

MULTIDISCIPLINARY ASSOCIATION FOR PSYCHEDELIC STUDIES

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rites of passage: kids and psychedelics

Rites of Passage: Kids and Psychedelics 2004

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MAPS (Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies) is a membership-based organization working to assist researchers worldwide to design, fund, conduct, obtain governmental approval for, and report on psychedelic research in humans. Founded in 1986, **MAPS is an IRS approved 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation funded by tax deductible donations.** MAPS is focused primarily on assisting scientists to conduct human studies to generate essential information about the risks and psychotherapeutic benefits of MDMA, other psychedelics, and marijuana, **with the goal of eventually gaining government approval for their medical uses.** Interested parties wishing to copy any portion of this publication are encouraged to do so and are kindly requested to credit MAPS and include our address. The *MAPS Bulletin* is produced by a small group of dedicated staff and volunteers. **Your participation, financial or otherwise, is welcome.**

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This MAPS Bulletin is the third in a series of themed issues edited by Jon Hanna and Sylvia Thyssen. The first in the series was our Psychedelics & Creativity issue (Vol. 10, No. 3, Autumn 2000), followed a year and a half later by our Sex, Spirit and Psychedelics issue (Vol. 12, No. 1, Spring 2002), now followed two and a half years later by this Rites of Passage: Kids and Psychedelics issue. These special issues give us the opportunity to explore intriguing topics at length and from a variety of perspectives, in contrast to the regular MAPS Bulletin, which primarily contains timely reports about research and educational projects, books and occasional articles about more general topics.

Letter from Rick Doblin, MAPS President

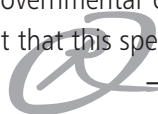
Addressing the theme of kids and psychedelics is part of the educational component of MAPS' overall mission, which is to sponsor scientific research designed to develop psychedelics and marijuana into FDA-approved prescription medicines, and to educate the public honestly about the risks and benefits of these drugs.

This discussion is MAPS' attempt to make a thoughtful, positive and rational contribution to an exceptionally controversial topic. This issue focuses on how families and society can best influence the variety of relationships that young people develop with psychedelic drugs and marijuana. We discuss not only how to minimize risks but also to maximize benefits, despite the fact that our acknowledgement of the potential for benefits is to many an heretical assertion. In order to provide a variety of progressive perspectives, we've included articles from other organizations including the Center for Cognitive Liberty and Ethics, the Center for Educational Research + Development, Children: Our Ultimate Investment, DanceSafe, Drug Policy Alliance, Peyote Way Church, Students for Sensible Drug Policy, and Unitarian Universalists for Drug Policy Reform.

As the proud father of three young children, now ages nine, eight and five, I've seen their ability to understand the world around them grow by leaps and bounds in parallel with their growing curiosity. One of the pleasures of parenthood is struggling to figure out how to explain my perspective on what they are seeing in language that they can understand, without losing important layers of meaning. This is the poetry of parenthood, trying to crystallize complex ideas in simple but not simplistic language. We've been compelled to begin discussions about drugs both as a result of my work (they tease me for being involved with Extrapee and Extrapoop research) and also because since kindergarten on they have seen a DARE flag hanging over the door to the gym at elementary school and the Drug-Free Zone signs plastered outside the school.

Our discussions have focused around broadening the definition of "drugs" to include sugar, coffee, beer and wine, and emphasizing that what matters most is the relationship that people develop with drugs—how they are used—more so than the properties of the drugs themselves. We've also discussed the concepts of good laws and bad laws, of social change and civil disobedience, of mysticism and magic, and of rites of passage.

Among the most destructive and poisonous aspects of the Drug War is that the government seeks to intervene in, and stifle, honest dialogue and sharing between parents and children. Furthermore, the exaggerations in anti-drug curricula have the unintended consequence of undermining the credibility of other necessary health and safety messages that come from government, schools, and parents. What isn't commonly realized is that in the United States, 23 states permit parents to legally administer alcohol to their minor children under parental supervision, despite the prohibition of alcohol use by minors outside of family contexts. Fostering a shift in the locus of decision-making for when any particular child is permitted to experience various drugs—from governmental control and its one-size-fits-all, abstinence-only approach, to the family—is the central concept that this special issue explores. We welcome your feedback on this extremely challenging topic. •



— Rick Doblin, Ph.D.

I GREW UP during the final years of the Cold War. Being artistically inclined, and with a penchant for reading fantasy and fairy tales, I was curious about visionary drugs. But not knowing at the time that LSD is physiologically safe, and believing the anti-drug propaganda I heard during my pre-teen years that told me “acid” would fry my brain, I decided that it really should only be taken at the end of one’s life. So I figured when I heard that the Russians were going to nuke the USA, I would pop a hit right before the end. Ah, misguided youth; these days I can’t imagine a worse scenario for an acid trip.

The first topical book that I saw was Schultes and Hofmann’s 1979 *Plants of the Gods*. I suspected that my parents would not approve of this tome, so I didn’t purchase the book, but rather just read it

when I visited the bookstore. Then it went out-of-print, and shortly thereafter the whole “drug books” section vanished entirely! This was during what Jonathan Ott calls the “Reagan/Bush Dark Ages.” Nancy’s “Just Say No” slogan pressured bookstores to stop carrying titles that “promoted” illicit

substances. My sojourns to Tower Books for drug education were brought to an abrupt halt. Left with no access to information, eventually the only recourse seemed to be to hunt down the drugs themselves.

I took LSD for the first time when I was 17. It wasn’t anything like what I had expected, but it was entirely fascinating. While I can count the occasions I smoked *Cannabis* during my high school years on one hand, I took LSD many times. Both the good and the bad trips provided psychological insights that were highly valuable in helping me to form my identity. Primarily, they allowed me to realize that a life spent in pursuit of materialistic goals was an absurd waste of time, as well as being harmful to people and the planet.

Kids growing up these days don’t have the same problems that I had in obtaining information. We are currently witnessing the first generation of youth who have lived most of their lives plugged in to the Internet, able to access all manner of good and bad information about drugs. Having access to realistic data from sites like Erowid allows today’s youth to realize at an early age that the “drug education” they receive in school is largely inaccurate. Consequently, when I interacted with some of these kids while working on this issue of the *Bulletin*, I

was quite impressed by the scope of knowledge that they had and the sophisticated approach that they took toward the topic. I was surprised to find myself with a hopeful outlook. Kids these days *are* getting a decent education on the topic of drugs—not in the classroom perhaps, but on their own by visiting web sites. And of course there has recently been a Renaissance in publishing on the topic, so the book store is once again a reasonable tool.

I was also impressed by some of the teenagers I spoke with whose parents openly use psychedelics. These kids stated that, although they have an interest in drugs, they have decided to wait until they get older to try them. Perhaps this is an example of a “if the parents are Democrats, the kids will be Republicans” type of rebellion.

Ironically, the best way to keep your kids off drugs may be to use them yourself.

Coming of age frequently does include some acts of rebellion against adults or established society. Becoming an adult is largely about asserting independence. Making one’s own choice rather than blindly following what one is told is an important step in the growth of an individual. Breaking the

laws prohibiting certain drugs can be seen as a part of this process. Yet it is much easier for kids to adopt an attitude of disrespect for *all* laws when they feel that they have been lied to by adults. Hence, it is important to be truthful with children.

My own daughter just turned five years old. She is blissfully unaware of most of the world’s problems. As our nation offensively bombed Iraq, she didn’t see the horrors up close on TV; instead she watched her *Shrek* DVD. Similarly, at the moment, she has no real concept of illicit drugs. For her, “drugs” come in sickly sweet “cherry” and “bubblegum” flavored syrups—cold medicines and antibiotics. Needles carry vaccines rather than vacations. At this point in her life, there are few questions about drugs that need to be fielded. But as the topic arises, I will strive to make high-quality fact-based information available. I will be honest with her about my own past use and my belief in the importance of cultivating a responsible attitude. If she trusts me, she will be more likely to come to me when she has questions or problems.

— Jon Hanna, Editor



fOR A WEEK EACH MONTH, I am buffeted by emotional storms from the hormonal fluctuations that many young women experience. Those days sometimes remind me of the sense of isolation and gloom I felt most acutely as a teenager, and the alienation I perceived between myself and other people, especially my parents. I wasn't much of an experimenter—I tried pot once when I was 16, and it just made me feel mildly anxious. It didn't occur to me to try it again, although some of my favorite friends were stoners. In retrospect, it's easy to imagine that a well-planned, therapeutic MDMA experience might have provided a powerful sense of equanimity and self-acceptance that I desperately needed. Yet most of my peers and I had no reference point, social milieu, or familial context that would admit a balanced, intentional use of MDMA or other psychedelics.

The issue is complex. After we settled on "Kids and Psychedelics" as a topic for the *Bulletin*, we repeatedly got feedback that this button was too hot to touch. Frequently when activities involving minors were discussed, people expressed their fears of criminal liability or extreme public disapproval. It has been striking to me that this topic is taboo among some of those who openly discuss the adult use of psychedelics. Perhaps these people are concerned that even *talking* about the issue could bring more negative attention onto the psychedelic community.

We are very far from the picture Aldous Huxley painted of Pala in *Island*, where young adults use a psychedelic "moksha medicine" as part of a rite-of-passage into adulthood. Even though we are aware of some traditional cultures' initiatory ceremonies, it can be difficult or of limited relevance to try to integrate these practices into our own lives. Most youthful experimentation with psychedelics (usually beginning with *Cannabis*) is done among peers, with little formal ritual. Some of these minors—often independently of family, but sometimes within a supportive family context—have experiences with psychedelics that contribute to their growth and their knowledge of the world. This idea is vigorously condemned and feared by many adults who can't handle the complexity surrounding the human motivation for using psychoactives. It can be hard to talk about without getting mired in discussions of failed drug policies and the ongoing damage that the Drug War

inflicts on teen culture. There are many open questions about how to reduce underinformed, impulsive use and help kids to make healthier choices. For this reason we've included several articles that discuss drug education and touch on the problems faced when trying to direct youth to act wisely and with restraint.

This issue doesn't include much about the potentially harmful, addictive, and sometimes life-threatening experiences that can result from reckless use. However, it

is important to note that confronting fear is often

a valuable aspect of psychological and spiritual transformation, and a symbolic death experience is part of some rites-of-passage ceremonies. Although the darker side of psychedelic use is not featured in this issue, it nevertheless deeply informs my reasons for focusing on the positive. I am inspired by people like Becca (see pages 39–44) who generally use good sense, healthy curiosity, and an increasingly comprehensive set of informational resources to make thoughtful decisions about what they consume. And I am equally alarmed by the "under-intentional" use of psychedelics by some kids. However, if as adults we can't offer a vision for that which is possible and beneficial, what kind of role models are we?

From the vantage point of a former neophobe, I have heard and read the stories we have collected with a sense of wonder. Through my professional work, I contribute to the growing body of information about psychoactives. I'm not a parent, educator, guidance counselor, or mentor for any teens. I simply have concern and compassion for their experiences growing up in an often scary and confusing world. I think of how in the film *Bowling for Columbine*, director Michael Moore asks Marilyn Manson, a favorite musician of some disenfranchised teens, what he would tell the kids and community of

Columbine, Colorado who witnessed the tragic 1999 school massacre. Manson replies, "I wouldn't say a single word to them. I would listen to what they have to say." Perhaps what we need to do most of all to help kids form reasonable and healthy relationships with psychedelics is to talk less and listen more.

— Sylvia Thyssen, Editor



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Psychedelic Rites of Passage

by Ram Dass

"In thinking about psychedelics, the first thing to understand is that there is a whole range of substances which share that name, and that they are of very different strengths. Some are mild; most marijuana, for example, falls in that category. Mild psychedelics open up the possibilities, but they don't override the personality. Stronger psychedelics, on the other hand—things like mescaline, or psilocybin, or LSD—are likely to override our existing thought patterns in a very powerful way. If we aren't prepared for that, it can get pretty hairy. If we don't have a sufficiently deep jnana (wisdom) practice, some understanding of what's happening to us, we freak when the entire structure of our existence starts to fall away. That's why it's important to do some reading and studying and contemplating in advance, so we'll have some foothold in the experiences as they start to happen to us."

— From "The Yoga of Psychedelics," in *Paths to God: Living the Bhagavad Gita* by Ram Dass, Harmony Press, October 2004.

WE ARE LIVING IN A DEPRIVED SOCIETY, as far as spiritual rituals are concerned. We suffer from a shortage of rites of passage—or at any rate a shortage of meaningful rites of passage. It's true that we get married and we get buried, we have our baptisms and our first communions and our bar mitzvahs, but sometimes they don't seem to touch our hearts very deeply. In the worst cases, they're just episodes we go through mechanically, by rote.

I remember my own bar mitzvah. I learned my Torah part, and I read it pretty well. I got lots of gifts—a thick stack of checks, and a lifetime supply of fountain pens. But that was about it. The inner meaning of the ritual never came alive for me, it was never imbued with living spirit. And I don't think I was alone in that; I think that's been a common enough experience among us. Maybe we "did" the rituals, but it was strictly pro forma.

If we have only the most superficial of ossified religious rituals, it is because these rites of passage no longer provide direct contact with the numinous. This is where psychedelics can help. But sadly, a first psychedelic experience is much more likely to happen at a noisy party somewhere than in a sacred setting filled with reminders of spirit. And that's a big missed opportunity, for us as a society.

While I would never encourage anyone to use psychedelic substances, especially in our current political climate, the fact of the matter is that a certain percentage of our young people (and of our older people, too) are going to experiment. And I would like to see that experiment unfold for them in the most positive sort of way, under conditions that minimize the risk of a "bad trip" and that maximize the spiritual potential of the experience.

So what would a proper initiatory psychedelic experience look like? As we learned early in the game, back when Tim Leary and I first began our experiments in consciousness-alteration, a psychedelic trip is largely conditioned by two factors: setting and set.

What we call the setting is the physical environment for the experience: the room where the trip takes place, the objects the room contains, the sounds that are heard. Personally, I like to surround myself with pictures of holy beings and wise beings, beings like Maharajji and Anandamayi Ma, like Christ and Hanuman. It's different for each of us—maybe for some of us it will be just a rock to remind us of Gaia and the interconnectedness of life. The setting for a trip should surround us with whoever and whatever best represents for us the wisdom and love and beauty of the universe.

The other factor, the set, is our interior environment. Whatever is going on in our mind and emotions as we enter the psychedelic experience is going to color what follows, but to rearrange the set takes a little more preparation than rearranging the furniture in the room. We need to think in advance about what kinds of practices we might want to undertake in approaching a psychedelic rite of passage—perhaps fasting, perhaps meditating, perhaps reading certain holy books. Maybe we will want to formulate a question or a prayer or an intention that we will carry with us. We can do whatever feels right to each of us, but it's a good idea to allow some time in advance for internal preparation.

It's extremely useful, especially with a first experience, to have someone on hand who is experienced, someone quiet and calm, someone with whom you feel loving and safe. Music is helpful, too—music that you love and can surrender into, something that is familiar and comfortable.

Those would seem to be good ground rules for creating a psychedelic rite of passage. Now what if a group of people were to build a community based on something like that? What would it be like to live in a society that included an

initiatory psychedelic experience? That's what Aldous Huxley explored in his novel, *Island*. At a certain age, the young people on Huxley's island would begin preparing for the psychedelic journey they would be taking; they would begin learning a series of exercises that would lead them into new terrains of awareness. Adults who emerged from that journey would be prepared to take their place in the society and to play their role from a much deeper level of their being.

There's not much of that kind of preparation available here, at least not in the majority culture that most of us inhabit. Such rituals do exist among some of the First World peoples. The peyote-using tribes, for example, have all-night ceremonies in which the sacred cactus is communally ingested and the trip is guided by an experienced "road-man." The shaman in Mexico who first turned on Timothy Leary with her magic mushrooms offered them with ritual. But that's not available to most of us.

I did recently witness a very gentle, loving, profound ceremony created by some friends of mine for a young man who was about to use marijuana for the first time. An elder of the family group prepared the pipe, and dedicated it to Lord Shiva. Then he lit it, and handed it to the young man. The young man raised the pipe to his forehead and chanted, "Bom, Shivaya!" before inhaling. The pipe was passed around the circle, and before taking a hit of the sacred herb each member of the group acknowledged the young man and welcomed him to the company of grown-ups. Don't you think that he experienced something in that ceremony? Don't you think he will have a deeper respect for the substance, and use it more wisely, than if he'd had that first experience in the corner of a parking lot somewhere?

Back in the 1960s, Tim and Ralph Metzner and I wrote a book called *The Psychedelic Experience*. It was based on the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, which Aldous Huxley had recently introduced to us, and it used the Tibetan manual as the framework for guiding a psychedelic journey of death and rebirth. The parallels between the descriptions in the *Book of the Dead* and the experiences of an LSD trip are quite astounding, and the book served its purpose.

We could use more books like that, books that offer a context for the psychedelic voyage and the psychedelic vision. We could use more rites of passage, whether or not they involve psychedelics, because in a very deep way, young people are yearning for something—for a symbol, a marker stone, a mythic context—that acknowledges the significance and the sacredness of the passage they are making. We owe it to them to develop rites of passage that match the stretch of their spirits. We owe it to ourselves to introduce them to the society of adults from the space of unity and love that psychedelics open within us. •

MAPS' CONTRIBUTION...

The MAPS Rites of Passage Project is our attempt to collect the stories of those families who have tried to build their own rituals, rites, and relationships with psychedelics and marijuana. Rather than waiting for young people to experiment with these substances haphazardly, some parents have chosen to offer their own guidance and experience. In other families, young people have introduced these substances to open-minded parents, creating a new kind of bond. By sharing these stories, we hope to document a variety of ways that families have tackled this issue.

If you have a rite of passage you'd like to share, please let us know! We're looking for one- to two-page stories, ideally with accounts written by each person present. For more information, check out www.maps.org/ritesofpassage or contact brandy@maps.org.

A Mother and Son Peyote Ritual

Written **anonymously**

THE MOTHER

My introduction to psychedelics was in my early teens. Psychedelics were the most helpful guidance I received during those difficult years. I was introduced to psychedelics by my older siblings. When my kids were reaching their early teens, and I knew they would be exposed to the drugs through the culture that we are in, I wanted to take the opportunity to share with them the values and the importance of respect and appropriate use that I felt might help them through their coming of age.

When my oldest son turned thirteen, as his mother I thought that it would be the perfect rite-of-passage to take him into the mountains to introduce him to plant medicines and plant teachers. When he was eleven and twelve, he was drifting away from our close bond. More troubled in school, getting into fights, and becoming rebellious, he was clearly ready to create a new identity of his own within the context of his peer group and the outside world. I was concerned about the potential for drug and alcohol misuse. At that age, he was young enough to listen to me and take me seriously, and I could still get through to him to impart positive values.

I believe in the power of the plant medicines to create a very bonding experience and I felt that within the context of a spiritual, psychedelic rite-of-passage that our bond would be even greater and that he wouldn't feel the need to rebel and reject me as a parent. I felt that doing something so powerful as psychedelics with him and entering into that state of mind would allow for a point of reference that would be the anchor in creating a more honest relationship between us.

I approached him and asked him if he wanted to do a special ceremony for his thirteenth birthday. I explained to him that we would use a small amount of peyote because he was familiar with it from being around Native American Church ceremonies. I used to attend NAC services and while he never took any peyote at them, he did attend some meetings with me as a small child, though mostly he just slept through them. He was happy and excited to have been asked—probably more about the time alone camping in the mountains together on this special day than about the peyote. I have another younger son as well, so my soon to be 13-year-old appreciated the

opportunity for time alone with me. I didn't know if he had tried marijuana yet when I offered him the experience with peyote, and he confessed that he had tried smoking pot before.

