bold appearance in America's major cities: New York, Miami, and Los Angeles as a more affordable version of cocaine for people who lived in low income neighborhoods.

The history of alcohol goes way back; as early as 7000 BC in China, where people began to ferment rice, honey, and fruit as a beverage. Other ancient civilizations— like the Greeks and Native Americans— also had their own form of alcohol creation by fermenting rice and different fruits. By our definition, alcohol is an addictive substance that is in its own unique category due to the fact that it is portrayed as a more acceptable substance to intake. In the United States, the consumption of alcohol is legal once you have reached the age of twenty-one; and the ability to consume alcohol is socially viewed as a rite of passage. It is an addictive substance that makes you feel drunk. To this day alcohol is one of the most commonly used drugs in not only the US, but worldwide. It is categorized as a depressant because of the fact that it reduces functions of the nervous system and activity. Although alcohol doesn't come in a typical prescription bottle, this condition has more effects on people who consume and their surroundings. This condition is classified as Alcohol Use Disorder or alcoholism, where people cannot stop drinking, constantly craving their next drink to feel "better." Alcohol Use Disorder comes in a spectrum, and can be mild, moderate, or severe. Mostly everyone who drinks harms their relationships with family, friends, and colleagues. Studies have shown that the development of alcohol use disorder often stems from genetics, mental health conditions such as PTSD, depression, anxiety, and ADHD could increase risks of addiction. The involved health risks include: alcohol-induced cardiomyopathy, alcohol-induced hepatitis, alcohol poisoning, cerebellar degeneration, liver disease or failure, and alcohol-induced dementia. Many people seek treatment for their alcoholism through talking with addiction counselors or psychologists, and going to support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous.



Growing Up Sober: The Effects of Alcohol Abuse

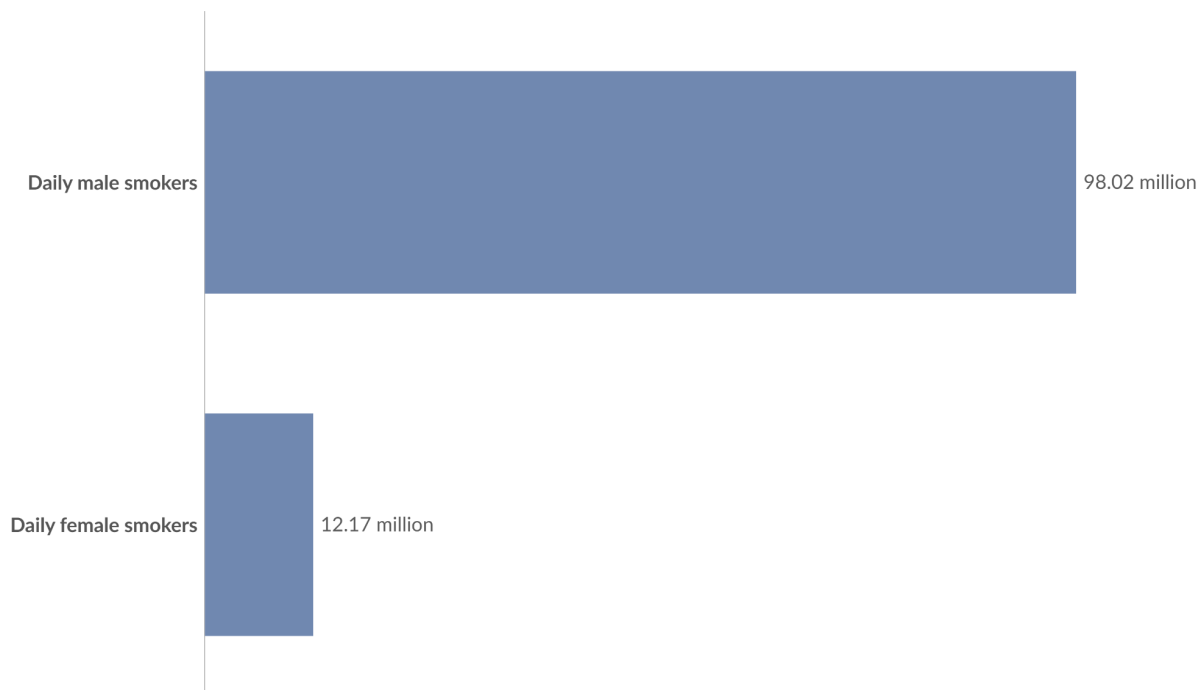
One of the oldest forms of drug use has been smoking. Tobacco is one of the most commonly used drugs worldwide, and it has quite the reputation. The tobacco plant is a part of the nicotiana genus of plants, and it has grown wildly across North and South America for over two thousand years. Originally, this plant was used by Native Central Americans as part of their cultural and religious ceremonies. This practice also spread to the Native North Americans, and it was used in various forms for various purposes, mainly to cure illness or wounds. It was around this time that the Native Americans started using tobacco in pipes and cigars. Once the Columbian exchange began, tobacco was introduced to Europe and it began to be developed over there. Soon, tobacco's international popularity would allow it to become a major cash crop between Europe and early America. As the crop reached more countries, it began to evolve into a multitude of consumable forms. In Spain, cigarettes took the scene as a smaller version of cigars wrapped in thin paper. In South Asia, tobacco can be consumed with a hukka, or it can be powdered into snuff. Similar to alcohol, the globalization of tobacco has caused it to be undeniably tied in with human culture and sociology. In spite of the well known health risks of tobacco consumption, millions of people around the world still use it for many reasons. Some people think that there are positives to its use, such as increased attention and better mood. And unfortunately, others consume tobacco because they believe it makes them look cool. Our society has been conditioned to accept smoking as a symbol of toughness, rebellion, and masculinity. People see the cool main character smoking in their favorite movie, or little kids see their cool older sibling smoking and laughing with their friends, and then rush to follow in their footsteps. Although there are plenty of women out there who smoke tobacco, it is oftentimes seen as

indecent and unladylike for a woman to do so. But as with any other thing in the world when a man does it, it's okay! Smoking makes the woman seem like she is trying to abandon her pure femininity, but for men it gives his masculinity a boost and makes him seem more powerful. As we push to eliminate tobacco and other drugs, we are simultaneously pushing towards a less misogynistic society.

Number of daily smokers, men and women, India, 2012

Our World
in Data

Estimates of the number of men and women who smoke cigarettes at least daily (all ages).



Data source: Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) (2012)

OurWorldinData.org/smoking | CC BY

[Number of daily smokers, men and women, India, 2012](#)

Along with traditional cigarettes, in 2003 came the invention of the e-cigarette, also known as vapes. Vapes were invented by Chinese pharmacist Hon Lik, and were meant to be a safer alternative to normal cigarettes. In April of 2006, vapes were introduced to Europe. In August of that same year, they were seen in the United States. E-cigarettes are built with a battery, an atomizer, and a cartridge containing nicotine. Nicotine is a compound that comes from tobacco, making e-cigarettes users highly susceptible to its addiction. Vapes and e-cigarettes are essentially the modern younger brother of cigars and regular cigarettes, which is part of what makes it so appealing to younger audiences. Additionally, the liquid that is in vapes

can have a variety of flavors such as vanilla or strawberry. Nowadays many teenagers are addicted to their vapes and see nothing wrong with using them— even in school. As anyone who’s ever been a teenager knows, people around that age are more likely to experience peer pressure from their friends to do things that make them seem “cool.” About “85 percent of high school students have felt peer pressure” (Reed, 2021). This high percentage makes it more likely that these teens are doing drugs that they shouldn’t be doing. This is why it is crucial that we educate younger generations on how bad addictive drugs are. Even though many people view vaping as something harmless or fun, it still involves you inhaling nicotine into your lungs. The only difference is that e-cigarettes convert the nicotine into an aerosol, while cigarettes burn the tobacco and you inhale it as smoke. Vaping hasn’t been around for very long, but it can be assumed that the long term health effects are similar to those of cigarette and tobacco usage. Some examples of these side effects are coughing, shortness of breath, and poor oral hygiene.

Marijuana (also known as weed, cannabis, pot, etc), is a psychoactive plant-based drug classified as a depressant, stimulant, and a hallucinogen. Now of course, ancient societies didn’t grow weed to get high. This drug comes from the cannabis sativa plant, and was originally evolved in Central Asia. Since earlier versions of this plant contained low levels of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), it was used for medicine and religious ceremonies. Through trade, this plant was brought from Central Asia to Africa, Europe, and later the Americas. The recreational use of cannabis in the United States began in the early 1900s, and was popular among the youth. Marijuana can affect your nervous system and slow your brain function, altering your sleep, giving you a sense of euphoria, relaxation, and drowsiness. Its side effects are nausea, confusion, reduced motor coordination, low blood pressure, slowed breathing, slurred speech, lightheadedness, blurred vision, and short-term memory loss. These are all side effects of the depressant, stimulants have the opposite effects, some strains of cannabis can increase your heart rate and blood pressure, cause rapid breathing, anxiety, increase in appetite, and paranoia. Although all of these factors are related, weed can also cause hallucinations, altering your sense of reality through sensory reception, visual or auditory responses. Over time all of these side effects from the addiction can cause anxiety, depression, and memory loss. Marijuana is one of the commonly used drugs in the US, according to researchers in 2021, 35.4% of people aged 18 to 25 (11.8 million people) consume marijuana. Of these many use marijuana medically, for

chronic pain relief, nausea relief, management of multiple sclerosis, and an appetite stimulant. Although there are benefits, scientists argued that there still isn't sufficient evidence to support this claim. For this reason, marijuana has several short term and long term effects.

Many drug addicts and devil's advocates would argue that taking away their precious drugs is a morally upright stance that they shouldn't impose onto others. Some would even argue that, if we are going to take away addictive drugs, you might as well get rid of coffee. While it is true that coffee containing caffeine chemically alters the brain into a state of dependence, it is considerably generally safe to consume worldwide. A cup of coffee doesn't change lives the same way cocaine does. Taking drugs consistently over a long period of time leads your body to become dependent upon them. Of course some people don't mind the idea of their body having to rely on substances to feel alive. But the problem is you become dependent both physically and mentally. First we can discuss the physical effects. The negative physical side effects of drugs are one of the many reasons why we (scientists and researchers) cannot create an ultimate super drug that would solve everyone's problems and have no bad side effects. Once the human body is given a boost of dopamine, we will continue to chase that feeling and repeat whatever action led us to that temporary happiness. But chasing a temporary happiness is exactly what drains you out mentally when you do drugs. If you are someone who uses street drugs to make yourself feel complete, then you've become an addict without even realizing it. Your body will never chemically be the same and you have to keep spending money just to keep yourself afloat. You're in a constant state of wanting— never satisfied without your powders or your cigars. Once you get caught in this cycle of wanting and receiving, it can be difficult to break out of because your mind will tell you one thing, and your body will tell you another. This is why—in order to break that cycle— we wish to eliminate all addictive drugs through preventative education, awareness, and by stopping the production of these drugs once and for all.

Description of the Problem

By Nikoletta

Addictive drugs are on the rise of posing the most dangerous threats to society today. These drugs pose major global health and social problems for many, including alcohol, nicotine, prescription opioids, and illegal drugs such as cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine, damage cognitive function and bodily integrity. Families, communities, and the economy have been impacted the most and ripple effects will continue to affect society as drug use increases. Physical dependence and psychological addiction is what defines substance addiction, the widespread misuse of these substances place a heavy burden on individuals, hindering their health outcomes, social stability, and financial security.

The causes of addiction and substance abuse have no definitive answer, yet biological factors often influence development of addiction. The biological components of addiction are genetics, genetic predisposition plays a critical role in determining the likelihood of an individual developing dependency. This dependency is also known as substance use disorder(SUD). Substance use disorder is a complex pattern of drug dependence that affects your physical and mental health. SUD is a mental health condition, the constant craving of the substance where it causes anxiety if you don't consume consistently. Addiction runs in families, different genes often are associated with different types of addiction. Not everyone is susceptible to these genes, since there isn't a specific genome. Studies show that, "genetic factors are responsible for 40% to 60%of the vulnerability to any SUD. If you have a first-degree relative(biological sibling or parent) with a substance abuse disorder, you're more likely to develop one(Cleveland clinic)." A common misconception about addiction is that the body craves the substance, when in fact it is the brain. Significant areas of the brain such as the frontal cortex and the reward system get altered especially when undergoing development. Substances can also affect the neurochemicals

in your brain; surges of dopamine get released making you associate those substances with one of your survival tasks, affecting your thoughts, feelings, and behavior. According to the National Institute of Health, “But when you’re becoming addicted to a substance, that normal handwriting of helpful brain processes can begin to work against you. Drugs or alcohol can hijack the pleasure/reward circuits in your brain and hook you into wanting more and more. Addiction can also send your emotional danger-sensing circuits into overdrive, making you feel anxious and stressed when you’re not using drugs or alcohol.” The repetitive activity of a “high” and alcohol use replace the negative emotions of the addiction for pleasure. Extensive damage to the prefrontal cortex decreases activity with impulse control and assessing risks. Over time, drug and alcohol addiction changes your brain chemistry and becomes callous to their effects.

Other factors of addiction are mental health conditions, during childhood many individuals experience predisposition to addiction through growing up with alcoholics or drug users, child abuse, and experiencing excessive stress. These stressors are associated with depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and bipolar disorder. Significant environmental risk factors such as peer pressure, misuse of prescription drugs, traumatic events, and exposure to addiction aid in developing addiction and mental health issues. As a consequence of these factors, a coping-mechanism to self medicate is turning to drugs for a sense of an altered reality.

Addictive drug use patterns are greatly influenced by social and environmental factors, which frequently determine both early substance exposure and long-term susceptibility to addiction. Drug use develops in the larger context of a person's daily environment, social connections, and opportunities; it does not happen in a state of isolation. One of the most important social determinants of drug use is peer influence. When surrounded by peers who normalize, support, or model substance-using behaviors, adolescents and young adults are more vulnerable to drug use. This pressure might be tacit, resulting from a desire to blend in or prevent social marginalization, or explicit, like outright encouragement.

Family dynamics are very important. People are more likely to come into contact with drugs at a young age in households that exhibit conflict, neglect, inconsistent parental supervision, or substance use among family members. Children may use drugs as a coping

strategy if they are raised in settings with unstable emotions or unsupportive relationships. On the other hand, parental participation and close family ties serve as protective factors. Drug exposure is greatly influenced by neighborhood and community factors. Substance use is more common in areas with high crime rates, widespread drug trafficking, few leisure opportunities, and inadequate infrastructure. Drugs might be easier to obtain in such settings, and there might be fewer good alternatives for socializing or relieving stress. Protective institutions that might ordinarily deter drug abuse are further undermined by social disarray and a lack of communal cohesiveness. Economic hardship and social inequality contribute extensively to drug addiction risk. Poverty, unemployment, unstable housing, and limited access to education create chronic stress and feelings of hopelessness, factors that can lead individuals to seek relief through substance use. Marginalized populations often face additional barriers, including discrimination, reduced access to healthcare, and limited opportunities for economic advancement, all of which intensify vulnerability. marginalized groups—such as low-income individuals, racial minorities, and those experiencing homelessness—are disproportionately affected by addiction and its consequences. These populations often face barriers to healthcare, education, stable employment, and safe housing, all of which increase vulnerability to substance use. Once addiction develops, these same barriers make it far more difficult to access treatment. This creates a feedback loop in which social disadvantage fuels addiction, and addiction further entrenches people in marginalization. Cultural norms and societal attitudes shape how communities perceive and interact with drugs. In cultures where alcohol, nicotine, or certain prescription drugs are socially accepted or widely used, individuals may underestimate the risks these substances pose. Media portrayals that glamorize substance use further influence public perception, particularly among youth. When taken as a whole, these social and environmental elements show that addiction is intricately linked to the circumstances and relationships that surround an individual and is not only the result of personal conduct. Therefore, addressing addiction necessitates treatments that go beyond the individual and involve community resources, family support networks, and more extensive societal reforms.