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I've always done psychedelics away from civilization so I could have a deeper relationship with nature and the earth, in an uninterrupted manner. I wanted to help him reconnect to the earth as his mother and to the incredible power and beauty of the animals, birds and plants. We'd had family camp-outs before, but this was the first time that we ever camped out alone. We went to the Steens Mountains in Southern Oregon. I felt at the time that it was the best experience I'd ever had with another person, let alone my son. There wasn't a bit of tension.

I briefly told him about what peyote does in advance. But mostly I felt that I needed to sit with him with the medicine and explain it while he was having the experience. It was important to me to share information and my experiences during the ritual—what I have been taught and what I have learned—and not to talk too much about it beforehand. I didn't give him anything to read about. There were no other resources other than my own experi-

ence, which I trusted.

We woke up in the morning after our first night of camping and had a bit of breakfast. We packed a lunch of snacks and then we began to hike. We hiked about an hour. We did a ceremony where I first called for protection and asked for blessings from the four directions and the guardians and we thanked this place on earth for being there for us. Then we ate the equivalent of one or two small buttons of peyote—a light dose. I began to speak. The words just came freely and naturally as I expressed my views and values about the differences between use and abuse. I talked about the traditional uses of psychoactive plants and I explained how they were tools. I told him how the plants were teachers and they were medicines and that this was the appropriate, respectful way to use them in whatever form you get them in, whether peyote, mescaline, or LSD. I also explained the importance of set and setting, of being in the right place and the right frame of mind.

I don't remember him expressing any fear or anxiety. After eating the peyote and talking and answering his

questions, we began hiking again, and noticing the magic of the land that we were in. I asked him to walk in silence with me for an hour. I think he broke the silence after about 45 minutes. Then we sat and he shared with me his comfort with what he was feeling and his excitement about being in the mountains with me. We then started talking about shamanism and he shared with me his own techniques he practiced as a child in his imagination to protect himself when he felt fearful. He also shared with me insights and his spiritual inspiration he received from the books he'd been reading, which were mostly fantasy novels. Under these circumstances, he felt safe to open up to me about his secret side, his spiritual take on the world.

We talked some more about shamanism, and power animals and protection, and he asked me how he would know what his power animal is? I explained to him they sometimes come in dreams, or in visions when doing plant medicines, and sometimes you just know—you have a sense about it. I asked him what he thought his power animal might be, if he had any idea? He said he thought it was a bear. I suggested to him that he close his eyes and ask the universe what his power animal was.

At the time, we were sitting on some rocks on the ridge of a mountain. We opened our eyes and talked a little while more. Ten or fifteen minutes later, a bear walking across a field of snow appeared about a hundred yards in front of us. He asked me if that bear was real since he thought he might be hallucinating. I told him it was real. It was springtime, and down where we were there was no snow, but up on the hill there was snow. After the bear was gone, we went to look at the tracks. We followed them to rocks where they disappeared and left some of our nut mix as a gift. It was quite magical.

Later, we were in an old juniper forest up high and he found a tree and connected to this one tree and even felt like it was speaking to him. Then we felt it was time to walk back to camp.

The next morning, we ventured to the hot springs just down the road where I facilitated a symbolic rebirth of his self. I asked him before he went under the water to hold a picture in his mind of himself as he has known himself as a child. I told him that when we went under, he should let go of that image and allow a new part of himself to emerge. He emerged from the water with great elation.

The rest of the time together was laughing and sharing like we never did before. I let him drive the truck for the first time. It was just fantastic. I think he will remember more about our experience than I will. A lot has happened since that journey.

Before we went on this retreat, he was going through a rebellious period. Afterwards, we had very little conflict. When conflict did occur, we were able to talk through it more easily. He was more mature and at ease around me. He's been very honest around me ever since, and we've expressed love and affection more openly.

Sometime after that, my husband took him backpacking in the mountains for several days, conducting a rite-of-passage in his own way. Even though he wasn't doing psychedelics at the time, my husband understood and agreed with what we were doing and valued it. When there is conflict among parents, kids can become confused, so it was important that we both were in harmony about the value of my sharing peyote with our son.

A few weeks after his peyote experience, my son independently became interested in Buddhism. On his own he found a local Taoist temple and started going to it every Sunday. And he became a vegetarian. I had to cook his meals separately since we all ate meat. I think his self-esteem was greater after this experience. He pondered spiritual things more. By luck at that time in his life, he got a speaking part in a Disney movie. With the money he made from the movie, he went to Bali for five weeks. He started having his own experiences out in the world, to create his own sense of self. I was blown away how it just fell into place like that. The rite-of-passage really seemed to have worked.

Later when he wanted to do mushrooms with his friends, he told me about it and I was able to encourage him to do it in a natural setting. I was able to be a kind of a guide and explain to him that drugs were not all the same, and, for example, that cocaine was not as useful as psychedelics. He felt comfortable coming to me. Later when he was 15 he came to me with some blotter acid. Since I was worried about the quality of the acid, I traded him some mushrooms for it. I never have known him to abuse any drugs. He seemed to prefer mushrooms over synthetics. He smokes marijuana occasionally, but has never used it heavily. His relationship to alcohol is the same, occasional and not frequent. He seems aware of what he is doing and of when he might be getting close to abusing. He hangs out with like-minded boys who also seem respectful of their use.

My younger son and I also did a similar ritual that really bonded us. He listens to me and respects my values and views and opinions about drugs. He's a skateboarder. Since the ritual, his self-esteem and perseverance increased. He's become a semi-professional skateboarder. He appears in magazines and videos. He's "hot stuff" and he did it all himself. He's had many injuries, resulting in

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my son independently
became interested in
Buddhism. On his
own he found a local
Taoist temple and
started going to it
every Sunday.

three surgeries, but he never allowed these to discourage him. He made the most out of his talent and has tremendous self-confidence. I think he gained much of that from a powerful affirmation from his parents.

The rites-of-passage weren't focused as much on doing the psychedelics as on giving my sons an affirmation of their value and place in the world. The time alone in the mountains provided us with the space of comfort, ease, and openness, without distractions. Now my kids prefer to go into nature to do psychedelics. When my youngest was 17, he wanted to go the Oregon desert to do mushrooms with his friend. He wanted me to take them, which I did. I acted as their sitter. I'm not sure if his friend's parents knew. That was a little uncomfortable, but I knew they were both already doing mushrooms and smoking pot and that the friend's parents knew that. He said his parents would be okay with what he did, so I trusted him.

An open dialogue with kids about substances is very important these days. If they want to do it, kids will do drugs regardless of whether they have their parents' approval. I don't think my kids are doing more drugs because of this open attitude. My oldest son is doing well in college and is a serious student. He's an occasional user, but I don't see him stoned too often.

My younger son has a laid back life-style and is a more frequent user of marijuana and occasional user of alcohol. He's had run-ins with the law, but my honest opinion is that the cops in my town harass the youth more than they need to, and have developed a paranoia about drugs. It's so silly to think that they can stop kids from doing drugs. It takes a lot to influence kids at that age. I think it has to begin early and with an open and honest approach. Do they really think that the War on Drugs has ever worked? Has it ever stopped kids from using drugs, or even slowed it down? Wherever you try to forcefully control the youth culture, it gives them something to rebel against.

Kids need a validating experience at that age and if they don't have it, then they create it through rebelliousness, in order to establish their own identity. I found that rites-of-passage my husband and I provided not only gave our boys the validation they needed from us, but also strengthened our family bond.

THE SON

Starting in about the fifth grade, an anger began to grow within me. When I entered middle school, the anger grew bigger and more powerful. I was confused about many things and I often felt torn between contradictory ideas and values. On one hand, there was what I knew from the upbringing my parents had given me. On the other hand, there was what I was receiving from my friends and peers and the pop culture around me. I became painfully aware of my individuality, which often manifested as a profound sense of isolation and loneliness. I was trying to find a way to feel okay with myself.

My rites-of-passage came at an important time in my life. I began smoking pot before my thirteenth birthday. On my birthday, I did blotter acid bought off the street, and later I began to use mushrooms. These experiences were always with my friends, with no guiding values other than curiosity and a fear of being left out. My friends who had already tried psychedelics made the experiences sound exciting. I was aware of their potential use as plant medicines and spiritual tools, but that awareness was not reflected anywhere in my life outside of my home. Since it was through my peer group and the music that I listened to that I was being introduced to marijuana and psychedelics, I naturally began to associate their importance with what my friends told me, which had no spiritual content.

When my mother first proposed doing the rite of passage, I was excited about it. Even through my darkest years, I never lost my respect for spirituality. In fact, it was during the hardest times that I yearned most strongly for it. I was aware of and curious about peyote use in the Native American Church, but that seemed far removed from my life as a twelve-year-old boy. The rite of passage with my mother taught me another way—the true way, I believe—to use psychedelics and plant medicine.

The experience itself was powerful, but in a very subtle way. I took only a small amount of peyote, in a capsule, and did not have any sort of normal psychedelic experience. I didn't have auditory, visual, or other sensory hallucinations, or feel a drastic shift in my consciousness. What I experienced instead was a deeper connection with the natural world, almost a sort of expansion of consciousness into it. A paradigm shift. The experience with seeing the bear also had a profound impact on me, as it was the first time I had what I considered at that time a "spiritual experience," and gave me something to hold on to—my spirit animal. At an age when everything is being questioned, it was a powerful reinforcement of the truth and existence of the spirit, and universal connection.

A connection between my mother and I was created, which has stayed open ever since. She was very trusting with me, non-judgmental, and accepting of what I had to say and of my previous experiences. This allowed me to feel safe enough to share my deepest and most-closely held ideas about the world—ideas I wasn't able to share with anyone else at the time. Being able to externalize these, and feel validated by what she said to me and what I experienced those days out in the desert, strengthened my self-confidence. From then on, my experimentation with "drugs" didn't come between my mother and I—I didn't have to hide it. When I felt ready, I could share these experiences with her. She always listened, accepting and honest. She would express her concerns about things she saw as inappropriate, and explained to me why this was, but she never got angry or punished me. I came to respect her opinions. Although I had to build my own understanding of the world, much of my personal spirituality has been based directly on my mothers teachings. •

Parenting the Peyote Way

by Rev. Anne Zapf • peyote@vtc.net

Rev. Anne Zapf is an apostle and sacrament steward of the Peyote Way Church. She co-founded the Church with her husband Matthew Kent and former Roadman Rev. Immanuel Trujillo. She served as the second Church President from 1984–1993. She has a BS from Colorado State University, and is the webmaster at www.peyoteway.org.



IT WAS NOVEMBER 1980. Matthew Kent, Norah Booth, and I were following DEA-authorized peyote distributor Marcos Muniz, in a search for peyote plants growing on an expansive ranch in south Texas. On our last visit Marcos had offered to help us buy land for the Peyote Way Church, but our plans had changed. Only a few days before, Matthew—my soul mate and husband, Norah—Church Archivist and friend, and I had spent the night in a Richardson, Texas, jail. Our land purchase mission had been delayed when the church truck, bearing “Peyote Way” signs and designs and a load of Mana pottery, was ostensibly stopped for “impeding traffic.” Each of us carried four dried peyote buttons as prescribed in Church bylaws. The charge was misdemeanor possession of peyote. We paid the bail and, under the advice of counsel, covered the truck’s signs. By the time we reached south Texas we no longer planned to buy land, as the down payment had been converted to bail money. Marcos thoughtfully offered to help us find a few plants to take home.

PEYOTE PRAYER

There’s an art to finding peyote in its native environment. Marcos suggested talking to it and began making sing-song calling sounds, reminiscent of calling one’s child or pet. Pretty soon he had found a peyote plant, and suddenly the winter desert revealed more plants around my feet. I was excited, but my mind still lingered over personal concerns. We had just initiated what ultimately ended up being a nine-year suit against the Texas and Federal governments for their discriminatory peyote laws, and here was I, contemplating what was possibly a miraculous pregnancy. Part of Matthew’s spiritual commitment was to a monastic life. He had had a vasectomy three years earlier. I chewed on a few freshly cut tops, or buttons, and prayed. Experiences with this holy plant had convinced me that the sacramental use of peyote was not danger-

ous to me. I had come to this peyote field to pray for a daughter. Prior to our Texas trip, Matthew had begun complaining that he was experiencing a tugging sensation between his legs. I suggested his vasectomy was reversing. My menses, which had stopped the same month as his operation, were finally recurring sporadically.

MIRACLES

I had been ingesting peyote in the Church’s prescribed Spirit Walk structure (see www.peyoteway.org) several times a year, but had increased my use as my prayers focused on healing and having a child. Matthew, whose focus was on peyote legalization, had also been sucking on a peyote button a day for its spiritual and tonic effects. Nine months after our Texas mission, Matthew caught Joy, our beautiful, healthy daughter, the first of our three children born at home. To us, and to our families and friends, these were all miracle births. Joy, 21, is an avid reader and creative artist and writer. Joseph, 18, is an honor student and a member of Phi Theta Kappa. Tristan, 13, is an excellent cook and budding musician. All three children were born and grew up during our lawsuit.

Those days we spent raising kids, tending the holy sacrament peyote, counseling spirit walk visitors, keeping records of our peyote distribution, and consulting with the A.C.L.U. lawyers who had taken our civil suit against Texas and the Federal government for their abridgment of our 1st, 5th, 11th, and 14th Amendment rights. Ultimately, we decided not to take our case to the Federal Supreme Court, due to an unfavorable ruling against Alfred Smith and Galen Black, two Native American Peyotists. In that case, the court ruled that the State of Oregon was justified in prohibiting the religious use of peyote. This ruling essentially nullified First Amendment freedom of religion guarantees, causing outrage among the religious community

by giving the government broad power to enforce criminal laws that conflict with religious practice. What would happen to the sacramental wine use in Catholic ceremonies in places that ban alcohol? What about a prisoner's right to follow dietary restrictions due to faith? The list goes on and on. Fortunately, Arizona state law protects the *bona fide* religious use of peyote regardless of race. We decided to postpone our arguments and wait for a friendlier Supreme Court. We may have a long wait.

FORMATIVE YEARS

Against this legal scenery our children were raised. The first six years of life are crucial to the development of a child's self image and worldview. During these early years, they form many conclusions about their world, based on daily observations of parents and caregivers. If a person has made a conscious decision to have a child, it follows that they would want to stay home with their kids those first six years. And so we did. Our spiritual connection to peyote was witnessed by our children and became integrated into their understanding of reality. When the kids were small we kept the planters out of their reach, but they soon came to recognize that peyote was sacred. We didn't go to traditional church for Sunday services. Instead our devotion was expressed as watering and feeding peyote and San Pedro plants and providing spirit walks and counseling for visitors. Joy could often be observed quietly listening to Matthew talk to a visitor. She loved his stories and obviously found the spiritual discussions intriguing.

When the children were ready to discuss drugs and the law, we read with them *From Chocolate to Morphine* by Andrew Weil and Winifred Rosen. I liked that this book pointed out that addictive drugs like coffee, tobacco, alcohol, and sugar are socially acceptable. We also read the Constitutionally aligned Arizona statute concerning peyote with them, and compared it to the discriminatory Federal law. We explained that plant sacraments have a long history of safe religious use among indigenous people. As the children got older we also discussed more complicated issues surrounding the topic of drugs, like the politics and profitability of pharmaceutical drugs, and their subsequent listing as legal or illegal.

In our home, television—as a mind-altering substance and tool for the dissemination of propaganda and advertising—was prohibited. The kids' first television experience was as a video monitor for the movie, *The Neverending Story*. Joy was five. The kids used their imaginations, read books, and played with each other when we weren't home schooling. That kind of simplicity didn't last, and today I have to make a reservation to use the Church computer.

Joy's initiation into the entheogen community came with a spirit walk shortly after her fourteenth birthday. She was mature but far from an adult. Joe, who had been in trouble at the tender age of eleven, was initiated the summer of his twelfth birthday. Tristan had his first spirit

walk last summer. He's thirteen. We chose to allow our children to participate in a spirit walk during adolescence because it is a time of great physical and emotional change. We felt the peyote would help the kids remember who they were and where they came from. Through the Spirit Walk, peyote helps us to realize that we are not our bodies. We occupy them for a short time, and then we are gone. Our bodies die, but that which is truly ourselves continues.

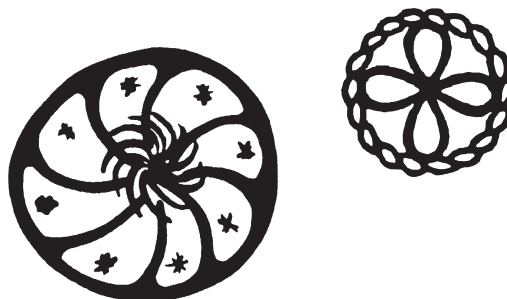
Raising children to have a healthy spiritual attitude about entheogens in a hostile Drug War climate is challenging, but I think a few general conclusions can be drawn from our experience. As parents and caregivers, we must be aware of the example and environment we provide for our children, as they are constantly learning from the examples, good and bad, of others. If children witness a daily demonstration of devotion and reverence towards entheogens, they will recognize the spiritual nature of entheogens.

Regardless of whether kids go to public school or home school, we are all home schoolteachers. We must maintain an open atmosphere of communication with our kids by conversing with them daily about any and all subjects of interest to them. These discussions encourage a child to communicate complicated ideas and question confusing societal behavior. Kids learn quickly what is appropriate to discuss with others. Showing the child where to find information in books helps them to develop their opinions based on facts instead of propaganda and scare tactics. Finally, by being consistent and honest with our kids, we may prevent them from causing harm to themselves or others.

DAILY EXAMPLE

In an American society obsessed with alcohol and tobacco, and where relief from all manner of problems is only a pill away, rational consideration of entheogens is replaced by hysteria and banishment. A home environment of honesty about drugs and the law puts the parent in a social minefield, but there are ways to get through it. Consistency, sincerity, and love are the parent's allies. The daily example we present to our children helps them to process all the baffling contradictions of our society and form a balanced worldview.

May your spirit walk experiences inspire you and remove all your fears. •





RABBI MATTHEW S. KENT

The Praying Woman, 1995, acrylic on canvas, 36" X 48"



ALEX GREY

ABOVE: *Family*, 1996, oil on linen, 25" X 30"

PAGES 13–20: *Buddha Embryo*, 2001, pigmented ink on linen paper, each image 8" X 10", in order of appearance: *Attraction, Penetration, Fertilization, Buddha Zygote, Self-replicating DNA Molecule, X and Y Chromosomes, Mitosis I, Mitosis II, Morula, Blastocyst, Implantation, Eighteen Days, Twenty Days, Twenty-two Days, Twenty-three Days, Twenty-five Days, Thirty-four Days, Forty Days, Fifty-two Days, Sixteen Weeks, Three to Eight Months, Full Term*

Parenting in a War Zone: A Conversation with the Grey Family

interviewed in 2003 by Jon Hanna

Tell us a little bit about your relationship. How do you get along? Do you ever fight?

ALEX: I'd say we're a pretty peaceful crew, the three of us. There's a lot of love in the house. We feel fortunate. A lot of families split up. We're just very happy together.

ZENA: Personally, I think I have the best relationship with my parents, compared to a lot of my friends. I get along with my parents so well, and we hardly ever fight and disagree. It's really amazing.

ALLYSON: I think all that's true too.

A spiritual approach toward life is obviously important to your parents, Zena. We can infer from Alex's 1996 painting Family that you sometimes pray together. To what extent does spirituality play a part in your own life?

ZENA: Well, I'm not *incredibly* spiritual or anything. But, I do pray and stuff like that. We pray at every meal that we have together, which is mainly just dinner. And I usually pray before I go to bed. It's not one of those things where I kneel down and say that "Now I lay me down to sleep..." thing. But, I dunno, just like a thing to God to bless me and my family—thanks for every day and just how happy I am. And, if I want anything, like a part in a movie or something, I might just add that in. [laughs]

ALLYSON: When Zena says that she's not very spiritual, I think what she means is that she's not very *religious*.