Systemic and economic influences play a pivotal role in both the emergence and persistence of addictive drug problems. These factors extend beyond individual behavior and encompass broader institutional, governmental, and market-level forces that shape how substances are produced, distributed, regulated, and treated in society. The pharmaceutical

industry and healthcare systems have contributed significantly to substance misuse, particularly in the case of prescription opioids. In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, aggressive marketing campaigns by pharmaceutical companies promoted opioid medications as safe and effective for chronic pain, often downplaying their addictive potential. As a result, physicians relying on incomplete or misleading information prescribed these drugs at high rates, inadvertently fueling widespread dependency. Before corrective action was taken, improper prescribing practices persisted for years due to weak oversight, poor regulation, and inadequate surveillance mechanisms. Regulatory and policy shortcomings have exacerbated drug-related issues. In some regions, drug laws prioritize criminalization over prevention and rehabilitation. Harsh penalties for possession or minor drug offenses often result in incarceration rather than treatment, disproportionately impacting marginalized populations and contributing to cycles of addiction and poverty.

Policies that focus primarily on punitive responses tend to discourage individuals from seeking help due to fear of legal consequences, thereby allowing addiction to worsen before intervention occurs. A structural obstacle that hinders early intervention and rehabilitation is the lack of access to mental health and addiction care. Many towns lack sufficient treatment facilities, counseling services, medically assisted treatment choices, or qualified mental health experts, especially those in rural or economically poor areas. Additional challenges include lengthy waiting lists, expensive medical care, and insufficient insurance coverage. Many people are left without assistance until their addiction has severely worsened due to these weaknesses in the healthcare system. Economic instability and structural inequalities heighten vulnerability to addiction. Individuals living in poverty, facing unemployment, or experiencing insecure housing conditions often encounter chronic stressors that increase the likelihood of turning to substances for coping. Economic pressures also reduce access to preventive resources such as quality education, stable employment, and supportive social networks that could mitigate the risk of addiction. In many cases, entire communities affected by economic decline or industrial loss see elevated rates of substance misuse as social and economic opportunities diminish. Inadequate funding and fragmented service systems hinder coordinated responses to addiction. Public health, criminal justice, education, and social service sectors often operate independently rather than collaboratively, causing gaps in care and creating inefficiencies. Limited funding for prevention programs, research, and community outreach restricts the development of

comprehensive, evidence-based solutions. When taken as a whole, these systemic and economic variables show that addiction is a result of bigger institutional and structural dynamics rather than just a human or moral problem. Expanded healthcare resources, improved regulation, policy reform, and a stronger focus on public health strategies rather than punitive frameworks are all necessary to address these underlying causes.

The health consequences of addictive drug use are extensive, multifaceted, and often irreversible. Addiction affects nearly every major organ system, while also altering neurological function in ways that make cessation extremely difficult. These health effects accumulate over time, contributing to significant morbidity and mortality worldwide. Addictive substances profoundly impact the central nervous system (CNS). Drugs such as opioids, stimulants, and depressants disrupt the brain's natural reward circuitry by artificially elevating dopamine levels. Over time, the brain adapts to these changes, reducing its sensitivity to natural rewards and increasing dependence on the substance. This neuroadaptation results in impaired decision-making, diminished impulse control, and compulsive drug-seeking behavior. Long-term use can also lead to memory impairment, attention deficits, mood disorders, and in severe cases permanent cognitive decline. Chronic substance use harms the cardiovascular system. Stimulants like cocaine and methamphetamine can cause elevated heart rate, hypertension, arrhythmias, and increased risk of heart attack or stroke. Opioids depress respiration, leading to dangerously low oxygen levels that strain the heart. Alcohol and other depressants can cause cardiomyopathy, heart failure, and other long-term cardiac conditions. Addictive drugs significantly affect the respiratory system. Smoking substances—whether tobacco, crack cocaine, methamphetamine, or marijuana—can lead to chronic bronchitis, decreased lung function, and higher risk of respiratory infections. Opioids may slow or stop breathing entirely, making respiratory depression the leading cause of fatal overdose. Fourth, the liver and gastrointestinal system experience substantial damage. Alcohol is one of the most common contributors to liver diseases such as fatty liver, hepatitis, and cirrhosis. Drug-induced gastrointestinal issues may include ulcers, malnutrition, internal bleeding, and impaired nutrient absorption. Many substances also cause severe dehydration and electrolyte imbalances. Addiction often compromises the immune system, making individuals more susceptible to infections. Behaviors associated with drug use such as sharing needles or engaging in unsafe practices heighten the risk of contracting bloodborne diseases like HIV, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C. Drug-induced suppression of immune

function further increases vulnerability to pneumonia, tuberculosis, and other infectious diseases. Overdose remains one of the most severe health consequences of addiction. Overdose can occur when the body is unable to tolerate a high concentration of a drug, resulting in respiratory failure, cardiac arrest, seizures, or loss of consciousness. Opioid overdoses, in particular, have escalated dramatically in recent years, contributing to a global public health crisis. Beyond the immediate physiological effects, addiction also has impacts on overall health and well-being, including disrupted sleep patterns, chronic pain, poor hygiene, inadequate nutrition, and higher rates of co-occurring mental health disorders. These combined effects illustrate that drug addiction is not merely a lifestyle issue but a serious medical condition that jeopardizes long-term physical and psychological health.

The social consequences of addictive drug use are profound, far-reaching, and often intergenerational. Addiction does not affect the individual alone; it disrupts families, weakens communities, and strains social systems. These impacts create a cycle in which social instability both contributes to and results from substance misuse. Addiction frequently damages interpersonal relationships. Individuals struggling with substance dependence often withdraw from social connections, experience mood instability, or engage in behaviors that erode trust. Relationships between partners, friends, and extended family members can deteriorate due to broken promises, dishonesty, financial strain, or emotional volatility. Over time, this erosion of social support can intensify isolation, which in turn exacerbates drug use. Family functioning is significantly affected. Children living in households with addiction are at heightened risk of neglect, inconsistent caregiving, emotional trauma, and unstable living conditions. These adverse childhood experiences can impair academic performance, mental health, and long-term development. In severe cases, parental substance misuse may lead to involvement from child protective services or removal of children from the home. Families often face emotional exhaustion as they attempt to manage the unpredictable behavior of a loved one struggling with addiction.