ZENA: Yeah.

ALLYSON: Because I don't think that we're very religious. But I think we have a rich spiritual life that is integrated with our regular life. Our spirituality is from all different religions. We celebrate Jewish, Christian and Pagan holidays and go to Buddhist retreats occasionally. We read aloud from the *Bhagavad Gita*, Buddhist scripture, the Bible, Rumi and other Islamic mystics. We look for the common thread in all wisdom traditions. We have no prohibition from practicing the occult. Zena likes to pull runes, we throw the *I Ching* and interpret each others dreams. It all adds to an intuitive and inner directed life.

At what age do you think that it is reasonable to begin a discussion on the topic of drugs with one's child? At what age do you think it is reasonable to mention one's own drug use?

ALLYSON: I always answer every question that Zena has directly and specifically. I try not to say *more* than I think she wants to know, because I don't want to scare her or encourage her. I just want to answer her questions. So whenever she might have had a question about drugs, I'd answer it. But, at the same time, she would hear a lot of messages about not smoking, and if she would see us smoking pot or something, then I would have to address that. We would talk about it. I think that when she was pretty young she saw us smoking pot—not that we smoked very often, we smoke very rarely. Occasionally with friends who might smoke in front of her. We didn't hide it from her, because I really can't stand that. I don't like hiding anything from Zena. I don't like to smoke pot all the time either, so that's a good thing. I wouldn't want you to think that I was constantly getting stoned every day. But if we were at a party, and we were with some friends, and we lit up, it might have surprised her when she was four or five years old, and she might have been curious about it then, and later on too.

When we saw propaganda television from the Partnership for a Drug-Free America, we explained to her that these were sponsored by drug companies that wanted people to buy *their* drugs, not the ones that the government had decided were "wrong." In addition to that—well maybe I'm jumping the gun here—but we had to explain to her early on that our own drug use was not something that she could talk to her friends about. We explained to her that it was like the early Christians who had to hide their religion from Roman persecutors; that we believed what we were doing was not wrong. We believed that it was right and it was part of our spiritual life, but it was against the law. It was illegal and it could be dangerous. We could go to jail for it. So we wanted to tell her about all of those dangers right away. And we didn't want her to think that the drugs themselves were not dangerous either, since drugs can be very dangerous also, when they are used by people who are too young, or by people who are mentally unstable, or used in excess, or whatever. So we would tell her those things. What age did we tell her those things? Well, as they started to discuss this in school. They would bring this topic up in school, and we would counter it with our own particular message.



What sort of “drug education” have you been exposed to in school, Zena. What impact has this had on your own attitude toward drugs?

ZENA: The message in school is basically, “Don’t do drugs, don’t do drugs, don’t do drugs.” Over and over again. It doesn’t teach you anything about drugs. It says nothing specifically that might be good about drugs. Everything is bad. No good will come from any of it. And I wonder why they lie about this? I don’t know. I suppose that they just want people to believe that what they are saying is true, so that they won’t do drugs. However, I agree that people shouldn’t be doing drugs at my age—like 13 or 14.

You’re about to turn 14, right? To what extent are you aware of others around your own age using drugs? And if this goes on at all, what drugs are popular?

ZENA: I’ve only had a few friends that do drugs, but I actually don’t hang out with them anymore.

ALLYSON: How about acquaintances then? People in your class?

ZENA: Me and my friends talk about the fact that so many people in our grade smoke pot. And a lot of people have had problems with it, or have gotten into a lot of trouble when their parents have found out. There’s so many people in our grade that do that. And a lot of people drink. I know some people who have done acid and Ecstasy.

ALLYSON: In the ninth grade?

ZENA: Yeah.

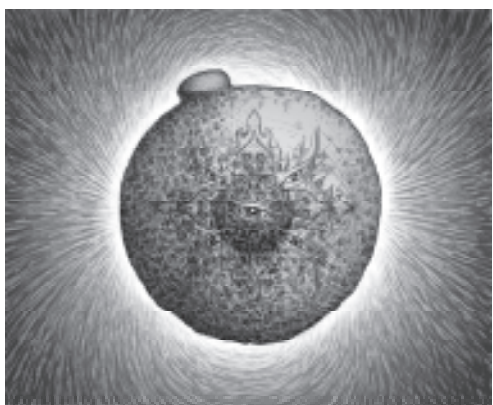
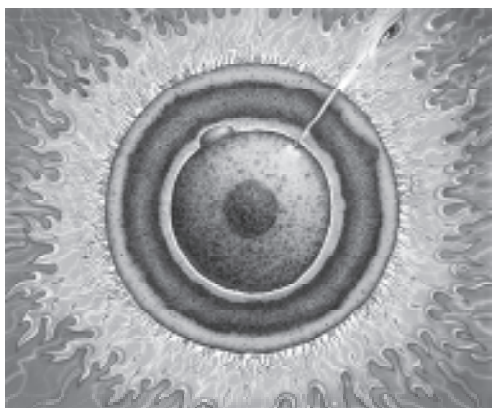
How prevalent would you say that such drug use is at your age—13, 14, 15 years old?

ZENA: I think that there’s a lot of people that are doing it.

ALLYSON: You think half?

ZENA: Yeah, if not more than half.

ALLYSON: And I’d just like to say, as a proud mother, whereas we have sacramentally used drugs for many years, and talked about it openly with Zena, whenever she was ready to hear about it, she knows that she is *not* ready. If you *talk* about it with your kids, it doesn’t mean that they are going to jump right into using drugs. The ones that are using drugs now in Zena’s grade, I would guess have parents who would be totally against it. Would not be using it, would be extremely petrified, and might have even kept any information from their kids or basically lied to their kids about the risks. Drug use is dangerous. For one thing, because it is illegal. But more than that. Young forming egos should not partake in mind-altering “ego dissolving” substances. Nevertheless, parents should still tell the truth, and not be afraid to include the positive effects that they might have had with drugs when they were younger. Not sharing openly with your kids leads to kids that keep things from their parents.



As parents, is there a particular age range where you feel as though it seems reasonable for a child to experiment with some drugs? Where would you place that age range, and what sort of an environment seems most suitable?

ALLYSON: I want to leave that up to Zena. I don't know, but I assume that she might want to experiment at some point. But she may never. I mean, my sister-in-law has never tried any drugs other than alcohol at all. People do go through their lives and not experiment, and if she doesn't want to, that's fine. I think that it will be up to her. The most perfect environment in my opinion for Zena, would be to do it with us. [laughs] I'd love to do it with her. When she is older, we could do it together. Yet, I think that in some ways it's a peer thing. That people should do it with their peers. We hear that from other people. But you know, it's not a bad thing if this is a part of your spiritual life, to share that with your family.

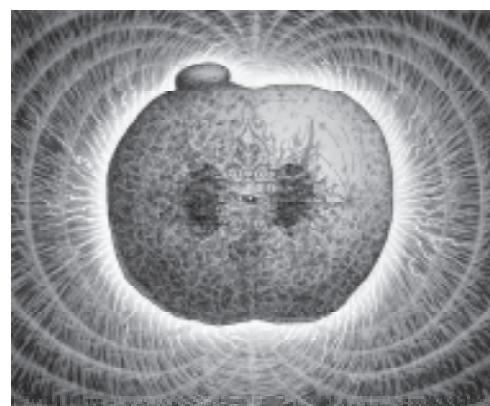
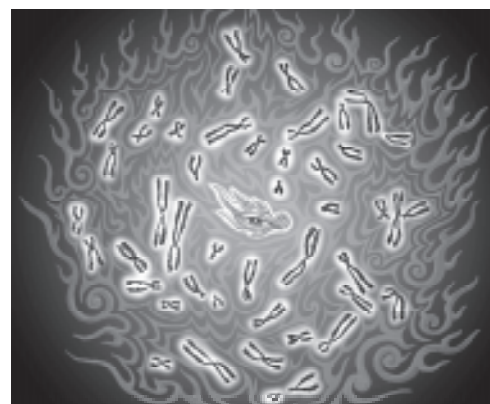
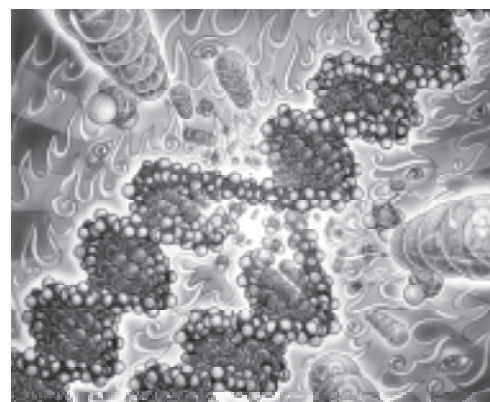
Alex, is there a particular age where it seems reasonable to you for children to experiment with drugs?

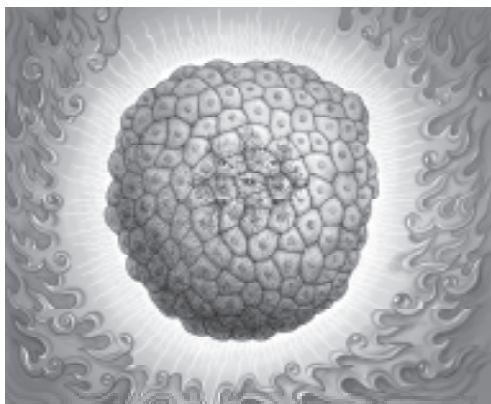
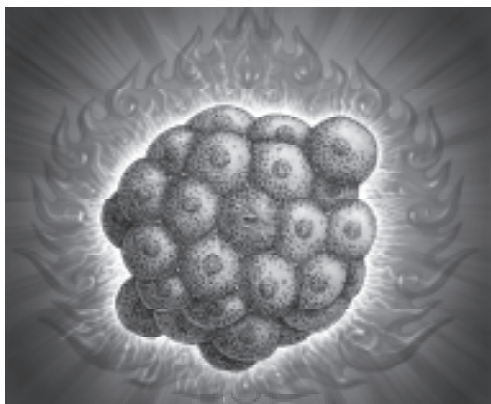
Alex: Children, huh? Oh God. [laughs]

Well, I guess by that I mean anyone under the age of 18.

ALEX: Are we talking about the crack babies, and whether they like it or not? God. I guess I'm of a mind similar to Stephen Gaskin, who basically feels that the drinking age is appropriate for the other stuff as well, in a general sense. That one wants to *form* an ego before one starts to transcend it. I know that my friends—when I was in junior high and high school—were probably 13 or 14 when they started trying LSD. And I think it really freaked most of them out. Some of these people stayed kind of rubbery throughout that period, and I don't know that it was helpful for them in gelling their personality, because they were dealing with a lot of other issues—their parents breaking up, and other kinds of things. It's kind of hard to tell what effects these things have on people, because our lives are complexly interwoven matrixes of lots of different forces. I can only speak from my own experience. I waited until I was around 21. My first trip was an extraordinary opening into resolving issues that had been coming up during adolescence, which kind of crystallized through that experience, resolved themselves in some ways, and suggested ways past my impasses. It might be that some kids would get that early, and they would be able to skip some of the doldrums or depressions of adolescence if they were initiated in a framework of support and by folks who were part of their tribe—a sort of wider and wiser family. And so if they were opening up and becoming vulnerable—exposing their psyche and delving into those dimensions in a loving supportive setting—then I can imagine that it could be done earlier than 21.

ALLYSON: I should say that I was probably 17. I left for college when I was 17, and I didn't start using LSD until then. But I really feel strongly about the aspects of set and setting. That if you are going to use LSD or this sort of thing, you really need to be in a perfect setting. It is best to be with someone who really cares about you, in case you experience that terror. You need to be with someone who is with you on that. It's not easy for high school students to find a place to do that. There's always the danger of parents coming in, or an authority finding out. To find the perfect set and setting, in nature where it is beautiful, and you can be





there for long periods of time—I don't think that is easy to find. Just being away from home and being on my own, it was better for me to start then than it was for me to do it in high school. But I know that kids are starting now much younger than that. Kids started younger than that when I was in school too, but I waited.

*When I was in high school, perhaps about 16 years old at the time, I remember that one of my friend's parents let us have alcohol parties at her house. She didn't buy the alcohol for us. But her thought was that if the kids were going to be drinking anyway, that she would rather have it be supervised and somewhere that they could spend the night if they needed to, and where no one was allowed to drive home if they were drunk. She didn't clear these parties with the parents of the kids who were in attendance. Her heart was in the right place. But she certainly could have had to face a lot of pissed off moms and dads, as well as legal problems. She was walking a fine line with her attempt to be more responsible than the current mores of society allow, and there was risk involved. On the other hand, some adult users of psychedelics have admitted publicly to turning on their own juvenile kids. Steve Kubby is one example; he wrote in his book *The Politics of Consciousness* about sharing a low dose of LSD with his 16-year-old son Sky. And then there are traditional societies where visionary plants are used ritualistically for spiritual purposes at a much younger age, but these folks may not be facing the legal consequences.*

ALLYSON: Well, it is one thing to turn on your own one kid. But then to have a group your kid's friends over, you're really in danger. We would be really in danger, because we're known. People have read about us in *The New York Times*. I mean they know. So we can't have children over here doing that, and Zena knows that.

From a legal perspective, I can see the utility of waiting until one's kid is at least 18, before dosing with them. But in reality, the kid might not want to wait that long. So for parents who aren't comfortable tripping with their kid before he or she turns 18, what do you think some reasonable options are?

ALLYSON: Well, in Brazil it is legal to do ayahuasca. Parents do go down there with their teenagers and they have this experience together in a legal environment. We know people who have done that, and we've considered that.

That's a great solution.

ALLYSON: But of course Zena has to want to do it. It's not just our thing.

ALEX: One of the things that Zena asked us once during an interview was, "Do I have to do drugs?" No, definitely not. It is just something that some people are drawn to. And after which, if they have had an amazing experience, they think, "Oh my God, why are so many people in the world going without this?" It's like not knowing about having orgasms or something. There's part of you that wants to be a proselyte, to initiate people, or to try and cajole people into it. But then you realize that you're of a certain mind, and we're not in a society—especially in these dark days of the Bush Era—that is understanding of the motivations that would drive people toward a spiritual reality through altering their brain chemistry.

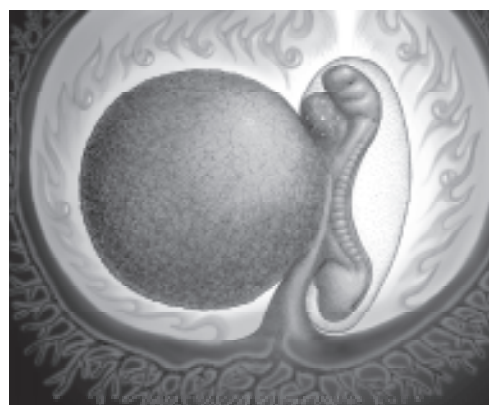
The fact that psychedelics are demonized by our current government places parents who use them in a strange situation. But one potentially beneficial side of that is that it allows for an opportunity to teach your child that it is important to think for him- or herself, and not blindly accept the government or media's propaganda.

ALEX: We've got a full-on Drug War, or rather a war on a certain state of consciousness. In the case of entheogen users, there are little rays of light that we have to celebrate. Certainly the Native American Church continues to use peyote, and they've been guaranteed that religious right. And there seems to be some opening up in New Mexico about the ayahuasca situation that is likewise used in religious settings as a sacrament. As far as the atmosphere that the government has promulgated, and how that helps to clarify drug education for our children, I think it's a lot like the sex education angle. Abstain. Don't do it. And without really any sort of informed education, there's *no* education to it.

ALLYSON: Marijuana is clearly a less dangerous inebriant than alcohol; and a lot of people feel this way. Alcohol is toxic in quantities that are very drinkable. You could drink enough alcohol in a day to kill yourself. You can't smoke enough in a day to kill yourself—it's just not as toxic. Some children are fiercely afraid of their parents smoking. We had friends who gave up smoking when their kids were pre-teenagers, because the kids were very afraid of their parents doing something that was illegal. They were so afraid of it that it caused them a lot of stress and anxiety, and so the parents stopped. Marijuana is more dangerous due to the potential legal ramifications, but less dangerous in terms of its physiological effects. People have been using inebriants in every society for ages. With this historical use of inebriants, it has been clearly shown over time that some drugs are less dangerous than others. And yet in the case of marijuana, children are taught to be *more* afraid of that drug. Society educates children incorrectly in this way.

ALEX: That's well put.

ALLYSON: You were asking earlier about when it is the best time to talk with your children about drugs. I like to relate the following story, because people are always concerned about parenting, and when they should properly talk to their children about drugs. Zena has been going to Alex's talks where he discusses his art history and his life, since she was maybe two. When she was maybe four years old was the first time she sat through an entire talk, which lasted about an hour and a half. Alex talks about the first time he took LSD and his whole spiritual life related to drugs and art. As she got older—maybe she was eight or nine years old, or even older, ten perhaps—I remember one time she said to me, "Well, I know you guys have tried marijuana. But nothing else." As we were walking down the street she said this to me. And I thought, "Okay, that's what she knows." That's what she *wants* to know. They only take in what they really want to know. So if you don't tell them what they don't ask you, then they only know what they want to know. When they are ready to know more, then they ask you. So here she was, living in an environment where her parents were known users, but she believed that we didn't use, because that is all that she could hold right then. The drug education that she had had in school made our consumption of the other drugs seem impossible to her. We couldn't be doing *that*. So she just made up that we hadn't done that, even though she had





heard it over and over again through the years that we had. So it's interesting. They basically know what they want to know, and you don't have to keep it from them. They'll ask you when they're ready.

How have you addressed the topic of visionary drug use with your own families of origin? Have your parents been open to your explorations of inner space via this method, or had any interest in such explorations themselves?

ALEX: I think that my parents are understandably uncomfortable with the subject. I don't think that they have ever really appreciated my interests, and they have never had an interest themselves in psychedelics. I think that the first time I was introduced to the subject was through *Life* magazine and various news magazines when I was a boy around 12 or 13. I did a science report on it at that time. I was quite taken by Timothy Leary and the hippies, and all of that. Allen Ginsberg and all those fellows seemed like they were having a lot of fun. It certainly looked a lot more interesting than getting blown up in Viet Nam. I was also intrigued by unlocking the imagination, since I was an artist and knew I was an artist from early on. The visionary world was a subject of attraction and curiosity to me.

At that time it wasn't illegal. I think that my parents considered it to be interesting and unusual. But then as soon as the government started to crack down on it, well... my folks were staunch Republicans who embraced the idea of "my country right or wrong." The hippies must be wrong, those who are wanting peace must be wrong. When I have talked about my psychedelic experiences with them—because it has been published many times in my books and in other places, interviews and such that I have sent to them—they express that they are uncomfortable with the subject. But they are really just looking out for our welfare. They really just love us and they want us to be safe. They don't want any harm to come to our minds and they don't want any harm to come to us through the negative publicity and Drug War mentality that surrounds us. So I can understand their feelings. I'm afraid that they can't understand mine.

ALLYSON: I'd like to just say about families that both of our parents are still together, and both couples have been married for the same amount of years—about 52 or 53 years. They were married the same year. And all four of them are pretty conservative, they're all Republicans.

And they had artists as children. [laughs]

ALLYSON: Well, we had artists as parents too. Alex's dad is a graphic designer and my mother is an artist. But they just happened to be... well, my mother lived with my dad, so she's a conservative I think because of the influence there. I think that everything Alex has said I go along with. Our parents are more concerned about our welfare and our well-being. Like when they saw the article that came out in the *Times*, they were worried about the legal ramifications, and what our friends would think, and what the school would think, and whether we were going to get busted, and whether the police were going to get a search warrant and burst into our house. You know, they worry about those kind of things. That's their concern. I think that my mother is unusual, in that she is the most open of the four of them. She's more of a free-thinker, and is interested in all things about consciousness.