Addictive drug use contributes to increased rates of domestic conflict and violence. Substance misuse impairs judgment, heightens aggression in some individuals, and contributes to volatile household environments. These conditions place both adults and children at risk of physical or psychological harm. The stress associated with living in a household marked by

addiction further perpetuates cycles of trauma and instability. Both adults and children are at danger of bodily or psychological injury due to these diseases. Living in a home where addiction is prevalent causes stress, which exacerbates trauma and instability cycles. Addiction is closely associated with homelessness and housing instability. Substance use may lead to job loss, inability to pay rent or maintain consistent employment, and strained relationships with family members who might otherwise provide housing support. Once individuals become homeless, the stresses of unstable living conditions can intensify drug use, making recovery even more challenging. Drug addiction contributes to social stigma, which further isolates individuals from community support. People with substance use disorders frequently face discrimination in employment, healthcare, and social settings. Stigma discourages individuals from seeking treatment due to fear of judgment, shame, or being labeled as morally deficient. This lack of social acceptance undermines recovery efforts and reinforces cycles of marginalization. Communities experience broader social disruption when addiction becomes widespread. High levels of substance misuse can reduce neighborhood safety, lower property values, increase public disorder, and strain community resources such as social services and local health clinics. Schools may encounter increased absenteeism or behavioral issues among students affected by addiction within their household. Overall, the social consequences of addictive drug use illustrate that addiction is not a private or isolated issue; it is a societal challenge that weakens the social fabric and contributes to long-term community instability. Addressing these social impacts requires coordinated support systems, community engagement, and policies that prioritize rehabilitation over punishment.

The economic costs associated with addictive drug use are immense, multifaceted, and felt across all levels of society. These costs are borne not only by individuals and families but also by healthcare systems, employers, government agencies, and taxpayers. The financial burden extends far beyond the direct expense of drugs themselves, encompassing long-term societal losses and structural inefficiencies. Addiction to drugs increases the cost of social services. The instability that addiction causes increases demand for government-funded programs, such as foster care systems, homelessness services, unemployment benefits, and disability benefits. Children whose parents suffer from addiction frequently need state-funded care, which comes at a high long-term expense. Communities with high addiction rates also

require increased investment in social support programs, rehabilitation facilities, and community outreach initiatives.

The issue of addictive drug use represents a deeply complex public health challenge shaped by a wide array of biological, psychological, social, and systemic factors. Addiction is not merely the result of individual choices but reflects broader forces—genetic vulnerabilities, mental health struggles, environmental pressures, economic inequities, and institutional shortcomings—that collectively influence patterns of substance misuse. Its consequences extend far beyond the individual, destabilizing families, burdening healthcare systems, weakening communities, and imposing staggering economic costs on society. Recognizing addiction as a multifaceted and chronic condition is essential for developing effective responses. Punitive or stigmatizing approaches have consistently failed to reduce drug use or support long-term recovery. Instead, evidence increasingly demonstrates the need for compassionate, comprehensive strategies that integrate prevention, early intervention, accessible treatment, harm reduction, and long-term social support. Addressing the systemic barriers—such as inadequate healthcare access, fragmented service systems, and inequitable economic conditions—is equally crucial in reducing the prevalence and impact of addiction.

Ultimately, confronting the problem of addictive drugs requires coordinated efforts from governments, healthcare providers, educational institutions, community organizations, and the public. Through policies grounded in public health principles rather than punishment, and through sustained investment in treatment, education, and community support, societies can mitigate the devastating effects of addiction and promote healthier, more stable communities. Only with holistic, collaborative, and compassionate action can meaningful progress be made in breaking the cycle of addiction and improving the well-being of individuals and communities alike.

Possible Solutions and Recommendations for Drug Users

By Mikelena

Drug abuse is a complex social and psychological growing issue that requires early prevention, education, and strong community involvement. Teen drug abuse continues to be a major public health issue across the United States and the rest of the world. The growing accessibility of drugs, social pressure, and lack of education about consequences of substance use all contribute to the rise of addiction especially for teens. While society mainly focuses on punishing those who engage with substances, some of the most effective ways to combat this problem are adding programs to reduce negative consequences of drug use, more public awareness and creating prevention programs to tackle early drug usage leading to drug addiction. These solutions focus on addressing the root causes of substance abuse.

Raising awareness is the first and most essential step in addressing teen drug abuse because it helps people understand both the reality of addiction and the importance of prevention. Many young people experiment with drugs out of curiosity, social influence, or the belief that substance use is harmless. In truth, this experimenting often stems from a lack of accurate information and open communication. To reduce the amount of individuals who are involved in drug use, we must first start with the younger generation.

Awareness begins with education. Teenagers are at an age when they are forming their identities and learning to navigate complex social pressures. Providing them with honest, age appropriate information about the physical and psychological effects of drugs empowers them to make better choices. Instead of using fear tactics or exaggerated claims, awareness programs must focus on real facts about how drugs affect the brain, disrupt emotions, and alter behavior. When people learn that drug use can impair memory, slow decision making, and increase the risk of depression or anxiety, the message becomes both relatable and credible.

Encouraging honest communication between students, parents, and teachers helps remove the stigma surrounding drug use and addiction. For example, schools can host “health

awareness weeks” or invite recovering individuals to share personal stories in a safe, nonjudgmental setting. Raising awareness about drug abuse is more than just teaching facts, it's about changing perceptions, promoting open communication, and empowering young people. When teens, parents, school, and communities work together to foster awareness, the cycle of misinformation and stigma can be broken. Awareness helps teens see beyond the myths, understand the real risk of drug use, and recognize that choosing a healthy, drug free lifestyle is both achievable and worthwhile.

A lot of time after many individuals get involved with drug addiction they feel embarrassed and even ashamed to ask for help especially if they're teens, and that can lead to some more serious issues regarding their mental health. One of the most common programs that help is rehab. How effective is rehab? American Addiction Centers state that nearly “108,000 people died in the United States from drug-involved overdoses.¹ That's almost 296 people a day” (Generes) and that is only in 2022. From 1981 to 2022 drug overdose had become one of the main factors of death in the United States. Rehab helps individuals by using different interventions to develop strategies to overcome whatever challenge they're facing, also supporting them to start living drug free and healthy productive lives.

Some individuals tend to relapse after treatment, “only 25 percent are successful at reducing their alcohol intake for more than a year” (Generes). Addiction is a hard and chronic illness, so relapsing is normal and part of the process. “Less than 43 percent of the individuals who enter treatment for drug and alcohol use complete it” (Generes). Even if the percentage of individuals who seek help after drug addiction isn't as high as people would like it to be, it's still an improvement. Does relapse to drug use mean treatment has failed? According to The National institute on drug use, “**No.** The chronic nature of addiction means that for some people *relapse*, or a return to drug use after an attempt to stop, can be part of the process, but newer treatments are designed to help with relapse prevention. Relapse rates for drug use are similar to rates for other chronic medical illnesses. If people stop following their medical treatment plan, they are likely to relapse.” Allowing themselves to seek help in the first place was already a huge milestone, so 43 percent is better than none. The national institute on drug abuse states that, “Like treatment for other chronic diseases such as heart disease or asthma, addiction treatment is

not a cure, but a way of managing the condition. Treatment enables people to counteract addiction's disruptive effects on their brain and behavior and regain control of their lives.” Recovery does not end after rehabilitation. Many, especially teens, struggle to return to school, find jobs, or reconnect emotionally and socially. Creating reentry programs that help recovering individuals rebuild their lives. School districts can establish alternative education programs where recovering students can continue learning at their own pace. Mentorship programs that pair recovering teens with young adults who have also overcome addiction can provide encouragement and hope.

Awareness is the root of all prevention efforts. Raising drug awareness helps by preventing initial use, facilitating early intervention, guiding people to treatment, reducing stigma, and fostering healthier, safer communities. The national institute on drug abuse states that, “As noted previously, early use of drugs increases a person's chances of becoming addicted. Remember, drugs change the brain—and this can lead to addiction and other serious problems. So, preventing early use of drugs or alcohol may go a long way in reducing these risks.” (NIH, 2020) Most teens are influenced on social and even school by their peers to start engaging in drugs. So the best way to target teens who are influenced is by using what they know and love best. Social media plays a big part in how people live their life, as trends come and go, more and more people are discovering new things to involve in their daily lives. Drugs are increasingly becoming something individuals use in their everyday lives. Using social media to educate them on the harm that comes from drugs and the life long consequences that come along. Raising awareness helps correct misconceptions about drugs and encourages young people to make informed decisions.