ALEX: She's a spiritually curious person.

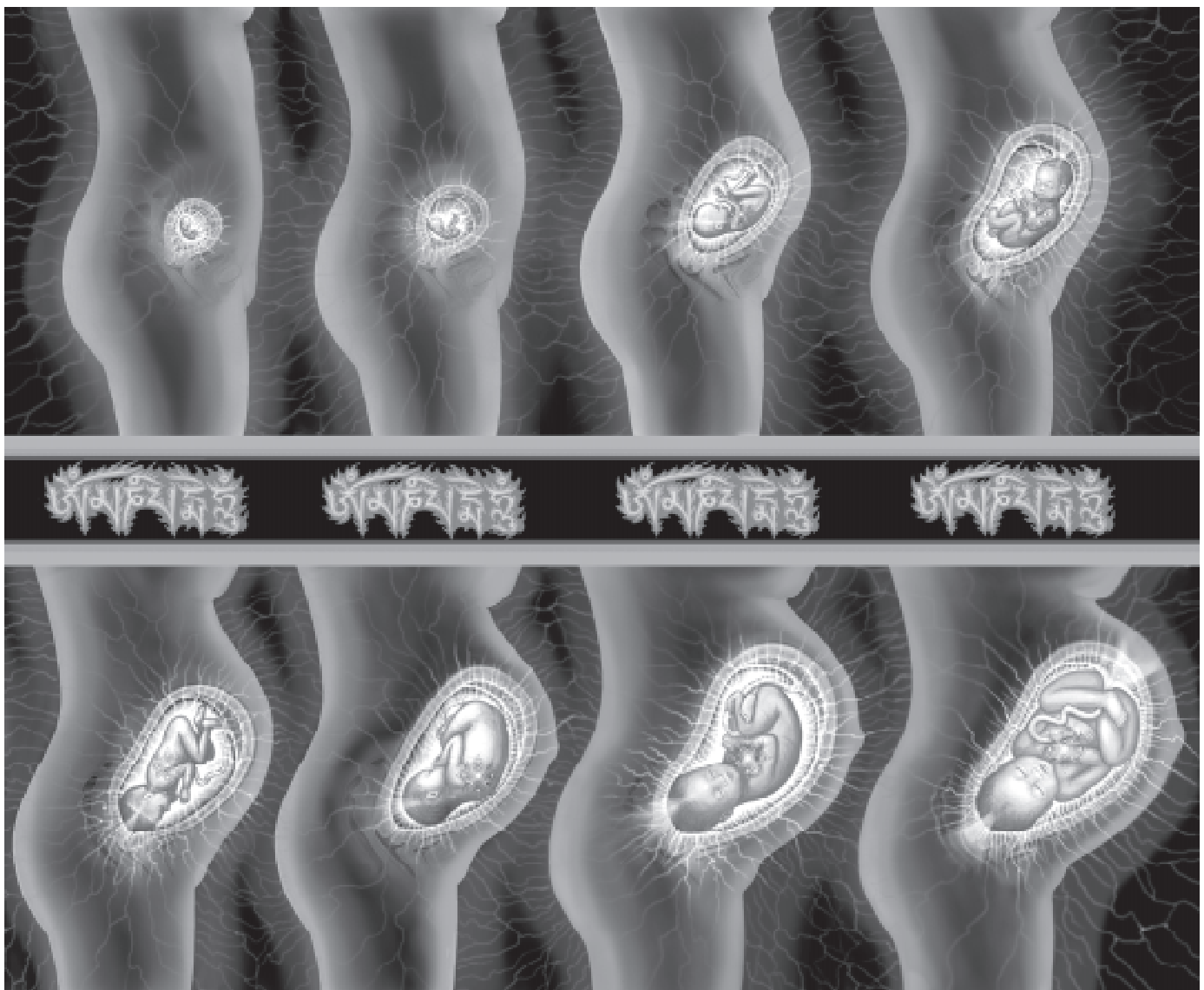
Knowing what you know now, would you have done anything differently in the past?

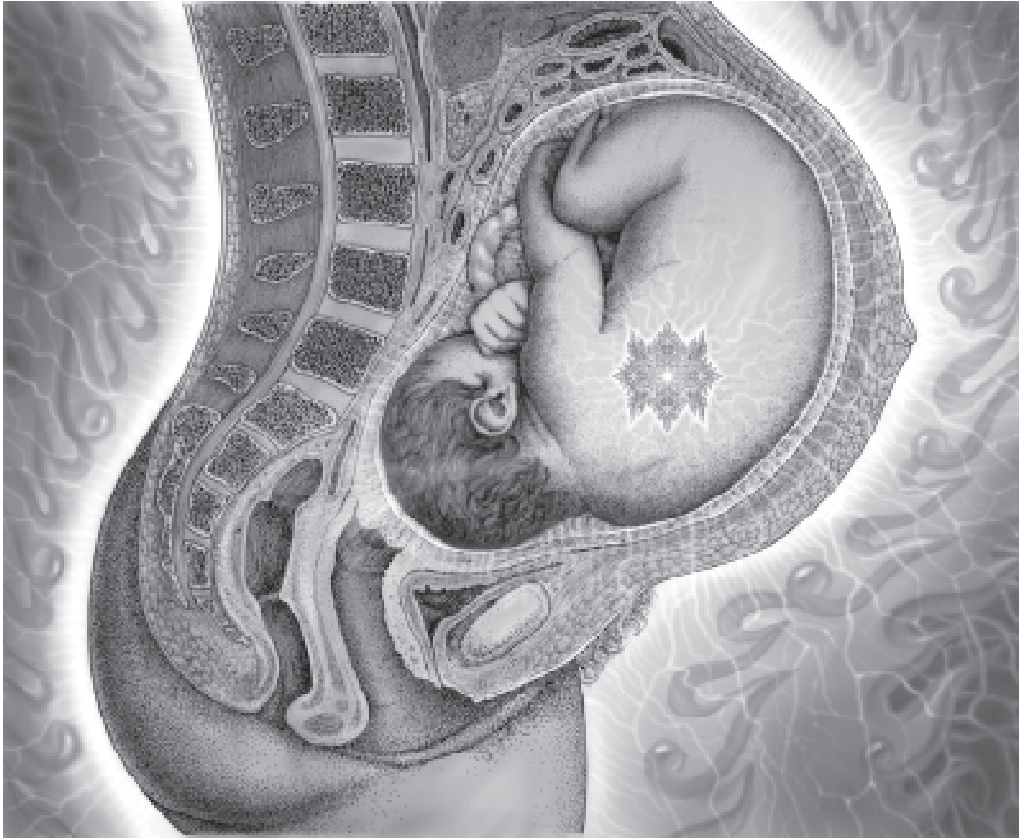
ALLYSON: No. I wouldn't do anything different. I am interested to hear what Alex has to say. But I think that Zena has come out perfect as far as I'm concerned. I wouldn't change a thing. She has a mind of her own. She's going to decide when it is time for her, or if it is never time for her. We've always told her the truth, and if she ever wants to know more, we would tell her more. I trust her implicitly. I think that if the time is right and she decides to experiment, she'll tell us. Because she tells us everything. She tells us everything because we don't implode or explode when she does. She'll tell us because we let her tell us without going crazy. I think she's turned out great. Would you do anything different, Alex?

ALEX: No. Because I feel as though that would mean either lying or not saying anything. And I've never felt comfortable doing that.

The attitude that you have is inspiring to me, because I think that it is very important to be truthful with one's children. I have some friends who used to hide when they smoked Cannabis—they tried as hard as they could to hide this from their children. At a certain point it got ridiculous, with them trying to hide this from their 13 or 14 year old daughter, because she'd figured it out. She knew what was going on. And then they had to have this sort of awkward conversation. So I decided for myself that I would be straightforward from the start about it with my daughter, and hope that this is the best approach.

ALLYSON: I think it has more integrity. If people are really concerned, they might consider temporarily stopping their use. For example, we have close relatives that





decided to give it up for a while. Their children were keen to them, and said, “We’re really scared for you, and it really makes us nervous. It really makes us upset.” I mean, you’re a family. You live together, and you have to make some sacrifices for each other. Sometimes if that happens, and the children are not going to be convinced about the positive effects, and it really makes them uncomfortable, it makes them afraid, so then for a few years you give it up. I mean, I gave it up when I got pregnant. Even before I was going to get pregnant, I gave it up for a while. Because I wanted to have the right environment for my womb. I think that it is possible to do that. It has more integrity to do that, than to hide. I don’t like hiding. I don’t want Zena to hide things from me. Everything I do, she’s going to do back. If I hide from her, then she’s going to be sneaky and keep things to herself. I would rather that she shares with me all the stuff about her life.

It seems like a good approach. Zena, what do your friends think about your parents?

ZENA: Well, *The New York Times* article came out. A lot of my friend’s parents are lawyers or corporate executives and they all read the *Times*, so my friends were all like, “Zena, you’re parents... they do LSD! And they smoke marijuana!” And I’m like, “Yeah, I know. Got it.”

“Yeah, I read the paper too.” [laughs]

Zena: Yeah. It’s an article about my parents. You would have *thought* that I would have read it. So after I was, “Yeah, whatever,” they just sort of dropped it. They don’t really talk about it all the time, like “Your parents are druggies.” The only thing that they say about them is that they are the coolest parents that they know.

Is there any advice that you might offer for a kid who is interested in taking drugs for the first time?

ZENA: I guess that I would just say think about it a *lot* before doing it. Maybe they could save this experience until later. Personally, I think that I am so young, if I just do everything and get it over with—have sex, and do drugs, and do everything *right now*—what will I have left to do when I get older? If you really want to do it, then waiting will give you something to look forward to. So I’m waiting. When you get older, and when you feel like you are *really* ready, perhaps that is a better time. As a comparison, are you really ready to have sex at a very young age? And then, are you really ready to have a baby? Are you really ready to accept the consequences of your actions? So the same can be said for doing drugs. Personally, I am not ready for those consequences. And I don’t think that a lot of kids my age are. I don’t want to deal with all of the stuff that comes with it all. If you *really* think you are ready, that might be another thing. But don’t come complaining to me if your parents find out! •

DanceSafe

MAPS speaks with DanceSafe Board President Bryan Oley

www.dancesafe.org

DanceSafe's 28 chapters and affiliates in the United States and Canada consist of young people from within the dance culture itself who have a sincere interest in bettering their communities and educating themselves and their peers. Volunteers staff harm reduction booths at raves, nightclubs, and other dance events where they provide information on drugs, safer sex, and additional health and safety issues concerning the electronic dance community. DanceSafe also provides adulterant screening or "pill testing" services for Ecstasy users. Pill testing is an important harm reduction service that saves lives and reduces medical emergencies by helping ecstasy users avoid fake and adulterated tablets that often contain substances far more dangerous than MDMA.

What does DanceSafe think about drug education; are there any programs or approaches it endorses?

DRUG EDUCATION is our primary goal and it is the most effective tool we use. We believe people make healthier decisions about engaging in risky activities if they have access to accurate information about risks. Though we primarily focus on drug use and safety concerns such as heat stroke and hearing loss, we also provide information and peer counseling for many life issues that may relate to drug use.

Our approach is a combination of harm reduction and popular education methods. We receive many requests asking how schools, government agencies, and cities around the world can implement their own youth-driven harm reduction organizations. While harm reduction requires an individualized approach that caters to the specific needs of a local community, we provide new groups a base to start from.

Do you have age limits or requirements related to who can be a volunteer or have a position of leadership in your organization?

Chapters set their own age requirements and limits. DanceSafe as a national organization requires that the group founders be 18 or older, so they can sign chapter bylaws and be in a better position to handle situations that may arise when dealing with local authorities and health groups. Most chapters do allow volunteers under 18, with signed forms indicating permission of their parents. We also encourage chapters to limit pill testing to volunteers over 18.

What laws do you think there should be regarding young people and drugs? Do you have any thoughts about the age of consent, or any distinctions made between different psychoactives or classes of psychoactives?

DanceSafe's commitment to harm reduction principles means we recognize every individual's right to choose for themselves what activities they participate in. However, there must be a balance between safety and risk when dealing with potentially harmful activities. We refrain from taking a specific policy stance on issues unless we feel that the specific issue may influence the safety and health of our patrons.

As for distinctions between different psychoactives or classes of psychoactives, DanceSafe believes that government tendencies to blur the distinctions between drugs limits users' ability to accurately gauge the risks involved with drugs that are similarly grouped but produce widely varying effects.

What kind of feedback, breakthroughs, or insights have you had with regard to the involvement of minors in your organization?

The continual influx of youth into our organization brings new ideas and perspectives, and we are constantly reminded of how much more worldly today's youth are compared to previous generations. Frequently we come across 14- or 15-year-olds who are considering experimenting with drugs or who have friends who are experimenting with drugs. Peer pressures and a lack of resources means they often depend on rumors for information about drugs. We find, after they attend a few meetings, they begin presenting health and safety information to their friends. As a member of their peer group, they gain more respect on drug issues than an older "authority figure" has. •

American Indian Religious Freedom... and a father's right to raise his child according to tradition

by John Halpern, M.D. • john_halpern@hms.harvard.edu

As they come of age,
children of NAC members
eventually decide
to try to stay awake
for an entire service
and ingest
an "adult" amount
of peyote.
Such a rite-of-passage
typically occurs
somewhere between
age 10 and 14,
but children do attend
these meetings
in their younger years
before fully participating.

IN LATE NOVEMBER, 2002 I found myself sitting in a small Michigan Circuit Court testifying *pro bono* as an expert witness in a child custody case revolving around the sacramental use of peyote. This Court's family judge in a prior divorce decree had forbidden a father from offering his religious sacrament, peyote, to his 4-year-old son. The father, Mr. Jonathan Scott Fowler, is a member of the federally-recognized Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, and his son, Ishkwada, with 25% Native American blood quanta, is also eligible for tribal enrollment. Mr. Fowler was awarded full physical custody of his son and did not accept that a judge could forbid he and his son from expressing their faith together like other Native American Church (NAC) families. The father turned to the Michigan State Court of Appeals, which decided that the decree against Mr. Fowler's religion should have had a hearing on the merits of the sacramental use of peyote. And so, the case landed right back before the very same family judge who handled the divorce.

Mr. Fowler is a member in good-standing of the Native American Church of the Morning Star, which was founded (according to the Judge!) in the late 1800s in Michigan. The taking of the sacrament, peyote, is central to the services and prayer meetings of the NAC. Though peyote and its psychoactive constituent, mescaline, are listed as Schedule I drugs of abuse, millions of peyote "buttons" are legally distributed and consumed across the United States each year by the 300,000 members of the NAC. The NAC, in fact, is the largest single denomination amongst Native Americans.

Mr. Fowler simply wished to do as any other proud father might by bringing his son to meetings and have him blessed with the "medicine." Much has been misunderstood on this issue, which is critical to grasp: we are talking about a very small amount of ground-up peyote or a small sip of peyote-infused tea being placed on the son's lips. This father wasn't seeking to "intoxicate" his 4-year-old boy, nor would he responsibly permit his son to just unwittingly eat away at peyote as if it were candy. Peyote is revered and respected by members of the NAC. It also has a bitter, acrid taste that precludes being mistaken for a delicious food. As they come of age, children of NAC members eventually decide to try to stay awake for an entire service and ingest an "adult" amount of peyote. Such a rite-of-passage typically occurs somewhere between age 10 and 14, but children do attend these meetings in their younger years before fully participating. They stare wide-eyed at the fireplace in the center of the tipi or traditional house and listen carefully to their elders' words. Some play make-believe drum in time with the beat of the peyote songs being accompanied by water-drum. Perhaps these children will be given a blessing by being touched with peyote, such as a small amount rubbed on the forehead, or by a very small "taste" placed in their mouth. Eventually, these children fall asleep behind their parents or grandparents until morning. And while these children sleep, the road chief and other congregants will offer blessings over their sweet little bodies. This is part of the NAC traditions and is how their faith carries forward into the future.

It should have been enough for this Court to hear from a road chief (the "pastor" who leads the all-night prayer ceremony of the NAC) that the father was only seeking to bless his son in "that right way," which is customarily accepted and approved by the majority of NAC members. I was present because, sadly, we have a court system that fails to fully respect the traditions and customs of Native Americans; and so, instead, the Court needed to hear a medical expert weigh in on this issue of allowing a child to ingest peyote. Now mind you, this issue has already been settled by Act of Congress: the 1994 Amendments to the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) became law expressly to protect these religious rights of all Native Americans who are members of federally-recognized tribes. Such individuals cannot be excluded from the *bona fide* practices of the NAC, but on the fault-lines of divorce, the need to uphold federal law appears to crumble in the name

of “child protection.” And so, as the only American scientist to conduct research on health consequences from lifelong peyote use (now or historically), I offered my expert testimony in the 27th Circuit Court, Family Division of the State of Michigan before Judge Graydon W. Dimkoff for an NAC father fighting for the religious freedom of his family.

Despite the absence of any evidence of harm, despite the passage of AIRFA, despite my clear testimony, Judge Dimkoff issued a ruling months later stringing together a patchwork of inaccurate assessments about the NAC use of peyote. With an elected judgeship, I suspect the Honorable Dimkoff was more interested in getting to his predetermined conclusions that are in-line with his electoral base, than in actually sticking his neck out to uphold the *Constitution* and protect the religious rights of one father and his young son.

Family Court Judge Dimkoff failed to appreciate what the NAC stands for and how it functions. He rightly noted in his decision that a surrogate can ingest peyote for another in special circumstances, but then used this point to continue his injunction against Ishkwada being fully blessed with peyote. He apparently thought that by forcing a surrogate upon Mr. Fowler and his son he did not burdened their practice of religion! The fact that a surrogate can be used in these NAC ceremonies was used as a “loophole” by this Judge to support his decision, but this decision continues to be an obvious burden upon this family: they are the only Native family in America now to have a judge tell them that they can’t exercise their religion consistent with the accepted traditions and faith of the NAC.

Judge Dimkoff’s 31-page decision is also filled with mistakes about peyote itself, and about my research. My catalog of them with my comments can be read in an expanded version of this article at www.maps.org/newsletters/peyotechild.pdf.

It really gets under my skin that Americans in positions of responsibility would abuse our *Constitution* and the principles upon which this nation was founded and disparage the protected beliefs of a people who have

suffered so much since their world was “discovered” by Europe. Jonathan and Ishkwada Fowler are not the first Native Americans to be so dearly wronged by people who claim that they are there to protect and help them. In fact these actions remind me of an old sick saying of past advocates who were calling for the complete acculturation of Native Americans into “accepted” society: You’ve got to kill the Indian to save the man. Fortunately, the Judge’s decision does permit Ishkwada to be present at NAC ceremonies. I think the future is quite bright for this family since federal law is on their side. Eventually, Ishkwada will be a fully-enrolled member of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians just like his Dad. Eventually, Ishkwada will express his wishes. And if it is his wish to partake fully in the ceremonies of



the NAC, he will be allowed to do so with the consent of his parents or after future litigation in federal court.

It appears that our culture is so hysterical when it comes to the topic of “kids and drugs” that it influenced this Judge to run in fear from his obligations, and it resulted in major media coverage around the globe. The sacramental use of peyote by Native peoples has continued for thousands of years and is not going to stop, so we might expect another case like this one sometime in the future. Next time around, we should all make sure people really have *read* the current American Indian Religious Freedom Act (the on-line edition of the *MAPS Bulletin* reprints AIRFA in its entirety). Also, my research on the neurocognitive functioning of longstanding NAC members will also finally be published soon, and science can’t be ordered by Judge Dimkoff to accept his opinions as if they were peer-reviewed facts. •

Students for Sensible Drug Policy

MAPS speaks with SSDP Board Chair Matt Atwood

www.ssdp.org



Students for Sensible Drug Policy (SSDP) is committed to providing education on harms caused by the War on Drugs, working to involve youth in the political process, and promoting an open, honest, and rational discussion of alternative solutions to drug problems in the United States. SSDP includes 120 university and high school chapters across North America. Some of the issues about which they help raise public consciousness are: the Drug-Free Student Aid Provision, which was amended to the Higher Education Act of 1998, urine testing in schools, and replacing zero tolerance with harm reduction. SSDP Board Chair Matt Atwood can be reached by e-mail at matt@ssdp.org.

What does SSDP think about drug education; are there any programs or approaches it endorses?

SSDP believes it is imperative that all students receive a comprehensive drug education. The vast majority of current drug education programs—those espousing “Just Say No” solutions to the problems of youth drug abuse—have failed. We need drug education programs that use a harm reduction model instead of zero tolerance reinforcements of the prohibitionist mind set. Safety First, a concept championed by Marsha Rosenbaum of the Drug Policy Alliance, is a reality-based effort to educate parents and teens. By following Dr. Rosenbaum’s lead, many other programs could be designed to fit the needs of diverse communities, while still minimizing the risks associated with potentially dangerous behaviors.

The most important factor in judging any drug education program is its ability to pass the honesty test. While accepting the reality of drug use amongst teenagers, successful programs must deal honestly and openly with the reasons for drug use, the harms associated with risky behavior, and the ways in which these harms can be minimized.

How is the SSDP “Have you talked to your parents about drugs?” project going?

The project is currently in the process of being evaluated. While we still stress the importance of honest and open communication between parents and children regarding drug use and the problems caused by prohibition, it is often difficult to gauge the success of an effort to influence thousands of individual interactions. The short answer is: students still need to talk to their parents, and we will continue to encourage this throughout our organization’s existence. In the future we hope to develop the idea into book form, tentatively titled *How to Talk to Your Parents About Drugs*, in which we discuss

at length the need for open discussions between parents and teens about drug use and drug policy. The book would also investigate the consequences when that discussion fails to occur, both at the individual and policy-making levels.

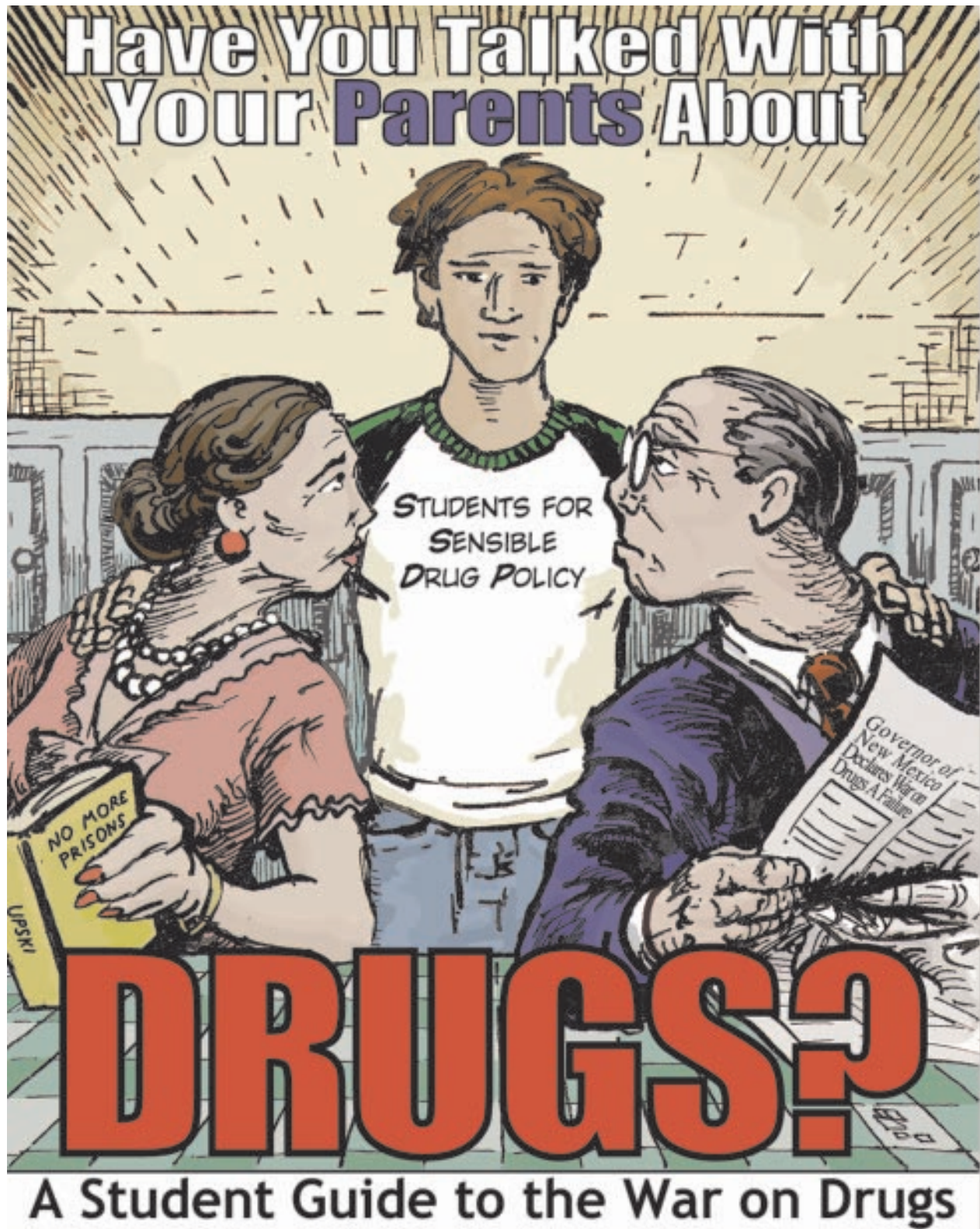
Do you have age limits or requirements related to who can be a volunteer or have a position of leadership in your organization?

There are no age limits in SSDP, either for who can join a chapter or who can take a leadership role in the organization. For instance, David Brown is a high school student in Florida and has been a trustee of the Board of Directors for almost two years. David recently remarked in an e-mail:

Contrary to what most people seem to believe, my being in high school [is] more of a crutch than a detriment. Nearly everyone in SSDP is very enthusiastic about having high school students involved. In fact, many of them seem to have more respect for anyone who can get involved at a younger age.

Drug policy reform is about changing attitudes before changing laws and that’s exactly what SSDP is doing. In my freshman year of high school, a student in my debate class once mentioned the idea of marijuana decriminalization and everyone laughed. Today, someone that mentions drug policy reform will at least get an earnest response, which is a huge improvement from years past.

SSDP welcomes and values the opinions of all students, especially with regard to how they have been affected by the War on Drugs. Placing an age restriction on public participation in the political process would be contrary to the mission of SSDP, which seeks to involve youth in the political process of reforming our nation’s drug laws. •

**SSDP T-SHIRT DESIGN**

Proceeds from the sale of SSDP T-shirts go to help students who have lost their financial aid as a result of the Higher Education Act Drug Free Student Aid Provision. To purchase a T-shirt, or otherwise donate to SSDP, see www.ssdp.org.

The Safety First Approach to Teens and Drugs

by **Marsha Rosenbaum**, Ph.D., Drug Policy Alliance, San Francisco • mrosenbaum@drugpolicy.org

I ONCE HEARD George Soros say that for a politician, drug policy reform is the “third rail.” Touch it and you die. Reformers know that the issue of adolescents and drugs is the third rail within the third rail. While we have been able to win the support of an increasing number of Americans on issues like medical marijuana and treatment instead of incarceration, even those who think “Just Say No” is too simplistic are skeptical of alternative approaches to teenage drug use. Many mistakenly believe that if you’re not saying no, you must be saying yes.

I began to look closely at prevention education when in 1988 my daughter was subjected to the DARE program without my permission. I first learned then that calling such programs “drug education” was a misnomer. Adolescents and preadolescents, the targets of media and school-based anti-drug messages, were taught “refusal skills” rather than being provided with objective information.

In a nutshell, kids were repeatedly told that all illegal drugs are equally bad, and use inevitably leads to abuse and addiction. That message “took” until savvy teens figured out that drugs are vastly different from one another in terms of effects and risks; that the vast majority of users do not progress to increasingly harder drugs or become addicted; and that many legal drugs are far more toxic than illegal drugs. With this knowledge, and the realization that they’d been duped, many teenagers became cynical about any drug information coming from adults, no matter how well-meaning the source. This scared me.

By the mid-1990s, I had become convinced that the use of a harm reduction perspective was the way to go with teenagers and drugs, just as it had been with teenagers and sexuality. As a NIDA-funded researcher I was familiar with the survey data and knew that the vast majority of teens who experimented with drugs did not get into trouble with them. Having looked at a variety of programs and curricula, I also knew that teens were not getting information they trusted that might help them make responsible decisions about the nature and amounts of drugs they might use.

All this (frightening) information about drug educa-

tion was immensely personal, since by this time both my children were teenagers. I tried to convince them that I, unlike the other adults they’d heard, was objective about alcohol and other drugs; that the information I would offer was based on the latest scientific evidence rather than propaganda and hype. I gave them *Marijuana Myths Marijuana Facts* and *From Chocolate to Morphine* to read, and urged them to do their own research. Although I told them up front that I thought abstinence was the best choice, my bottom line was their safety. More than anything else, I wanted them to stay out of cars if they or their friends became intoxicated, and I was prepared to do anything to keep them out of harm’s way.

My friends who were also parents felt exactly as I did. While that was no surprise, I suspected that other, possibly more conventional, parents also honored safety above all else. In 1998 my hunch was validated. *The San Francisco Chronicle* published a letter I wrote to my son, Johnny, who was then entering high school. In the letter (which has now been

translated into ten languages and can be found at www.safety1st.org), I told Johnny about the drugs he might encounter in high school and that abstinence would be his wisest choice. What distinguished my message from that of Nancy Reagan’s were four little words, “but if you do.” That’s where harm reduction came in. I advised my son to become informed about whatever substances he chose to use, and most importantly, to “be safe.” I assured him that his father and I, as well as our friends, were available to help, if he should find himself in a compromising situation.

The response I got to that letter was overwhelming. Parents asked if they could duplicate the letter and send it to friends; schools began using it in health education classes; students thought it was the most “real” thing they’d seen about drugs.

The Drug Policy Alliance and I created the Safety First drug education project a year later, in 1999—kicking it off with a conference, “Just Say Know: New Directions in Drug Education,” and an expanded version of the *Chronicle*



letter in a booklet entitled, *Safety First: A Reality-Based Approach to Teens, Drugs, and Drug Education*.

The project was dedicated to parents and educators. We advocated abstinence while providing a “fallback” strategy addressing those teens who said “sometimes,” or “maybe,” or even “yes” to alcohol and other drugs. Our position was clear:

- Regarding alcohol and other drugs, in order to eliminate the possibility of potential problems, abstinence is the wisest choice for teens.
- Conventional prevention programs, providing misinformation and utilizing scare tactics, are ineffective because they have failed to gain the confidence of young people.
- Teens, whether we like it or not, will make their own decisions about alcohol and other drug use.
- Everyone needs honest, science-based drug education because America is a drug culture (using alcohol, over-the-counter substances, and prescription drugs, as well as illegal drugs), and we all will have to deal with a wide array of legal and illegal substances throughout our lifetimes.
- Safety should be the end result of any program or approach.

By 2002, *Safety First* had been shunned and embraced by parents all over the world. The usual cadre of zealots denounced the approach as encouraging and facilitating drug use among teens by not “drawing a line in the sand” and sticking to an abstinence-only agenda. I gave up on them early on, knowing they were mired in a moral and cultural fantasy-like belief system that forced them to use the same failed approach, over and over, despite its obvious failures.

But real parents in the real world with real teenagers have gotten and appreciate the message. The California State PTA partnered with us in 2002 to make *Safety First* available to all parents of secondary school students. We published a practical brochure, *Getting Real about Teens and Drugs*, and created the web site www.safety1st.org for parents and educators that includes facts about commonly used drugs, a question and answer column, news about drugs and drug education, and strategies for parents dealing with teens and drugs. We have conducted parent workshops all over the country, as well as in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Poland, and Slovakia, urging parents to:

- Open a dialogue by listening to what teens say about drug use.
- Get educated about teenage culture and the nature of drug use within that world.
- Remain calm, non-judgmental, and honest.
- Recognize that teens will make their own decisions.
- Be of assistance when teens find themselves in compromising situations.
- Learn how to help those teens who get into abusive patterns with alcohol and other drugs.

Today's parents of
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themselves
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1960s and 1970s.
The majority
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marijuana and
other drugs.

Due to high demand, we are now in the process of working with the Department of Education, the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs, and other prevention professionals in California to create a harm reduction-oriented drug education model for middle and high school students, couched in Student Assistance Programs.

Those of us introducing innovative approaches to teenage drug use know that this Drug War “issue,” more than any other, comes closer to connecting us to and alienating us from conventional America. Relatively few people know someone who's incarcerated on a drug charge or is strung out on heroin; more know someone who needs or uses medical marijuana. But the vast majority are, were, or will be, the parent of a teenager; and over half of those teenagers admit to using an illegal drug before they graduate from high school. In this sense, the issue of teenage drug use—potential or real—touches almost all of us.

Today's parents of adolescents were themselves teenagers in the 1960s and 1970s. The majority have used marijuana and other drugs. Most have long since quit, bowing to the pressures of parenthood and conventional life. They now struggle with

how to talk with their teens, and whether to divulge information about their past use. While they're concerned that today's marijuana might be stronger than the stuff they smoked, the parents I talk with repudiate the propaganda being promulgated on their kids. They know our government is waging a failed war on drugs, and prevention of teenage drug use, due to extreme Reefer-madness-style tactics, is part of that failure.

I am encouraged by the thousands of requests for our *Safety First* materials and by the enthusiasm of prevention professionals to seek new approaches. But mostly I am heartened by teenagers themselves, who have shown themselves to be resilient enough to cut through the propaganda aimed at them, and make increasingly safer decisions about alcohol and other drug use. •

Drug Education and a Resilient (Re)action

by Joel H. Brown, Ph.D., M.S.W. • jhb@cerd.org

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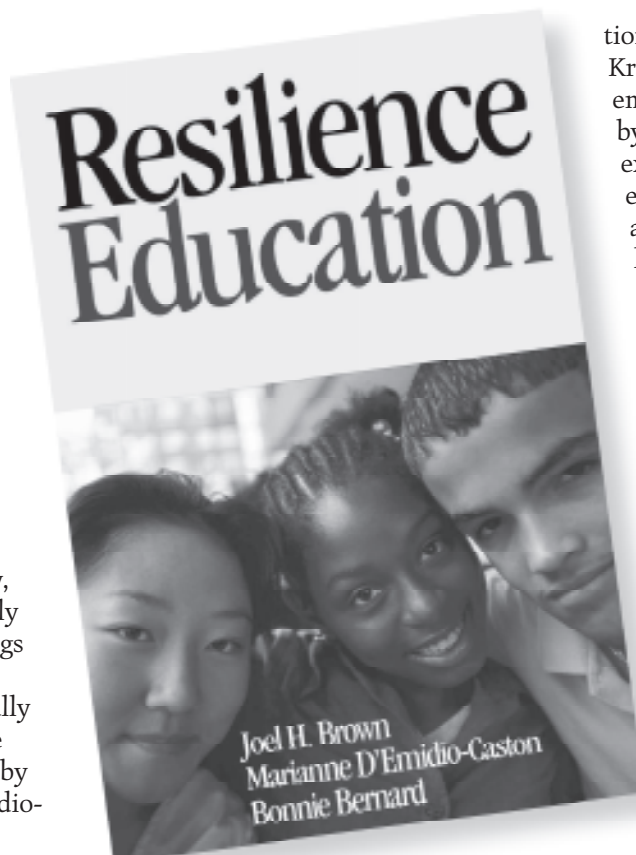
This article is a follow-up to "Drug Education and Democracy (In)action," from the Winter 1996/1997 issue of the *MAPS Bulletin*.

RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW, an auspicious opportunity for positive change in drug education exists. There are two reasons for cautious optimism. First, the kinds of critical discussion needed in such a flawed field are reemerging. Second, we may possibly be moving from the problematic "abstinence" or "no use" approach to one that focuses on *youth development*—a resilience (re)action.

THE RE-EMERGENCE OFA DRUG EDUCATION DISCUSSION

For the first time in over 15 years, the scope of drug education discourse is enlarging. Discussions about the challenges of drug education are taking place in both the popular culture and the scientific community. Within popular culture, discussion primarily concerns Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE). For many, it is now a given that DARE not only fails to prevent kids from using drugs but may actually increase such use (Wysong et al. 1994). The potentially negative "boomerang effects" of the DARE program have been exposed by many researchers (Brown & D'Emidio-Caston 1995; Brown et al. 1997; Rosenbaum & Hanson 1998). Questions have been raised related to DARE's dominance of the educational market, its profit motives, apparent programmatic reinvention, and the potential (yet ancillary) benefits of having an officer on the school site during these insecure times. Deft public relations have so far allowed DARE to continue despite these debates. Nevertheless, the fact that these issues are now being raised in the public domain says something important: based on serious evidence, a frank if not skeptical public discussion about DARE has been initiated. In addition to the DARE debate, we are now on the cusp of another type of discussion, one not yet so well known. It centers on the fact that the issues of "zero tolerance" drug education are much larger and more significant than the single program DARE. This is something that seemed impossible only a few years ago—a candid discussion addressing the following issues:

- Irregular drug education research analyses/reporting
- Overstatement of findings
- Outright misrepresentation of findings (Brown 2001b; Gorman 1998, February & March 2003)



In addition to our publications (Brown 2001b; Brown & Kreft 1998), these issues have emerged in materials published by esteemed institutions. For example, the National Academy of Science describes an availability bias—relating to how easy it is to estimate the frequency of an event by how quickly it comes to mind—as follows:

"Studies showing limited effectiveness often are difficult to publish and may remain unpublished technical reports available only in the original investigators' office" (Manski et al. 2001). The Academy finds that this research occurs in a field that "tended to overstate the effectiveness of prevention activities" (ibid, p. 213). They then specifically place the experience of young

people in these "abstinence" drug education programs into the forefront:

Brown and Kreft (1998) argue that the "no use" messages typically conveyed in universal prevention programs actually increase use among those most at risk for using. These youths are more knowledgeable about drugs and their effects than prevention curricula assume, and the naïve messages conveyed in the programs serve to create cognitive dissonance in the minds of these youths (Manski, Pepper and Petrie, 2001, p. 218).

Colleagues are more brazenly coming forward to critically discuss the under-reported evidence to which the Academy refers. Precisely such discourse occurred at the Tenth Annual Meeting of the Society for Prevention Research. Professor Dennis Gorman from Texas A & M University was discussing Project Atlas, selected by the

U.S. Department of Education to be an exemplary drug education program. As Gorman was contrasting the program's status with his finding that only one out of twenty published results were significant, the program developer entered the conference room. Gorman describes his experience: "Who was I, he demanded—'from Bryan, Texas'—to question the wisdom of those experts who considered his program exemplary (Gorman, February & March 2003)?" In short, the scientific community and the public are becoming increasingly aware of uncomfortable evidence from various unrelated sources regarding our highly irregular drug education science and its large scale programmatic failures.

PRELUDE TO A CHANGE?