Addiction Center claims that, “Teens are uniquely vulnerable to the effects of what they see on social media, as this age group is highly susceptible to peer influences and pressure.” (Hilliard) Teens are more likely to believe what they see on social media, at that age their brains are not fully developed yet and they are easily influenced. Even though social media plays a big part influencing teens on starting drug use it can also be used to help to educate and encourage teens with learning the consequences and effects of drug use and how it can lead to addiction. Using social media allows for a more broad range of information to be spread, not only that but

information travels quicker with social media. Influencers and athletes have a lot of influence on people who use social media, partnership with those influencers can reach a wide range of audiences and make the message more authentic. A lot of young individuals involve themselves in video games. To target those individuals, creating simulations and video games that are similar to what they usually play could also have a positive impact on how they absorb information on drug use. Allowing them to see the real effect of drugs on the human body will broaden their understanding.

While awareness focuses on knowledge, prevention programs focus on action, equipping teens with the life skills and support system they need to reduce the likelihood of trying drugs in the first place. One of the most effective places for early prevention is the school environment, where students can be reached before or even during their first exposure to drugs. Schools provide a unique opportunity to guide teens at a time when they are forming habits, facing peer pressure, and learning to make independent decisions. By teaching students how to manage stress, resist social pressure, and think critically about their decisions, schools can greatly decrease the chances of substance use in the early years.

Health education courses should also go beyond basic facts and statistics. They should explain addiction in simple, relatable terms helping students understand how drugs affect their brain, emotions, and decision makes. Lessons that include real life examples, open discussions, and interactive activities can make the information more meaningful. When students truly understand how addiction develops and why it's so harmful, they are better prepared to make responsible choices.

Next, is community and after school programs because prevention extends beyond the classroom. Many teens turn to drugs out of boredom, lack of positive influence and attention. A lot of people use sports, clubs and art programs as a sense of belonging. They can use this as a distraction for whenever the thought of using drugs comes into mind. After school programs can provide volunteer opportunities that keep youth engaged. Many teens experiment with drugs as a way to handle stress, social anxiety, or emotional pain. Programs that teach coping skills like mindfulness, stress management, and communication can help students develop healthier

responses to life's problems and challenges. Prevention programs must not only warn teens about drugs but they must prepare them for life and all obstacles that come along with it.

Works Cited within the White Paper

Cleveland Clinic. "Addictive Substances: What They Are, Effects & Types." *Cleveland Clinic*, 10 September 2024, <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/addictive-substances>. Accessed 6 November 2025.

Cleveland Clinic. "Vaping (E-Cigarettes): What It Is, Side Effects & Dangers." *Cleveland Clinic*, 22 August 2022, <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/treatments/21162-vaping>. Accessed 14 November 2025.

Editors, HISTORY.com. "Marijuana - Plant, Use & Effects | HISTORY." *History.com*, 31 May 2017, <https://www.history.com/articles/history-of-marijuana>. Accessed 14 November 2025.

Generes, Wendy Manwarren. "Drug Rehab Success Rates and Statistics." *American Addiction Centers*, 31 March 2025, <https://americanaddictioncenters.org/rehab-guide/success-rates-and-statistics>. Accessed 14 November 2025.

Hilliard, Jena. "The Influence Of Social Media On Teen Drug Use." *Addiction Center*, 29 July 2025, <https://www.addictioncenter.com/community/social-media-teen-drug-use/>. Accessed 14 November 2025.

McMurtrey, James Edward. "Nicotine | Tobacco, Addiction, Poison." *Britannica*, 26 September 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/science/nicotine>. Accessed 14 November 2025.

Mishra, Shanu, et al. "Tobacco: Its historical, cultural, oral, and periodontal health association." *PubMed Central*, 2013, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3894096/>. Accessed 13 November 2025.

National Institute of Drug Abuse. "Treatment and Recovery | National Institute on Drug Abuse."

NIDA, 6 July 2020,

<https://nida.nih.gov/publications/drugs-brains-behavior-science-addiction/treatment-recovery>. Accessed 13 November 2025.

NSW Cancer Council. "A brief history of smoking." *Cancer Council NSW*,

<https://www.cancercouncil.com.au/news/a-brief-history-of-smoking/>. Accessed 14 November 2025.

PBS. "The Buyers - A Social History Of America's Most Popular Drugs | Drug Wars |

FRONTLINE." *PBS*, 2014,

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/drugs/buyers/socialhistory.html>. Accessed 6 November 2025.

Reed, Catherine. "23 Insightful Peer Pressure Statistics." *The Firewall Times*, 27 September

2021, <https://firewalltimes.com/peer-pressure-statistics/>. Accessed 14 November 2025.

Tackett, Brittany, and Dan Wagener. "The History of Marijuana: Learn About The Origin of

Marijuana." *Recovery.org*, 31 July 2025, <https://recovery.org/marijuana/history/>.

Accessed 14 November 2025.

University of San Francisco. "Commonly Abused Drugs." *myUSF*,

<https://myusf.usfca.edu/hps/alcohol-drugs/commonly-abused-drugs>. Accessed 6 November 2025.

B: Warning Message

Warning Message to Humans in the Future (Part B):

By Johnathan

Project Overlord Report 7777

ANK777 · AT – 7777

Printed sometime in the near future

**The Invasive Nature of Addictive Drugs in a
Capitalistic Society and Markers to Deter
Society from Addiction**

Johnathan Sattaur
Mikolena Bouzy
Nikoletta Abel
Emily Lugo
Vallery Taveras
Victoria Morris
Zuzia Smolaga

**Prepared by
Department of State and Human Resources
In Collaboration with Ankver Lab
New York, NY 12345
for the guys at the top
and to those who come after us**



Issued by the New World Department of State and Human Affairs

Printed in the New World. This is the best copy. The ONLY copy.

Against America

Available publicly by:

Me

Me

Me

Me again

Me

Me

Mickey

Niko

Victoria

Zuzia

Vallery

Emily

from:

Somewhere in NY

Contents

1. Introduction
 - 1.1: The Issue
 - 1.2: Marker

2. Context and Analysis
 - 2.1: What Caused the Drug Epidemic
 - 2.2 Effects on People and Society

3. Methodology of Markers
 - 3.1 Principles and Key

4. References/Sources

5. Special Thanks

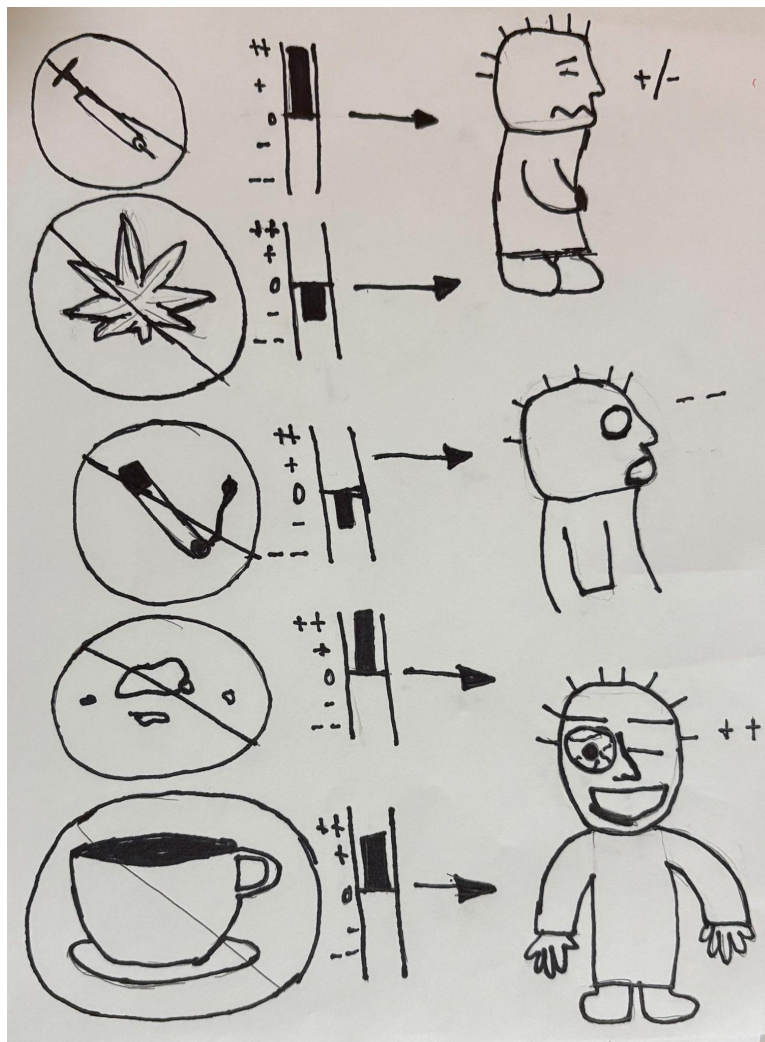
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1: The Issue

Drugs— by definition— are a medicine or other substance that when ingested has a physiological effect. They are usually used to treat illnesses and pain. However, like all things when ingested, the substance will enter the bloodstream when consumed. Most of the time it is harmless, however when certain substances are ingested and substances beyond a certain amount are consumed, they have harmful effects. The most common harmful drugs are tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, heroin, cocaine, crack, methamphetamines, fentanyl. These are known as addictive drugs because any amount consumed has a harmful effect on the body. Most of these are illegal as well. However, even pharmaceutical drugs, when overconsumed, are addictive and can be highly dangerous, such as: acetaminophen, ketamine, opioids, etc. This seems very simple; illegal drugs are harmful so you should stay away from them, and pharmaceutical drugs should only be consumed within their allotted constraints as provided by your doctor or on the packaging.

Now we reach the main issue, there is generally no regulation to acquiring drugs and many broken points in our systems. First, there are many loopholes to get around getting drugs that can only be prescribed, such as going to different doctors and getting prescribed medication. Not only that, many over-the-counter drugs exist making it very easy to acquire drugs, such as: Tylenol, Benadryl, sleep aids, anabolic steroids, laxatives, etc. Even something that people commonly consume, coffee, is a drug because of the caffeine in it. Now we've reached the root problem. The world we live in perpetually encourages the consumption of drugs, even when it seems like we are against it.

1.2: Markers



In essence, these markers just show what drugs could look like, to not consume them, and the effects they could have on your brain.

2. Context and Analysis

2.1: What Caused The Drug Epidemic?

The world today faces a drug epidemic. There are many avenues to acquire drugs and they are so widely consumed, it is normal in most places to consume things like alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances. But why is the world like this in the first place? To put it simply, the drug business generates a lot of money. We live in a capitalistic society, derived from colonialism and mercantilism of past empires. Our society revolves around the very basis of getting money and spending it. Now with this current society we live in, it breeds corruption and dishonesty in order to achieve control in a government that can be simply bought out by the highest bidder. Our government bends the knee to those who are paying them and it creates a false sense of leadership where the government is actually controlled by corporations who line the pockets of our politicians. This leads to things like costly healthcare, cuts to public funding, cuts to government agencies that support the working class (such as SNAP, Medicaid, etc.), and large conspiracies to push drugs to the people. Historically, this is well known with events such as the Opium Wars (1839-1860), where Great Britain sold opium in the Chinese Black Market because China did not let Britain have a sphere of influence in China's trades. Opium was pushed into Chinese society, severely weakening the population because opium is highly addictive. In the 1960s the CIA in the American government was widely known to push drugs into colored and impoverished communities to create division between races.

Our society breeds corruption in order to keep control. Things like healthcare are highly expensive, food is costly and hard to acquire, many people are homeless and others struggle to keep their homes. Our governments often create plots against us to create division and anger. This is quite the opposite of what the governments should be in our world. The government should be a public service, providing for the people. We should have housing for everybody, food should be available to all, everyone should have access to free and good healthcare and education. Our politicians are supposed to be public servants, voted in to serve and support the people. In the current world we live in people have to fight to only get scraps while the smallest

percentage of people hold most of the world's wealth. Drugs are super invasive in this kind of environment. It becomes easily intrusive when the government pushes drugs into impoverished communities, creates massive class disparities, and makes healthcare and food almost impossible to acquire. People who can't get proper medical treatment abuse things like painkillers to find relief; people with severe mental issues— such as depression —often abuse illegal drugs or alcohol to find relief for their conditions.

2.2: Effects on People and Society

In the United States, around 60% of people aged 12 or older used some type of drug in 2024 (tobacco, alcohol, vaping, illicit drugs). It is very common and accepted in most places to use a type of drug, usually the most popular drugs such as: alcohol, tobacco, nicotine, marijuana. These drugs often destroy people and their lives. Alcohol impairs you, making it harder to function and do tasks. People still do these tasks while inebriated, like driving, working, talking with others, etc. Many people become angrier and out of control when under the influence. Tobacco products like cigarettes can cause things like lung cancer, oral cancer, gum receding, lower stamina, and generally make breathing harder. However we as a society often smoke cigarettes because they provide a stress relief effect or simply because most people think they look “cool” while doing so. The same effects apply to vaping and other nicotine products. Marijuana also impairs you like alcohol, but also causes the same effects as cigarettes and vaping. People use marijuana because it also provides an aloof, stress-relief effect.

Illicit drugs can destroy your life. Things such as methamphetamines, crack-cocaine, and fentanyl can cause you to hallucinate and act bizarrely. Not only that, they are highly addictive, causing many people to spend all of their money to simply acquire these drugs. This applies to all of the drugs listed and more. Many people spend all of their money on things like tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs. However, in a capitalistic society, you need money to survive. You need money to pay for housing, food, clothing, transportation, and education. It creates an endless loop where people get addicted to drugs, may spend all their money on drugs, and then

end up homeless and fighting for more money in order to acquire more drugs. In short, a cycle to keep people in a lower class in the current economic class-based system we have now.

3. Methodology of Markers

3.1: Principles and Key

There are three components

1. The Drugs
2. The Meter
3. The Faces

Each drug has a meter which could correspond with one of the faces that have a positive or negative symbol. The meter just describes the amount of brain activity caused by each drug. The singular positive or negative symbols signify a moderate decrease/increase in brain activity while the double positive or negative signify an extreme decrease/increase in brain activity. Positive correlates with an increase in brain activity and negative correlates with a decrease in brain activity. Each face corresponds with a set of symbols that show what could happen to a person if they consume said drug that corresponds with that level of brain activity

The first face shows a queasy look, corresponding with someone who is intoxicated. The second face shows a ghost-like face where life is sucked out of the person. This simply illustrates extremely low brain activity from drugs that slow you down. The last face shows someone who seems extremely intoxicated, where the person has a high amount of brain activity from a drug.