The regular occurrence of such personal attacks in this field points to more than a growing discourse and knowledge base: it indicates impending change. According to Thomas Kuhn (Kuhn 1962), such incidences indicate attempts to incorporate novel evidence into the currently failing drug education paradigm. In this Kuhnian sense, the growing discussion of the various failures of the current drug education paradigm serves as "the prelude to new [paradigms]" (ibid, p. 68). For a full description of this process, see Brown 2001a. Perhaps as a result of this emerging discourse, drug education is in a state of flux and may appear to be shifting between the "no-use" programs of the past 100 years (Beck 1998) on one end and programs promoting youthful drug use on the other end. Many in the community see the "harm reduction" approach as one alternative to these two extremes. However, while harm reduction is necessary, it is insufficient. This is because harm reduction is oriented toward reducing risk, which is far different from developing an environment that is supportive of youth. There is a greater opportunity here than mere harm reduction. We can move beyond the inherent limits of a problem remediation focus (i.e. drug use, abuse, and misuse prevention) and into a focus on youth development.

In our response to these considerations, I and my colleagues at the Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD) have worked for over a decade on more than the rhetorical level. Drawing largely from sources outside of drug education (e.g. education, brain science, human development), we have developed a research-based alternative which we call "Resilience Drug Education." Resilience Drug Education neither advocates use, nor fails to recognize the realities of youthful drug-

taking decisions. In so doing, Resilience Drug Education moves beyond stiff rhetoric and applies sound principles of human development.

RESILIENCE DRUG EDUCATION

The resilience education process is fully described in the book *Resilience Education* by Brown, D'Emidio-Caston and Benard (Corwin Press/Sage Publication 2000). Resilience research from pioneers outside of drug education has serious implications for drug education. Long-term studies suggest that even under the worst circumstances (e.g. poverty, abuse, or neglect), young people will predictably grow into thriving adults when the following three "protective factors" are present:

1. Connectedness.
2. Opportunities for participation and contribution.
3. High self expectations (Benard 1987; Garmezy 1983, 1987, 1991; Resnick et al. 1997; Rutter 1981, 1985, 1987; Werner 1986, 1987, 1989, 1990, 1993; Werner et al. 1971; Werner & Smith 1977, 1982, 1992, 2001).

Evidence suggests that under even the most challenging of circumstances nearly 80% of young people thrive by mid-life when these protective factors are present. In applying the resilience process to drug education, it is clear that the most important part of drug education is the *education*, and that the most significant opportunity for positive change lies within the process itself. Facilitators at CERD implement specific approaches to locate and support the above protective factors with respect to drugs and their inherent issues (Brown 2001b) using Confluent Education skills-building practices (Brown 1972, 1975; Brown 1996; see the Winter 1996/1997 issue of the *MAPS Bulletin* for more on the basics of Confluent Education). Their approach includes:

- Learning how to strategically shuttle between individual experience, dyads, triads, small groups, and large groups.
- Providing context-specific drug information regarding substances—abstention, use, misuse, and abuse—offered during the "teachable moment."

The above strategies make opportunities for developing the protective factors visible to the educator and model them for youth. Also, without condoning drug use,

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...There is
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opportunity here
than mere
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Resilience Drug Education blends this youth-supporting process with honest, accurate and complete information, delivered not on script, but during the teachable moment. Through a caring, connected relationship, the teachable moment emerges when a young person's interest or strength is identified as a learning opportunity.

As emotional ties of connectedness between youth and adult occur, information provided during the teachable moment is more likely to be accepted and become deeply learned not because of the information *per se*, but because of its context, the caring process. By conducting exercises to help youth build interpersonal skills within this context, educators, counselors, administrators, or social workers implementing the Resilience model do more than merely provide drug education for these young people. Participants also acquire a process that can help them learn, make decisions in general, and thrive over the course of their lives. It is this process that makes Resilience Drug Education so powerful.

Resilience Drug Education represents more than just another unsupported program shift. As research emerges, supporting evidence regarding resilience and drugs indicates that the results from this approach are long term and predictive. When researcher/practitioners focused on the larger dimension—creating a resilient school—young people's drug use was significantly reduced (Battistich & Hom 1997; Battistich et al. 1991; Battistich et al. 2000). Long term results found in these studies also include positive effects on young people's school-related attitudes and motives (e.g., how much they liked school, their levels of achievement and motivation), social attitudes, skills, and values (e.g., concern for others, conflict resolution abilities, commitment to democratic values), higher test scores, higher grades in core academic subjects, more involvement in positive school and community activities and less misconduct at school than comparison students. These results support the salience, predictability, application, and development of resilience in educational systems.

Why are these findings so very important? Resilience Drug Education was born from a perspective of human development. Now, for the first time in many years, a drug education program fits in with what we know about how to construct an effective learning environment.

Resilience Drug Education enhances the overall educational landscape. This is best described by comparison. With DARE, Life Skills Training, and other similar programs, effective educational practices are sacrificed at the expense of expensive canned curricula. In otherwise

effective schools, such programs expose the serious divide between effective educational practices and the drug educational practices that were often developed by people with little or no practice, knowledge, or experience in education. Young people subsequently feel disconnected from school and adults, and the adults feel disconnected from the young people and their school. While many begrudgingly implement these programs, they suffer from knowing about effective education and simultaneously knowing that these programs are not it (Brown & D'Emidio-Caston 1995). Resilience Drug Education

requires little in the way of expensive materials. In bringing the following principles to life, Resilience Drug Education fits into and builds on what we know about effective education in general:

1. Use strategies that engage the student's intrinsic motivations.
2. Allow young people to safely experiment with making decisions.
3. Help create life goals or "dreams" that the learner endorses.
4. Create a healthy democratic educational community.
5. Encourage the exploration of emotions related to the adversity young people face (Brown et al. 2000, p. 28).

While Resilience Drug Education is presented in a context of "drug issues," its method is independent of that context. This means that although it deals specifically with drug issues, anybody can capitalize on its personal growth process component. Resilience Drug Education is flexible. It does not depend on staid curriculum, but rather focuses on mobilizing the three protective

factors that are known to be effective. It does this through interaction with the facilitator, whose professional discretion is trusted. Resilience Drug Education not only addresses the drug decisions of young people, but it is also oriented toward what we refer to as the "health of the helper" (Brown et al. 2000). By supporting the professional discretion of facilitators, Resilience Drug Education is more likely to be implemented and also more likely to have an impact that is mutually supportive of facilitator and student.

CERD has worked with concerned parents, educators, administrators, counselors, juvenile justice workers, and the medical community. Resilience Drug Education can be used with any age group above the fourth grade, in formal or informal educational settings. Support for this program has been garnered from the Graduate School of Education at the University of California at Berkeley, the University of California at Santa Barbara, and the San Francisco

While Resilience

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Department of Public Health, among others. CERD trainings are springing up across the country. In April 2004, a ground-breaking National Workshop was conducted in Washington, D.C.

CONCLUSIONS

In the current ambling and failed drug education environment, CERD's Resilience Drug Education offers an evidence-based, paradigm-changing alternative possessing several potential benefits:

1. Resilience Drug Education balances an environment that is supportive of youth with a directed focus on the specific protective factors and appropriate information that allow for lifelong thriving.
2. It costs little. The curriculum works with an educator's professional discretion, an *Instructor's Resilience Education Guide* and a drug information guide. With approximately four experiential training sessions spread over time, participants can incorporate Resilience Drug Education into their practice.
3. It is likely to be taken up by educators because it has a development orientation and can be incorporated into any class. Not everyone is a natural at connecting with young people, but nearly everyone can improve the process of working with them.
4. It develops an interactive, caring, connected community that offers a reasoned, scientifically-based hope for drug education. Resilience Drug Education meshes with the best of what we know about effective education and lifelong development.

Overall, Resilience Drug Education sends a critical message to young people and the adults they are working with: they are cared for. By providing accurate information that young people can verify through various sources—the Internet, youth culture, or self-exploration—a focus on resilience builds adult credibility and allows youth to positively connect with adults, further supporting their own lifelong development. This felt sense of meaning and belonging paves the way for the information to be delivered and deeply learned. A reductionist way of viewing this approach might be as follows: (harm reduction - problem remediation) + protective factor support = Resilience Drug Education.

MILEPOSTS ON THE ROAD-MAP TO CHANGE

In light of this opportunity, be wary of two issues. First, "resilience" as an alternative is a currently fashionable buzz word. Many say they are already conducting resilience-oriented work. Regrettably, what we find is that resilience is often "risk wrapped." It has been recently determined that for many, underlying the language of resilience there appears to be an adherence to a risk, deficit based, or problem remediation focus on young people (Brown, in press). "Risk wrapping" resilience worsens the situation by mis-identifying resilience. This in turn serves to preserve the risk and deficit drug education paradigm.

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development.

Second, there is no substitute for those who are trained in the processes of Resilience Drug Education. The most significant error made when offering a reasoned alternative to drug education is the focus on information at the expense of instruction. Knowing *how* to mobilize protective factors for skills development is key. There is a shortage of people experienced in facilitating the development of a process that supports honest interaction with youth. What we tend to see is an example (i.e. "Johnny is resilient because he is connected to his teacher") serving as a surrogate for experiential facilitation (e.g. "this is *how* Johnny becomes connected with his teacher to learn how to effectively make drug decisions"). As has been described throughout this article, this is educational *process*. Actually *experiencing* the development process is what teaches this process for making drug-related decisions. The lack of such experiences when focusing on the process is called "experiential surrogacy."

"Risk wrapping" resilience and experiential surrogacy serve as signposts for the current period of changing approaches to drug education. Although encased in wide-ranging program names and words, they are the mile markers for narrowly defined, similar and failed programs. While disconcerting for some, these signposts also indicate that there is a significant opportunity for positive programs that honor youth and support a change in drug education.

It is important to continue our popular and scientific discourse. It is also important to critically examine often deceptively effective programs. Finally, it is essential to support real youth development services, such as Resilience Drug Education. In this period of change, if we endeavor to shift from a problem remediation focus to a youth development focus in drug education, we will have done much to better the lives of young people. •

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Drug education as it now exists is, at best, a thinly disguised attempt to scare young people away from disapproved drugs by greatly exaggerating the dangers of these substances.

More often than not, lectures, pamphlets, and film strips that take this approach stimulate curiosity, make the prohibited substances look more attractive to young audiences, and make the authorities appear ridiculous.

...High states appeal to young people as much as they do to adults. Grown-ups enjoy racing cars and boats, hang-gliding, dancing, drinking, smoking, and many other consciousness-changing activities.

Don't make your child feel it is wrong to want these experiences.

From Chocolate to Morphine: Everything You Need to Know about Mind-altering Drugs
by Andrew Weil, M.D. and Winifred Rosen

Unitarians Develop Cutting-edge Drug Education

by Charles Thomas, Executive Director, Unitarian Universalists for Drug Policy Reform • charlesthomas@uudpr.org



For more information about the Unitarian Universalists for Drug Policy Reform, contact Charles Thomas at charlesthomas@uudpr.org, 301-938-1577, or 2808 Weisman Road, Silver Spring, MD 20902. Also see www.uudpr.org.

Unitarian Universalism is a religion as old as our nation. Grounded in the inherent worth and dignity of every person, we are often in the vanguard on cutting-edge social justice issues. In June 2002, the General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) passed a drug policy Statement of Conscience, advocating that marijuana should be legalized (like alcohol) and that all other drugs should be decriminalized and regulated by prescription.

The Statement also advocates a harm-reduction approach to drug treatment and education, to address the problems of drug abuse and addiction *without* scaring, arresting, punishing, or coercing people.

Unitarian Universalists for Drug Policy Reform (UUDPR) is an affiliate of the UUA, promoting the Statement's recommendations in the public arena. In the sphere of drug education, the Statement of Conscience urges, "Develop and implement age-appropriate drug education programs that are grounded in research and fact and that promote dialogue without fear of censure or reprisal."

UUDPR is rising to meet that challenge. Starting in November 2003, we developed an 18-session curriculum (75 minutes each session) and tested it with a group of ten high school students and occasionally one college student in a UU congregation in a suburb of Washington, D.C.

With more than a thousand congregations nationwide, the denomination is an effective organizing structure for grassroots advocacy, and for trying new approaches to tough problems like drug education. This article describes our background, philosophy, goals, experience, and future plans.

BACKGROUND AND PHILOSOPHY

Unitarian Universalists recognize that parents are the primary educators of their children. Our curriculum was developed

as a response to requests from parents and youths themselves for guidelines based upon the ethics of our faith. This is reflected in the curriculum name, *Freedom and Responsibility*, referring to the fourth of the denomination's seven guiding Principles, which affirms and promotes the "free and responsible search for truth and meaning."

UUDPR embarked upon this project in 2002, doing background research and getting input from parents, teens, ministers, religious educators, youth advisors, medical doctors, pharmacologists, professional educators, and experts in psychology, pharmacology, drug treatment and public health.

We started with the recognition that the consumption of drugs (including alcohol, tobacco, and pharmaceuticals) is prevalent in our world and that young people are or will be faced with serious decisions about these substances. There is no better place to address this situation than in the safe space of our church community with well-informed adults, both clergy and lay-leaders, who truly care for the youth.

The curriculum acknowledges that there are major differences between drug use, abuse, and addiction. While emphasizing that abstinence is the only way to remove all risk of developing a drug problem, we take the *Safety First* approach championed by Marsha Rosenbaum, Ph.D. (see pages 26–27 of this *MAPS Bulletin*). Our main focus is on preventing use from turning into abuse or addiction and reducing the potential harm from various levels of use. We are honest about the relative risks of different drugs and situations, and we teach people how to notice if a problem is developing and how to seek help.

OUR EXPERIENCE

A parent orientation session was held prior to starting the trial run at our church, as young people could not participate without their parents' approval.

Fortunately, no parents refused to sign the permission forms.

I co-facilitated the sessions, which ran about twice a month on Sunday mornings. After the sessions ended in June 2004, all eleven participants completed our 40-question evaluation form, giving us very favorable ratings. The following are the average responses on a few key questions, which utilized a five-point rating scale (5.0 being the best possible rating):

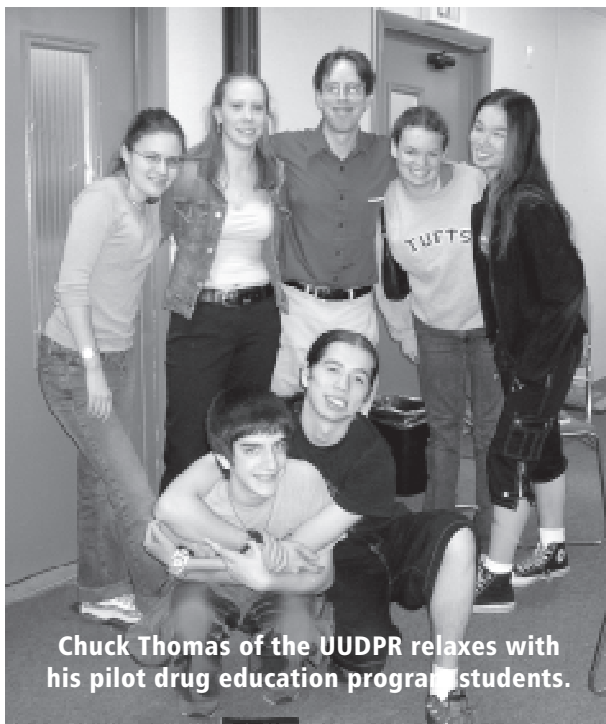
- What is your overall rating of the program? mean rating = 4.7
- This program would be very useful to other UU teenagers. mean rating = 5.0
- This program provided me with information that will probably be useful in my life. mean rating = 4.7
- My parents would be happy with what I learned in this program. mean rating = 4.5
- If you had any other drug education classes (for example, in school), how does the UU Drug Education Program compare? mean rating = 4.8 (i.e., “much better”)
- Sample reasons given for our program being “much better” included:

— “More in-depth; uncensored; more information.”

— “You recognize that people do use drugs and go from there, instead of just portraying them as ‘bad.’”

— “In school they teach us about drugs and their effects, but not how to handle these effects and causes.”

— “Unbiased, concise, no scare-tactics, fun, discussion based.”



Chuck Thomas of the UUDPR relaxes with his pilot drug education program students.

FUTURE PLANS

In autumn 2004, the curriculum will be tested at nearly a dozen congregations. It will be evaluated according to the feedback of facilitators and participants, as well as more scientific methods (with pre- and post-program measures of knowledge, attitudes, and intentions). Afterward, we will use this information to further modify the curriculum and ensure that it is implemented in as many UU congregations as possible.

Supportive religious communities are ideal for this program while it is still too controversial for most public schools. Our hope is that our successes will help to foster the paradigm shift necessary

to ensure that all young people eventually have the opportunity to participate in realistic, harm-reduction drug education programs.

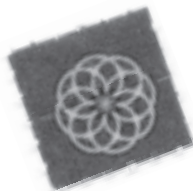
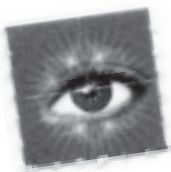
UU DRUG EDUCATION CURRICULUM GOALS

- To provide the *accurate information* that young people need about drugs.
- To provide a forum in which *all questions are legitimate* and appropriate.
- To provide *learning about drug issues* that goes *beyond factual information* and that will be useful throughout the participants' lives.
- To help participants develop the skills necessary to make good decisions that will allow for a healthy, satisfying life.
- To foster an interest in mental health and personal growth, as well as a reverence for the brain/mind and consciousness itself.
- To help participants learn the difference between drug use, abuse and addiction—and learn how to reduce the likelihood of developing unhealthy or destructive relationships with drugs.
- To educate and empower participants to help other people to reduce the harms associated with drugs.

My father was a successful Chicago attorney. Then after taking LSD, he moved our family to Los Angeles and opened a metaphysical bookstore. Around 1974, when I turned 13, I had my bar mitzvah. Afterward, my father told me, "Now I will show you a real bar mitzvah." We went to a mountaintop in Colorado. He spent a few hours explaining what to expect from LSD, and how to handle its effects. He emphasized that this was a spiritual experience. On top of the mountain with my father, the LSD was very, very, powerful. We watched the clouds move and open up. My heartbeat seemed synchronized with everything in the natural environment. This rite-of-passage was very beautiful. From then on, I only took LSD for spiritual purposes. I could not understand why other kids used it recreationally, casually tripping at Disney World. My father and I shared many other trips in the coming years.

In a strange twist of events, I eventually introduced him to MDMA, which greatly pleased him.

– Anonymous



[M]y father persisted in asking me such questions as:

"Who was the king of England" during this time or that time?

Initially I turned my attention away from the visions and answered him.

But finally I told him he was bothering me.

(My mother later wrote, In "I Ate the Sacred Mushroom,"

her article published in the May 19, 1957 issue of *This Week* magazine:

"From a distance I heard my daughter Masha say impatiently,

'Oh Father, I'm having too good a time to bother talking to you!'")

For although I could answer his questions I preferred the wonderful visions. ...

My father never told me why he felt it would be good for me to try the sacred mushrooms.

But he genuinely wished to share his life with me and all his experiences.



Laura Huxley's Ultimate Investment

by **Connie Littlefield** • concepta@ns.sympatico.ca

I met Laura Huxley two years ago while working on my documentary film, *Hofmann's Potion*. At that time, I knew more about her late husband Aldous because I had read so many of his books. I discovered Laura to be the living embodiment of the values he espoused in *Island*, his last and most idealistic novel. Since then she's become one of my most important teachers.

Laura can't understand why a person would ever set out to harm themselves or anyone else. Her vision of the world is simple and honest. Since Aldous died in 1963, Laura has spent her life working for the well being of children around the world. She has written several books and founded a non-profit organization that educates underprivileged kids: Children: Our Ultimate Investment. Her foundation has several programs; I'll mention two of them here. The first is the Caressing Room Project, wherein senior citizens are encouraged to enter hospital nurseries and simply hold tiny babies. We all need touch, and this program benefits the volunteers as well as the babies. The second program is called Teens and Toddlers. Run through high schools, it puts young people into day care centers where they are paired with needy toddlers. This is also a win-win situation. Many of the relationships formed in this program last well beyond the semester, and the teenagers come away with a better understanding of what it takes to be a parent. The following is from the Teens and Toddlers program outline:

Every night in America, 100,000 children are homeless. Every year, nearly 3 million children are reported abused and neglected. While the emergent need to help correct this situation is clear, we believe that equally urgent is our humane duty to prevent its repetition. This is the mission of Children: Our Ultimate Investment. Those abused and neglected children of the night roaming the streets, using guns and deadly drugs and making even more children, act out of the emotional framework generated in their very first moments of life. Being uncared for, they develop a disregard for life, either unaware of or unconcerned by the consequences of their behaviour... Moral insensitivity, acceptance of violence, absence of caring and ethics—these are not inevitably an aspect of those who disregard law and order: these are the tragic consequences of unconscious living. These children have been betrayed from the beginning. In a sane society, we would all be loved from before the beginning. We have the means, knowledge and will to stop these tragedies before they become the almost accepted, logical outcome of past events. These tragedies are our tragedies.

WHAT HAS THIS GOT TO DO WITH PSYCHEDELICS?

At a recent gathering of MAPS members and friends at Laura's house in Beverly Hills, she pointed out the fundamental similarity of her work and that of MAPS. While MAPS works towards inner healing with psychedelics, Laura aims to lessen the *need* for healing later in life by providing a more nurturing world for children. Psychedelic therapy can help people to open up to their emotions and connect to others; a nourishing childhood can prevent the shutting down and closing off in the first place.

If anyone is in a position to help humanity, it is those of us who have had the psychedelic experience: we don't need to have relationships pointed out to us, since so many of us have first-hand experience of the interconnectedness of all life. If we all had access to the tools of enlightenment, we could all be free. The question is, what will we do with this freedom? Laura's work with children is one example of a positive direction that such freedom can take. •

"Never give children
a chance of imagining
that anything exists
in isolation.
Make it plain
from the very beginning
that all living is relationship.
Show them relationships
in the woods,
in the fields,
in the ponds and streams,
in the village and
in the country around it.
Rub it in."
— Aldous Huxley, *Island*



Photo by Michael Hilsenrad
from the 1991 facsimile collection of
The San Francisco Oracle (1966–1968)
from the "Variations" chapter.

Dangerous Lessons: Urine Testing in Public Schools

by Richard Glen Boire, Esq., Co-director and legal counsel for the Center for Cognitive Liberty & Ethics • rgb@cognitiveliberty.org

IN 2002 the U.S. Supreme Court decided an important case (*Board of Education v. Earls*) opening the doors to much wider drug testing of America's public school students. The day after the decision, Psychemedics, a company that widely markets hair testing for MDMA and other illegal drugs, pronounced the decision very good for business, its CEO commenting, "We believe that yesterday's Supreme Court decision to broaden the parameters of drug testing in public high schools could dramatically increase the number of drug tests performed." Unfortunately, while drug testing companies work to fill their cups and stuff their pockets, the rest of us, with our children leading the way, are being forced down a dark and dangerous path.

The Supreme Court's ruling giving public school authorities the green light to conduct random, suspicionless, drug testing of all junior and senior high school students wishing to participate in extra-curricular activities, teaches by example. The lesson, unfortunately, is that the Fourth Amendment has become a historical artifact, a quaint relic from bygone days when our country honored the "scrupulous protection of Constitutional freedoms of the individual." (See *West Virginia State Bd. of Ed. v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624, 637 [1943].)

The Court's ruling turns logic on its head, giving the insides of students' bodies less protection than the insides of their backpacks, the contents of their bodily fluids less protection than the contents of their telephone calls. The decision elevates the myopic hysteria of a preposterous "zero-tolerance" Drug War, over basic values such as respect and dignity for our nation's young people.

Under the ruling, America's teenage students are treated like suspects. If a student seeks to participate in after-school activities his or her urine can be taken and tested for any reason, or for no reason at all. Gone are any requirements for individualized suspicion. Trust and respect have been replaced with a generalized distrust, an accusatory authoritarian demand that students prove their "innocence" at the whim of the schoolmaster.

The majority reasoned that requiring students to yield up their urine for examination as a prerequisite to participating in extracurricular activities would serve as a

deterrent to drug use. The Court reasoned that students who seek to join the debate team, write for the student newspaper, play in the marching band, or participate in other after-school activities knowing that their urine will be tested for drugs, would be dissuaded from using drugs.

While some students may indeed be deterred from using drugs, the conventional wisdom (supported by empirical data) is that students who participate in extracurricular activities are some of the least likely to use drugs. Noting this, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, whose dissenting opinion was joined by Justices Stevens, O'Connor, and Souter, harshly condemned random testing of such students as "unreasonable, capricious and even perverse." Even when applied to students who do use drugs, the Court's decision merely makes matters worse.

The federal government has tried everything from threatening imprisonment to yanking student loans, to spending hundreds of millions of dollars on "Just Say No" advertisements, and still, some students continue to experiment with *Cannabis* and other drugs. Like it or not, some students will use illegal drugs before graduating from high school, just as some students will have sex. Perhaps it's time to rethink the wisdom of declaring a War on Drugs and adopt instead a realistic and effective strategy more akin to safe sex education.

Ultimately, if a student does choose to experiment with an illegal drug (or a legal drug, such as alcohol), I suspect that many parents, like myself, would prefer that their child be taught the skills necessary to survive the experiment with as little harm as possible to self or others. The DARE program, the nation's primary "drug education" curriculum, is taught by police officers, not drug experts, and is centered on intimidation and threats of criminal prosecution rather than on harm reduction. Random, suspicionless, urine testing fits the same tired mold.

Among the significant gaps in the majority's reasoning is its failure to consider the individual and social ramifications of deterring any student (whether they use drugs or not), from participating in after-school activities. Students who on principle prefer to keep their bodily fluids to themselves, or who consider urine testing to be a gross invasion of privacy, will be dissuaded from partici-

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pating in after-school activities altogether. Similarly, students who do use drugs and who either test positive or forego the test for fear of what it might reveal, will be banned from after-school activities and thus left to their own devices.

Extracurricular programs are valued for producing “well-rounded” students. Many adults look back on their extramural activities as some of the most educational, enriching, and formative experiences of their young lives. Extracurricular programs build citizenship. For many universities, participation in after-school clubs and academic teams is a decisive admissions criterion. Whether a student uses drugs or not, it makes no sense to bar them from the very activities that build citizenship, and that help prepare young people for leadership roles in the workforce, or that help them get into college. In other words, a policy that deters students or bans them outright from participating in extracurricular activities is not just bad for students; it’s bad for society.

Aside from eviscerating the Fourth Amendment rights of the nation’s 23 million public school students and imposing a punishment that harms society as much as it harms students, the decision foreshadows a Constitutional Dark Ages. When a young person is told to urinate in a cup within earshot of an intently listening school authority, and then ordered to turn over her urine for chemical examination, what “reasonable expectation of privacy” remains? When today’s students graduate and walk out from behind the schoolhouse gates, what will become of society’s “reasonable expectation of privacy?”

Raised with the ever-present specter of coercion and control, where urine testing is as common as standardized testing, today’s students will have little if any privacy expectations when they reach adulthood. As a result, within a single generation, what society presently regards as a “reasonable expectation of privacy” will be considerably watered down. Rivers of urine will have eroded the Fourth Amendment, our nation’s strictest restraint on the over-reaching and strong-arm tendencies of some government police agents. As aptly stated by Justice Ginsburg and the three other justices who joined her dissenting opinion: “That [schools] are educating the young for citizenship is reason for scrupulous protection of Constitutional freedoms of the individual, if we are not to strangle the free mind at its source and teach youth to discount important principles of our government as mere platitudes.”

The U.S. Government recently allocated another 20 billion dollars to fight the so-called War on Drugs, yet all we really have to show for it is a tattered *Constitution* and the largest prison population in the history of the world. Fellow Americans have been constructed as “the enemy” simply because they’d rather have a puff of *Cannabis* than a shot of bourbon.

And that is perhaps the greatest tragedy of the Court’s ruling. The decision not only victimizes our children, it makes them the enemy. Being a public school student is now synonymous with being a criminal suspect or a prisoner. The values of trust and respect have been chased from the schoolyards and replaced with baseless suspicion and omnipresent policing. The lesson for America’s students as they stand in line with urine bottles in hand, is that the Fourth Amendment’s guarantee is a broken promise, yesterday’s dusty trophy, worthy only of lip service. The lesson for the rest of us is that the so-called War on Drugs desperately needs rethinking. •

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I'm Not Going to Hide Who I Am

a teen talks about her use of psychedelics

The following is from an interview conducted for the Erowid website's "Families & Psychoactives Vault" (www.erowid.org/psychoactives/families/families.shtml). Erowid kindly allowed us to publish this adaptation. At 17 years old, the young woman interviewed was not a legal adult when this interview took place. Because of this, her name has been changed to respect her privacy, as have the names of other minors that appear in this interview.

In the spring of 2003, Becca's father invited her to attend the Mind States IV conference (www.mindstates.org), where I had the chance to meet her. At her father's suggestion, she agreed to talk to me about herself and her attitudes about psychedelics. I wondered what had led up to the point where a father would be inviting his teenage daughter to a conference about altered states of consciousness. The following interview was conducted a few weeks before her high school graduation. The interview happened at Becca's best friend's house, where I had the pleasure of learning about her high school years and the grace with which she successfully navigated them.

HIGH SCHOOL WAS a mixed experience. I went to a private elementary and middle school, with 24 kids in each grade. After that, I went to Berkeley High, and there were three and a half thousand kids in the school—a thousand freshmen alone. So there were a lot of people; it was a much bigger school. In freshman year I was on crew, and I made some friends there. It was my "preppy" period.

Then sophomore year, I started hanging out with kids in the park. They were called "the parkies." Hanging out with these kids was when I really got into expanding my mind. I made a lot of friends. I had some great experiences. But it was mostly outside of school. I didn't go to class very much. Nevertheless, I feel that I learned a lot about social skills and taking care of myself during that time, which was important for me. However, I didn't get much of a formal education there.

After my sophomore year, my parents pulled me out and sent me to Albany High, which is smaller, with perhaps 1,500 kids. The change was kind of a shock. Even though it's among all the suburbs, it's a small town. Everyone stays there, and has been there since kindergarten. It's very cliquey, and I didn't get along with most of the kids there. I was a free thinker and I wanted to experience life. They all just sat and studied, and did

schoolwork. They had a different way of thinking about things, that I considered more close-minded. I didn't make as many friends there, but I did end up focusing more on my schoolwork. For the first semester of my junior year, I was on the honor roll, and for the second semester I was on the Dean's list, which requires a 3.5 GPA or higher. So I really shaped up at that point. The first semester of my senior year—this year—I was also on the honor roll. But then the second semester, I kinda of just went and did my thing again [laughs]. But at least I know how to be academically centered now, so I'm excited to go to college. I'm going to start strapping down again at that point. I had a lot of fun in high school. Well, not *in* high school: it was aside from high school.

Tell me a little bit about when you started hanging out in the park. You said you learned social skills, and you were expanding your mind. That's got to mean something. [laughter] What was that about? Have you tried psychedelics?

Yes. I've taken acid and mushrooms. And I recently tried *Salvia divinorum*, although I didn't get to the heights that some people talk about. But I didn't take a lot of it, so that may be why the effect was mild.

I've just met you. To me you're this cool teenager who has tried psychedelics. It sounds like you've been responsible about it. And you've been communicating with your dad, which is an interesting perspective. You are about to graduate from high school and go to college. You successfully navigated the world of high school, which is kind or rough for some people. There are kids who are so straightedge and studying so hard that they are a bit maladapted because they're not really engaging in social activities. Then there are kids that go to the other end of the spectrum—smoking too much pot and cutting too much, and they're not doing well in school. Ultimately, that approach affects their potential if they're

not motivated in other ways. So I'm interested in hearing your story. Tell me a little bit about the social scene when you first got involved with Cannabis, and what went on at that time.

I started getting high with my friend Carley, who I met in 8th grade. I smoked pot twice in 8th grade. When I got to 9th grade, I focused in on crew. I was really successful in that. I had broken up with my boyfriend at that time, and he had this really cute friend. I was hanging out with his friend a lot at the time of the breakup, and his friend frequently smoked pot. I thought, "Yeah! I'll smoke pot!" I liked smoking pot and I was smoking a lot then. But when crew finals came up, I stopped smoking completely so that I could really get my strength and my lung capacity up. Because I could feel it in my lungs when I smoked. So I stopped smoking up until sophomore year. That's when I met all my friends in the park.

I had this close friend Lisa, who introduced me to everybody. One time I was stoned off my ass, chillin' and lying on the grass, and this guy comes up to me, and he's like, "Hey, what's up?" We start talking. His name was Jay. We clicked, and we were together for the next two years. He was my dearest boyfriend.

In January, I went to my very first rave. It was called Electric Allstars; it was this incredible rave. I hadn't ever been to one, but the people I was with said that it was the coolest one they had ever been to. That same night I dropped E. I took a green clover. I remember when it came on, I was like, whew! Everything got brighter, the lights looked like they were all coming towards me. I almost felt like a higher being. I was talking, and I was all close and touchy with the new boyfriend, it was a really great experience. All my inhibitions went away. I was kind of scared at first, because I'd never been to a rave. I didn't know the people there, and I was afraid to dance and let loose in front of them. Obviously the E loosened me up a little bit. [laughs]

I can't really describe what it was like, but I felt as though I had found something important. For the next couple of weeks, I dropped E every other weekend or so. We'd go to raves at night and during the day I'd kick it with all these kids in the park. They were free thinkers. They had a different way of thinking that I'd never experienced before. They were all genuinely happy. I learned a lot from them. For example, it doesn't really matter how other people judge you, because as long as you believe in yourself, who is someone else to say what you

are? You shouldn't worry about what other people say. During this time I picked up on a lot of concepts that I hold dear. I think that I'm a much more confident, whole person than most teenagers my age are.

That was your sophomore year. Did you say you were cutting school to go hang out in the park?

Yeah, I eventually ended up cutting school. A lot of it was just to go be with my boyfriend. He didn't smoke weed. Even though I did, I'd do it when he wasn't there, because I kind of felt weird about doing it around him. He just didn't get it.

He didn't get how you felt or he didn't get that you wanted to smoke?

He didn't get that I wanted to smoke. He'd act aloof about it. So I didn't do it around him. I just didn't feel comfortable. It's no fun to do if you don't feel comfortable about your smoking.

When you took MDMA the first time, what contributed to your decision to take it? How did you approach the topic of recreational drugs in general? Had you been through the DARE program? Did you expect that there was going to be Ecstasy at your first rave because you'd heard about it? Did your boyfriend talk to you about it?

Ever since I was really young, I think I was meant to do drugs. I always had an open mind toward them. When I was about seven years old, I had my tooth extracted at the dentist office and they gave me laughing gas. I vividly remember the car ride home with my dad. I told him, "It feels like I am on a cloud! I want to get more teeth pulled!"

And he was like, "Uh, no, I don't think so Becca."

I started smoking pot fairly early for the kids who were in my school, especially because it was a private school. I was the only person in the entire school who ever got high, except for Carley. I was always really curious. I never went through any DARE programs, but I got a lot of drug education. Although they tell you all the bad things, when I heard them I would think, "Yeah, but you can die from taking too much Tylenol." It's all subjective.

I've kind of established the idea that you should do everything in moderation. For the most part if you're smart about the circumstances when you do it, and you're responsible with how much you take, and how often you do it overall, not a whole lot can really go wrong. Just get it from safe people, go through the right motions, be smart

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about yourself, and I don't think that anything too bad can happen. It seems like common sense for me. I tend to think about things pretty logically. I don't let myself get carried away. I have a loud voice in my head telling me what to do. It's kind of like my intuition—I can feel out situations. I've always been really open about trying all these drugs, and I've always been very interested. Basically, I knew that E was going to be there at the rave. Jay asked me if I wanted to roll and I said, "Yeah! I do wanna roll." I came in with the mind set that this was going to be my first experience taking E, and what better place to do it than a rave, because that's where you hear about it. However, I eventually realized that I actually prefer taking it with only one other person, whether it's a girlfriend or a boyfriend. You can just talk, and you connect one-on-one. But at that point I'd heard, "E and raves," and so I thought that since I was going to the rave, I might as well do the E. I was open to it and I'd already wanted to take it beforehand. It was basically my decision, no one really pressured me into doing it. But with the change in social group, it became available to me.

My first experience taking acid was a couple months after taking E. I'd been hearing about acid, and I'd heard mixed things about it. From what some people told me, it could be a scary thing. But I then got on-line at Erowid, and I read some of the good experiences. The idea of being able to see things that your mind can create sounded really cool to me.

Lisa, my good friend at the time, and me had a day off. We didn't tell my parents about it. I said I was going to school. Instead I went to Lisa's house, because her parents were going to be gone all day. We each took two hits on a sugar cube. I took it in the morning and I went over to her house soon after. By the time I got there I was feeling, "Oh, this is interesting." We locked ourselves in the house, because we had heard all these horror stories about people taking half a vial and flipping out in public. We knew we should stay inside the house for the first time because we didn't know how we were going to react to it. We stayed in her room, talking and exploring the new world that we were in, because that's what it was. It wasn't so much the hallucinations. It was more like exploring everything again. It was a psychological trip for me, at that point. We kind of had our own kingdom going. Perhaps it sounds silly when I talk about it, but it was so great at the time. Lisa and I totally connected, we saw things eye to eye. It

was a really fabulous experience and it brought us a lot closer together as friends. There were no problems. I didn't have any bad trips. Things were kind of moving around, doing their own thing, and we were talking with each other. Later on in the afternoon we went out and walked around. That first time was the best experience I had on acid, for sure.

After that, I would take it with my boyfriend, Jay. But

Jay had a different way of taking acid. He took it just to get "messed up." He didn't really see the psychological side or the emotional side. You know how you can kind of get an emotional high, too? Jay isn't very emotional; he's one of those people who is objective and logical. When he'd take it, he wouldn't see things the same way that I did. When I'd say stuff that didn't make logical sense, he'd kind of shun me for it. Like, "That doesn't make any sense, don't say that!" I can't tell you how many times I took acid, but it's probably 20 or 30 times. The more times I did it, the more insecure I felt when I would take it. Although I loved the experience, and I tried to enjoy it on my own, it wasn't the same. I didn't have that loving emotional connection that I had experienced with my friend Lisa. I guess I got scared. I'm not sure how long ago it was, but probably a year into taking acid was the last time I took it. And it has probably been about two years now, since that last time. I had taken two hits of this really good acid, and I was having a great time. For once, Jay was being nice. It was kind of like, "All right!" I guess what I was thinking was that I wanted to continue it, so I asked for another hit from the guy who had it. Which proved to be a mistake. It got to be too much—I couldn't see past the hallucinations. I don't remember what happened, but I heard afterwards that I was acting really weird, and off in my own world, doing my own thing.

I didn't "wake up" until the morning. It was basically nonstop hallucinations. While I was in it, I was having a great time. But

when I came out, I was standing next to Jay, and he was pissed. Apparently I had kept him up all night, talking to him. I think that if I had been in his situation, I wouldn't have minded. If your friend or your girlfriend took too much, you stay with this person and make sure that they don't have a bad trip. But he did the opposite. He basically said, "I don't want to deal with her." I felt bad afterwards and I stopped taking it at that point.