4. References/Sources

- [“SAMHSA Releases Annual National Survey on Drug Use and Health.” SAMHSA, 28 July 2025.](#)

www.samhsa.gov/newsroom/press-announcements/20250728/samhsa-releases-annual-national-survey-on-drug-use-and-health#:~:text=Among%20people%2012%20or%20older,rceived%20neither%20type%20of%20treatment

- My AP World History Teacher: Kyle Novak

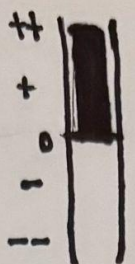
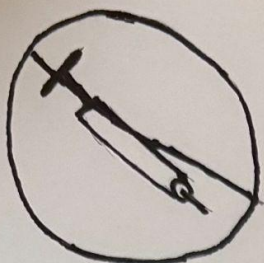
5. Special Thanks

Thanks to me for writing this report in service of the New World Order and for the NWO themselves. I wouldn't have been able to do it if it weren't for a secret society approaching me and asking me to create a new world with them. Here's to the New World of peace, which doesn't include any drugs!

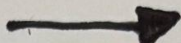
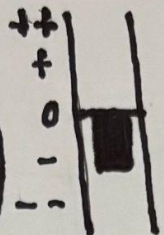
Special Mentions

- Writer - Me
- Editor - Me
- Illustrator - Me

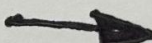
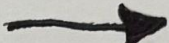
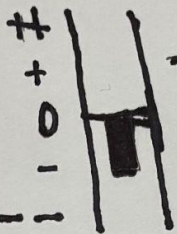
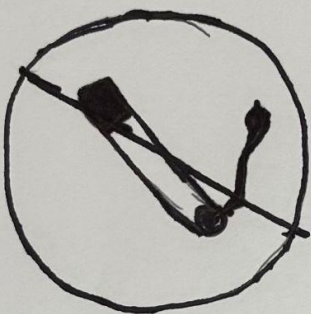
FULL ILLUSTRATION ON NEXT PAGE



+/-



- - -



++



C: Public-Facing Campaign

Public-Facing Campaign (Part C): Script for Anti-Drug Use Instagram

Reel

By Vallery

S (Speaker)- Young educated girl (gen z)

P (Purpose)- to inform on the danger of addictive drugs

A (Audience)- tiktok genz

C (Context)- instagram reel short chat

E (Exigence)- influence of new world for safer life

C (Choices)- imagery, hyperbole, metaphor

A (Appeal)- pathos, logos

T (Tone)- sincere, erie

1-Minute Script Template



[Hook – 0:00–0:05]

(Bold Rhetorical Question)

“What if I told you that one of these pills was laced with fentanyl?”

“Would you be able to tell”

[Setup – 0:05–0:15]

(Context)

“It is estimated that 105... hundred thousand people will die due to drug overdose in 2023? Insane right!? 80,000 of those deaths actually involved opioids

“a class of drugs used most known for their effectiveness of pain relief”

[Deep Dive – 0:15–0:35]

(Quick explanation)

“Many temporarily rely on these opioids for pain relief following major surgery”

“Meanwhile, giant pharmaceutical corporations profit billions while everyday people vote with their dollars to keep production flowing.”

[Call-to-Action / Outro – 0:35–0:45]

(Finishing Statement)

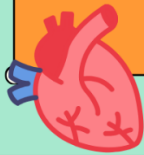
“So the question isn’t *how do we fix it* — it’s *how long will we keep ignoring it?*”

“Click the link in my bio to find out how you can be a part of a world that puts your health over profit... instead of the other way around...”

WHEN THE ANTIDOTE BECOMES THE POISON

DID YOU KNOW!?

In the year 2024 alone
there were a total of 53,336
deaths due to drug
overdose



Empathize with them.

Nearly 7 in 10 overdose deaths
in the U.S. now involve
synthetic opioids like fentanyl
– often found in counterfeit
pills.



WHAT CAN WE DO

We as a people want to stop
this. Say no to big
pharmaceutical corporations
who make money off of human
suffering.

THIS COULD BE YOU

21.9% had a non-substance-
related mental health disorder

In 2021, only 23.2% of people
ages 18–44 received any mental
health treatment



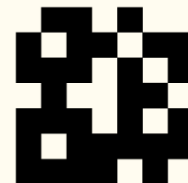
Tragedy In Your Own Community

The CDC highlights that from 2019
to 2020, overdose deaths
increased disproportionately in
some racial groups (44% increase
for Black people; 39% for American
Indian/Alaska Native)



JOIN OUR PLANET

We are building a new
community, free of harmful
substances that destroy
communities. Scan the QR
code to apply.



D: Textbook Section

Textbook Section (Part D)

By Emily and Zuzia

“The Dangers of Drugs and their Impact on Society”

Sample pages from the Publisher-Award Winning Textbook written by:

Susan Smolaga

Emily Lugo

Nikoletta Abel

Johnathan Sattaur

Vallery Taveras

Victoria Morris

Mikelena Bouzy

Chapter 1: Introduction to Addictive Substances

Section 1.1 - What are drugs?

Formal definition wise, drugs are a medicine or other substance which has a physiological effect when ingested or otherwise introduced into the body, or, a substance taken for its narcotic or stimulant effects, typically illegally. (both definitions taken from Oxford Languages)

Simply put, drugs are substances that change your brain and body when you take them. They can alter how one thinks, acts, moves, and perceives their environment. Drugs can be **naturally occurring or synthetic, legal or illegal**, and most importantly, **helpful or harmful**.

Naturally occurring vs Synthetic Drugs

Drugs come from two different sources

- Plants: cannabis (weed), mushrooms, and tobacco
 - Processed plant products: alcohol and heroin
- Synthetic: amphetamines, and ecstasy

Some examples of **legal drugs** include everyday substances such as alcohol, caffeine, nicotine, and tobacco.

- Although these drugs are legal, they are heavily regulated, such as by alcohol content within drinks and the milligrams of nicotine in cigarettes, and also restricted, based on one's age, location, and government regulations.

Comparison of Medical vs Non-Medical Drug Usage

Medical Drug Use (Helpful)	Non-Medical Drug Use (Harmful)
Safe to use when prescribed by medical professionals and used properly	Can alter the body and brain in harmful ways
Used to alleviate and cure symptoms of a medical or mental condition	Used for pleasure, to get high, or for other purposes other than medical ones
Follows prescribed dosage and instructions given by the medical professional	Involves taking a larger dose than necessary/prescribed, taking it in a different form, or taking it for a different purpose
Medical drugs are still drugs, but they are used for helpful reasons.	

How can these drugs enter your body?

There are many ways that drugs can enter the body, and depending on the way they're taken, the speed of how they reach the brain can be affected.

The 5 main ways of ingesting drugs:

- Ingestion
 - Swallowing pills, gummies (edibles), or liquids
- Injection
 - Delivering substances directly to the blood stream by a needle
- Inhalation
 - Smoking, absorbing through the lungs/mouth
- Snorting
 - Absorbing through the nasal tissue
- Absorption
 - Absorbing through skin or mucous membrane
- Rectally or vaginally
 - Absorbing through the bowel or vaginal lining

Section 1.2- Common types of drugs

There are seven main types of drugs that each take different forms and have different symptoms and effects. Understanding the main categories and their symptoms can help understand why some of these drugs are more addictive than others.

Name	CNS* Depressants	CNS* Stimulants
Examples	Alcohol, Anti-Anxiety Medication (Valium, Xanax, Prozac)	Cocaine, amphetamines, methamphetamine
Symptoms	Slowing down the operations of the brain and body	Acceleration of heart rate and elevation of blood pressure. Stimulants are meant to over-stimulate/speed-up the body.

Name	Hallucinogens	Dissociative Anesthetics
Examples	LSD, MDMA (ecstasy), peyote	PCP (phencyclidine), dextromethorphan

Symptoms	Perception of the world and environment as different than it actually is.	Inhibition of pain by cutting off the brain's perception of the pain
----------	---	--

Name	Narcotic Analgesics	Inhalants	Cannabis
Examples	Opium, heroine, morphine, Vicodin, darvon	Plastic cement, paint, gasoline, hair spray	Cannabis products, cannabinoids, Dronabinol
Symptoms	Pain relief, euphoria induction, mood changes	Breathable substances that cause mind-altering results	Pain relief, stimulated appetite, bloodshot eyes

***CNS: Central Nervous System**

Section 1.3- How addiction starts

There are many ways that addiction can start, even within people who swore that they would never take drugs. Sometimes, drug addiction happens accidentally, and sometimes it is done on purpose.

Some of the possible reasons for addiction (including many others not written):

- Peer pressure
- Misuse of medical prescriptions
- Stress
- Coping with emotional pain
- Curiosity

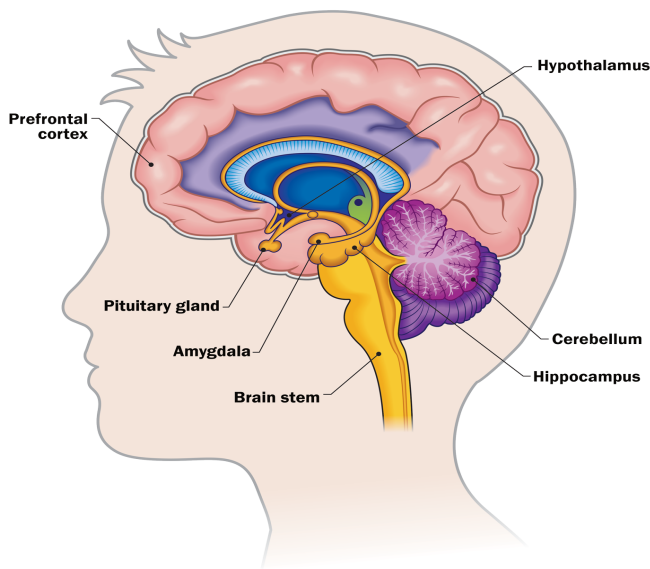
Steps to addiction:

1. Initial Use
 - Many of the possible reasons (as listed above) can happen to lead someone to start using drugs initially.
2. Repeated Use

- After the initial use of the drug, one's brain feels the pleasure or relief that the drug provides. The brain starts to crave the dopamine made by the drug and this leads the person to start using the drug repeatedly.
3. Building tolerance
- Once the person begins to use the drug repeatedly, the brain becomes accustomed to it and it slows down its dopamine production. With less naturally produced dopamine, the person will have to take higher doses of the drug to regain the same feeling from the original dose.
4. Dependence
- With the need for higher doses, the person becomes fully dependent on the drug to keep them alive. Without the drug, they will go through something called withdrawal.
 - Withdrawal is the loss of the drug within the body, and it happens when the person can no longer afford to supply their body with the drug. The symptoms of withdrawal include nausea, irritability, and shaking.
5. Addiction
- Addiction is the final stage of drug usage, and it is when the person can no longer function without large doses of the drug. Withdrawal can lead to people doing crazy things to get the drug, such as stealing money to buy the drugs. The desire for the drug becomes the main priority, often resulting in a decline within relationships and health. A person suffering from addiction will continue using even if they are aware of the negative consequences.

Section 1.4- How drugs affect the brain and body

Drug addiction can be a very dangerous thing. Once the addiction has started, there's no telling the negative effect it will have on your brain and body. The human brain is the most intricate organ in the human body, so when drugs are in your system, they begin to interfere with the neurons in your brain. The neurons that send signals throughout the body are called **neurotransmitters**, so essentially, drugs like marijuana and heroin activate these neurons because these chemical structures copy the **neurotransmitters**, acting like an imposter. But other drugs, such as cocaine or amphetamine, can cause these neurons to release extraordinarily large amounts of **neurotransmitters** and lead to an interference with the transporters and original brain chemicals.



The Amygdala - The amygdala is a part of the brain associated with stressful occurrences, such as anxiety or irritability. When on drugs, this part of the brain is what causes withdrawal symptoms, which is when, after consuming drugs, you begin to feel the effect of the drugs wearing off, after your body is already accustomed to it. Withdrawal symptoms are one of how addiction occurs. Withdrawal makes people crave or want to get more drugs to make these painful withdrawal symptoms go away. Someone experiencing withdrawal may feel nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, anxiety, and insomnia.

The Prefrontal Cortex - The prefrontal cortex is the part of the brain associated with the ability to think, plan, and solve problems, essentially your ability to make decisions. If you are familiar with the saying that “the brain doesn’t fully develop until you are 25 years old”, well, that saying is associated with the prefrontal cortex, which is the last part of the brain to fully develop in teens. So when teens start to use drugs before their prefrontal cortex fully develops, that is what leads to difficulty with impulse control, and substance abuse is most likely to occur.

Section 1.5- How do drugs affect society

Drugs have always had a long-term effect on society, including addiction and the battle that people face with it. In 2023, only about 23% of people were able to receive help with their drug addiction, which is a small percentage compared to the number of people in the world who experience drug addiction and substance abuse. The use of drugs and addiction has a very negative impact on citizens in society, it's been known consequences such as:

- Affecting crime rates
- Hospitalizations
- Child abuse or neglect
- Financial burden

The economic cost of drug abuse in the United States alone was \$180.9 billion, leading to a death rate of 1.3 deaths per 100,000 people in 1990 to 1.7 deaths per 100,000 people in 2021.

The rise of crime rates are due to the amount of crimes that are committed while under the influence. People who overdose on addictive drugs are most likely to be hospitalized and faced with financial burden. Not only that but financial burden can also come from the purchase of drugs, where an individual with a heroin addiction can be spending from \$438 and \$1,750 per week on heroin alone.

Section 1.6 - Recovery from drugs

Nevertheless, addiction and drug abuse are treatable. There are many different methods in which people recover from addiction and drug substances, and these methods have been proven to help 75% of people out of 29.3 million people in the world.

Some forms of treatment include:

- **Medication** (that helps with detoxifying from drugs)
- **Therapy and counseling** (family therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy, motivational enhancement therapy, etc.)

- **Treating withdrawal** as one of the early stages, so people don't become tempted by the idea of taking drugs again
- **Support groups** that consist of people who are experiencing the same thing
- **Rehabilitation**

This is a list of medications that are typically used to treat drug addiction and withdrawal symptoms:

- **Methadone, Buprenorphine, Naltrexone, Lofexidine** (used for patients addicted to Opioids)
- **Nicotine patches/gum, Bupropion, Varenicline** (used for patients addicted to Nicotine)
- **Naltrexone, Disulfiram, Acamprosate** (used for patients addicted to Alcohol)

The important part of recovery is recognizing that you have an addiction problem and taking the first steps in wanting to get better. The recovery process may be long and difficult, but it is worth it for a healthier and stable lifestyle. Relapse is part of the process, so don't ever think that you failed at recovery if you relapse, because that is what will eventually help you get rid of your addiction. Remember that relapse can sometimes trigger someone to want to take more drugs than they originally would take, but that disrupts the process. Remember to stay dedicated to your recovery process and keep trying even when things feel too difficult.

-

Sources:

<https://www.theiacp.org/7-drug-categoriesby>

<https://www.yalemedicine.org/conditions/marijuana-use-disorder>

<https://www.health.gov.au/topics/drugs/about-drugs/what-are-drugs?language=en#how-do-people-take-drugs>

National Institute on Drug Abuse. “Treatment and Recovery.” Drugs, Brains, and Behavior: The Science of Addiction, June 2020,

<https://nida.nih.gov/publications/drugs-brains-behavior-science-addiction/treatment-recovery>

[Opens a new window](#)

Hoffman RS, Goldfrank LR. The impact of drug abuse and addiction on society. Emerg Med Clin North Am. 1990 Aug;8(3):467-80. PMID: 2201515.

.