I've taken mushrooms since then though, and every time I've taken them, I've felt this really strong sense of

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insecurity. I don't feel comfortable talking to people, I always think that they're judging me. I don't see Jay anymore, but even with the people I consider friends, who I would normally be comfortable with, I still worry, "Oh my God what are they going to think of me if I say something that doesn't make sense?" If I say something weird and they question me, I feel like they're judging me. I just don't like that feeling. If I'm not having fun, if I don't feel that same sense I felt the first time, I don't see the point in taking it. Why take it if I'm not going to have a good time? I'm not saying I'm never going to do it again, but I'm going to wait for the right time. I'm going to wait for the time that I have a girlfriend with me, when we can relax, and when I will be able to open myself up to it again. I'm going to wait until such a time that I have all these insecurities and this questioning out of my mind. I think it's going to be after my teen years. I hear that one's teen years are the most insecure and confusing time, and I want to wait until I can really enjoy it again.

I still roll on E once in a while, but only very occasionally. I heard Ann and Sasha Shulgin remark that after about your 12th or so time, it stops working as well and you lose some of the magic. And I've noticed that. I didn't really realize it until I heard them say it, but that's kind of like what it is. It stopped really having the magic for me. When I take it now, it's a different experience. It's not so much of my thing at this point.

I'm so thankful for my experiences with each of them. Although I've had bad experiences, I still was able to expand the way I think about things. I realized that there were doors that I hadn't unlocked—entirely new things in my mind, which I didn't even know were there before. It changed the way that I thought about life in general—it changed my outlook. In those experiences, I was able to explore previously inaccessible parts of me. I was able to deal with a lot of things that I probably wouldn't have been able to deal with before.

I was a bad kid, in the sense that I wasn't getting along with my parents at that point. My parents are divorced. I was living with my mom. I would go out of the house in the middle of the night to party or hang out with friends. I'd go and explore. I was cutting classes. How my mom—and I think my dad at that point—saw it, was that I was this out-of-control teenager. I got this boyfriend and all of a sudden everything went to hell. I ran away from home several times. I got taken home by the police once. I was just bickering with my mom. But I wouldn't really

attribute that to the drugs. It was more of my choice. I didn't believe in what my parents believed in. My dad was on my mom's side at that point. They didn't "get" what I was going through and they didn't understand what drugs are really like. They saw what is on TV—kids going crazy on drugs; it ruins their lives, it ruins their brain, and they won't be able to think the same. So my parents were like, "Oh my God, what are we going to do with her." They would threaten to send me to Thunder Road—an adolescent treatment center.

Although all of this was going on at home with my parents, I didn't let it affect my life. I knew that what I was doing was right for me, because I could just feel it. I also knew some of the things I was doing were bad. I wasn't going to school, and I probably should have been attending classes more. I was being defiant to my parents, but that's just part of me. I think that the problem was that I wasn't going by my parents' agenda. They didn't like that, so they were coming down on me. It's part of my makeup to rebel. The more someone tries to stop me, the more I'm going to do it—that's just how I am. In a lot of situations, I think that's a good attribute to have; but maybe not so much when it is against your parents when you're 15 years old.

Nevertheless, I'm thankful for everything I've been through, because it's made me into the person I am today. My parents say it jokingly, but you know they kind of mean it: "Parents know everything. We know better. You think you know everything as a teenager, but you don't. Just wait until you learn how things really are." I realize that parents are human too. But just because they were older didn't make them right. I questioned them a lot more. I feel like I got to understand that you can't just assume that they know what's best. You have to go with what's right for you. When

all is said and done, I didn't get held back a grade. I took some summer school classes at college, but I liked those too. They were better classes because they were more to the point than most of high school classes.

I'm a smart kid. I haven't lost any brain power. I don't think I'm dumb. And I feel like I'm a lot further than many kids are, because I got the mix of the social experience along with the academic stuff. When I was in class, I absorbed what they'd say. I wouldn't necessarily do the homework, but I got it ideas.

I did get out of control in 10th grade. I got into other stuff. I was smoking and snorting methamphetamine. I did coke. I took some pills like Vicodin, but nothing too serious. It was when I got into speed that things went

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know were
there before.

really wrong. But I realized that and I stopped. I don't do it anymore. When I was on speed, I'd stay up for days. I'd pick at my face. I was too young to be doing it. I tried it at 15—that's pretty young to do speed. With the E, and the acid, and the mushrooms, it was all about expanding my mind and learning about myself. However, with the powders, I ended up with the same mindset as my boyfriend: "Let's get messed up!" But I didn't like that approach. I didn't like coming down the next day and feeling like complete shit. I didn't like that at all. I did it a lot for about three months, and I continued to do it on rare occasions for about a year or a year and half after. The more I did it, the more I realized I didn't like it. I couldn't really think of a good reason to continue doing it. I wasn't learning more about myself, I wasn't making myself happier, I was actually making myself depressed when I did it. I began to notice that I felt horrible when I took meth. I could feel how bad it was for me. When I'd been smoking meth, I'd cough up stuff, which I didn't like doing. I could just feel my body getting weak, my muscles would ache. I didn't need that. It worked against me. So I just don't do it anymore.

You mentioned that your best friend Carley hasn't tried acid. How does that play out in your friendship?

She is a little less mentally and emotionally stable. I'm pretty stable. I'm kind of into it. I like the idea of expanding my mind. When Carley was younger, she had a history of depression. Neither of us knows what the acid would really unlock. It could unlock the bad with the good.

What about Salvia divinorum?

I didn't want to take *Salvia divinorum* at first, although I did eventually try it. I knew it was psychoactive. My last experience with acid caused me to shy away from it. I also had a bad trip on mushrooms, in which I thought I was sick and that I was going to die. I was with the same boyfriend when I did it [laughs] and he reacted in the same way. So I thought, "I don't think I can handle psychoactives right now." Because I get that insecurity. If I can't control myself I don't want to put myself through it, because I don't want to ruin it forever. I want to be able to experience these types of things later if I want to. I'm okay with waiting for a few years if I have to. I have my entire life ahead of me to do it if I want to. So I'm just kind of taking a step back. But I bought some *Salvia divinorum* from a friend. He has an approach toward psychedelics

where he will read just a couple of reports on one of them and then he'll do it. If other people have done it and been okay, he will take whatever he becomes interested in. I don't think that's the best idea. If I'm going to do something new, I like to know *everything* about it. I like to know what problems could happen, what problems *do* happen a lot, if there are any. But in the past, I've read these reports and they don't always accurately describe

what I feel when I take something. This was the case with *Salvia divinorum*, although I think that perhaps the mild effects I got were related to the low dose that I took.

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What is your situation with your father, with regard to your interest in and use of psychedelics?

After the fiasco of my sophomore year, my mom and me had the "Big Fight." She ripped up all the pictures that I had on the wall—all the pictures of my friends from the park, all the kids from Berkeley High. I don't have the pictures anymore. It's okay though, I still have the memories. At that point, she told me to go live with my father. I had never wanted to live with my father before, because I didn't get along with him. But since things were so bad with my mom, I agreed. I was determined to make it work. He knew about what had been going on. So I went to live with him, and then it was just me and my dad.

My dad has sides that I don't like about him. He's kind of manipulative sometimes.

But if you just try to deal with a person, especially if it's your father... well, you can get along with anyone if you really try. So I went to live there, and we started really talking to each other. The rules at his house were simple: if I did certain chores, I'd be allowed to go out with my friends. Which was at that point all I wanted; I cherished the time with my friends. Not even to go out and get high or anything—just to *be* with my friends was the biggest privilege for me. I'd do whatever I had to appease him, and I'd be able to go out. He got what he wanted. He got the sense that I was being responsible and that I could handle the chores that were given to me. I got what I wanted: the happiness of being able to be with my friends as much as I wanted, or at least enough to make me feel comfortable.

So we were both happy, which allowed us to talk to each other objectively. We shared experiences with each other. I told him about the time he took me to a parade, a big Mardi Gras festival, when I took acid. One night I told him, "I was frying, and you had no idea!" He was like, "Wow you can really handle yourself." He'd share stories with me about when he'd go to camp-outs. He kind of

understood. After I talked about it a lot, he understood I was a smart kid about this type of thing. We both realized I had gotten out of hand earlier on, but that such things were in my past. He realized that I was responsible, and he wouldn't punish me for taking drugs—certainly not acid and E. He was mostly just concerned about my health when I would take E.

If someone gives me a chance, I'll talk with him. It goes back to what the friends at Berkeley High taught me—I'm not afraid of what people are going to think of me. I'll tell my dad some things he may not want to hear about, but it makes me feel comfortable. If I was going to go roll one night, I'd tell him. I'd say, "I'm going to this rave." And he'd ask, "Are you going to party?" That was his question, "Are you going to party?" I'd tell him truthfully yes or no. Because my father knew he could trust me to tell him the truth, he always knew what was going on. Since he knew that I was responsible, in some ways he felt okay with me doing that type of thing. As a parent, he could never say, "Oh it's okay to do that." He feels that as a parent he's not really allowed to say that it's okay. But he understands. And he knows that when it comes down to it, he can't really stop me. So he accepted it. It brought us a lot closer together, because he was able to see the real me.

With my mom, I always have to lie. No, I'm not smoking any pot. No, I'm not drinking at all. No, I'm not going to see boys. It gets tiring to lie all the time. But if I want to do what I want to do, and keep peace at home, I have to lie to her. Since my dad allowed me with talk to him about it and he didn't punish me for the experiences I wanted to experience, I was able to tell him what was actually going on. He was able to see the real me. My dad and I have a much closer relationship.

When the second semester senior year came, and I started slacking off in school, me and my dad were getting into fights. We got on each others' nerves, so I've been back living with my mom for the last couple of months. Although my dad and I are not getting along great at this point, we still have love for each other—we still have the connection there. Just last night we went out to dinner, and I was able to talk openly with him again. This time it was about what I really want for college. By opening the door to letting me feel comfortable talking to him about drugs, I really feel like I'm able to talk to him about anything. I know that if I'm really messed up on drugs and I shouldn't be driving home, that I can call my dad and have him pick me up. He'll be happy that I called and I

won't get in trouble for it. That's probably one of the best situations a kid who's going to use drugs can ask for.

If you parents just say "don't do it," you're going to do it anyway. If you really want to do something, you're going to do it. But you're missing the guidance from your parents. They've been through it before. A lot of kids' parents have done drugs. They can share their experiences with you. Letting your parents really know what is going on can help keep you safe. So if a parent is open to hearing it, and is willing to not just punish a kid, they'll get to know their kid a lot better. Because they actually *will* know the kid.

Although my dad knows that I sometimes do bad things, he also really knows the good parts of me. He knows I actually take care of myself in situations where a lot of kids wouldn't be able to, because I'm able to tell him about the whole experience. Yes, in some situations the experience may have included that I took E. But he can hear about my adventures too. And usually it's a pretty good story, in which I took care of myself, even though bad situations may have presented themselves. With my mom, she misses out. And I miss out on letting her know about those things.

What about college?

I'm ready to leave the Bay Area. I've lost all of my friends at Berkeley. Actually, a lot of them got too much into speed. Some of them got depressed from taking too much E. Some went to jail for stealing cars when they were all tweaked out. Many of them weren't able to be as responsible as I was. So I lost the friends from Berkeley. At my new school in

Albany, the kids just don't understand. They haven't touched any drugs. They think I'm a crack-head for even trying E. It's okay that they think this, because they really don't understand.

Do all the kids know you've tried E? Do you have a reputation?

Sure. I'm not going to hide who I am. This is a part of me, and this is what I've done. If they ask me, I'm going to tell them. In all truth, I don't really need their friendship, because they aren't my people. I still have my girl Carley. [laughs] We've been together since 8th grade. We have plans for the future, when we both get out of college. But I'm ready to go to school. I'm ready to try something new. I'm going to go and see how it works out for me. •

Because
my father knew
he could trust
me to tell him
the truth,
he always
knew what was
going on.



NAOTO HATTORI

Tripping Girl, 2004, acrylic on board, 4.1" x 5.9"



Above: Little Huichol girl, two years old; her grandmother is the family shaman of the rancho.



Left: Same little girl at eight years old, with her shaman grandmother's feathered power wand. This child has been on the pilgrimage to the peyote desert at least once with her grandmother and extended family, and has consumed peyote at her family rancho on numerous occasions, when family members who are peyoteros return and perform a ceremony to mark their arrival home.

Below: Little boy who accompanied parents on the temple members' pilgrimage to the peyote desert. He received peyote throughout the pilgrimage and subsequent ceremonies, via his mother's milk. Yellow face paint indicates that a person or one of their family members has been on the pilgrimage.



Photographs by
STACY B. SCHAEFER

Psychedelic Family Values

by R. Stuart

The following has been adapted from a longer article that is available on-line at www.maps.org/ritesofpassage/youngpeople.html.

SINCE THE 1960s, most psychedelic users in industrialized societies have been introduced to mind-expanding substances within a youth subculture. These illicit drugs have been of unregulated purity and potency. Adult society has systematically deprived young people of the preparation and supervision that are necessary to maximize the benefits and minimize risks of these substances. Many Americans who might otherwise want to legalize psychedelics suddenly support prohibition when they hear news reports or speeches about the menace to our youth posed by drugs. Even those who might wish to share their positive experiences and knowledge with their children are afraid of the legal risks. Elders in our society do not offer young psychedelic users “any beneficent or guiding adult presence, thus increasing the likelihood of disorganizing and dangerous consequences.”¹

The cloud of fear around the subject of young people and drugs means some young people have drug problems that could have been avoided. The following account is by a neuropsychologist who helped prepare protocols for psychedelic experiments and had met many of the scientists who were involved in psychedelic research. She declined to “turn on” her son, despite being well-qualified to do so:

When I was a teenager in the 1960s, I decided I wanted to try LSD after reading about it in *Life* magazine. I took acid for the first time when I turned 16; it was a birthday gift from my brother. I had a wonderful trip in my family’s house. By the time my son became a teenager, I had read a lot about psychedelics and was well-informed on the subject. When my son became interested in drugs, I wanted to turn him on. But that was back when the Drug War was in full force; the DARE program was training kids to turn in their parents to the police.

Adult society has systematically deprived young people of the preparation and supervision that are necessary to maximize the benefits and minimize risks of these substances.

I was afraid if I gave him supervision, he might say something to somebody that could get me arrested or cause my license to be revoked. But he went ahead and did it on his own. First he smoked pot. When he took one puff of pot he felt good, when he took six puffs of pot he felt even better. He felt good when he took one hit of acid, so he took six hits hoping to feel even better. Then he had a horrible trip. He was howling at the moon when the police picked him up. He spent the night in a psychiatric ward and was treated horribly by the staff. He was okay the next day, but the whole terrible scene could have been avoided if I had been allowed to turn him on.²

This example illustrates how it can be dangerous to fail to prepare a young person for the inevitable encounter with the opportunity to use drugs. While problems with drugs seem particularly common in Western society, the desire to alter consciousness appears to be universal, and cross-cultural. Small children commonly display an inborn drive to alter their consciousness, inducing dizziness via hyperventilation, whirling, and oxygen deprivation.³ Not surprisingly, adolescents around the world are often attracted to psychoactive drugs. Is there a way drug use can be integrated beneficially into a healthy culture? The examples below offer a glimpse of how such a vision might be achieved. Closer to home, later examples show how some California families have taken their own steps by providing safe contexts for young people to have psychedelic experiences.

EXAMPLES FROM OTHER CULTURES

In some pre-industrial societies, puberty initiation rituals transform the adolescent into a young adult ready to work, raise a family, and take on community responsibilities. Often, these rites incorporate psychedelics. Richard Evans Schultes reported that ayahuasca was used in the northwest Amazon “to fortify the bravery of male adolescents who must undergo the painful *yuruparí* initiation ceremony.”⁴ Writing about the Machiguenga people of Peru, Ethan Russo observed:

What I can say about this is that Machiguenga children

(boys) have this experience as an integral part of their religious upbringing. It is part and parcel of their world concept and manner of living. Ayahuasca (*kamarampi*) is a window on enlightenment, a portal to divination, and a teacher of plant, hunting and spiritual knowledge. The kids accept it in that context and none see it as a “kick” the way American youth might brag about sneaking a swig of bourbon from the old man’s stash. Rather, they enjoy it for the same reason other members of the tribe do: it is a thrilling experience that binds the tribe in their philosophy and mutual interdependence to survive and thrive in an eternally challenging environment.⁵

The mestizo congregations of the Brazilian ayahuasca churches continue the tribal custom of introducing young people to their sacrament and its proper use. In the *União do Vegetal* (UDV), young children are often given a spoonful of ayahuasca before they are considered old enough for full servings.

In our own country, adolescents often actively participate in the Native American Church. Younger children are less likely to consume peyote at NAC road meetings (ceremonies), although one of the first Navahos to use peyote started at age ten.⁶ Each September in the Four Corners reservation, the Navahos have an annual ceremony to encourage the school children to have academic success in the coming year. Some of the youths consume a token amount of peyote, and others put their finger to their mouth after touching the medicine. This ceremony has been spreading to other tribes; for instance the Washo held their first ceremony

for students in 2002.⁷

Unlike the NAC, the Huichol Indians of Mexico may begin taking peyote around age six.⁸ The Huichol believe that the best time to learn how to use peyote is during early childhood. Children should have reached “the age of understanding” so they can verbally articulate their experience. Rather than fix a chronological age for initiation, the maturity, interest, and personal circumstances of each child are individually considered. The Huichol find that pre-pubescent children can integrate a peyote initiation better than an adult whose mind is



Above: A young Huichol boy who is part of the peyoterios that have returned to the community. Eagle and turkey feather adorned hats symbolize that one has participated in the pilgrimage. Photo by Stacy B. Schaefer.

already rigid, or an adolescent going through the confusion of role transition and sexual maturation.⁹

Again, young people are introduced not only to the plant cherished by their people, but also the values and traditions surrounding it. Susan Eger and Peter Collings wrote:

Through their observance of and participation in the ceremonies, children come to understand the sacredness of peyote and learn to esteem it at a very young age. Most children, although given peyote to taste and to play with when they become curious about it, do not actually consume it in doses large enough to produce visions until at least eight years of age. But because of the frequency with which the children attend the ceremonies and watch the performance of ceremonial duties, by the time they actually do partake of peyote, they are sufficiently clued in to be able not only to experience prototypical, expected visions but to interpret them with some degree of accuracy and to remember their significance. As soon as they are given responsibilities in the religion, they begin teaching their younger siblings. Children can begin their training toward the priesthood at the young age of ten and, if they stick to it, be fully initiated *mara'akame* by the age of twenty.¹⁰

Harvard psychiatrist Harrison G. Pope reported that boys in various West African tribes use *Tabernanthe iboga* in ceremonies supervised by their priest, fathers, and uncles.¹¹

In Gabon, children participate in the nocturnal *ngoze* rituals in which members of the Fang tribe consume *T. iboga*.¹² Giorgio Samorini observed that in the Bwiti religion, "This *iboga* baptism may be experienced at any age, as is the Catholic baptism. Currently, in some sects there is a tendency to initiate relatives, especially their children, from ages 8 to 10, which is followed by a second initiation as adults." Samorini noted that the Bwiti leader Owono Dibenga Louis Marie "has during the past few years created the '*Iboga* Youth Movement', so that the new generations may get better acquainted with the Buitist creed."¹³

rites for our culture

Our industrialized technocracy delays adult responsibilities in order to extend education as preparation for employment in a complex economy. Living in limbo, modern teenagers are often unable to achieve fulfillment through part-time after-school retail or food-industry jobs and obeying church-sponsored vows of sexual abstinence. Without adult responsibilities, privileges, or experience, young people in our society still find ways, not necessarily good ones, to assert the autonomy of adulthood. Substance

abuse is one of many problematic responses to the confusing world with which adolescents are faced. A minority of educators, social scientists, and mental health professionals are beginning to suggest that the creation of new, meaningful rites-of-passage could help young people take on their adult roles, accepting responsibilities as well as freedoms.

What might a modern rite of passage in our own culture look like? Inspired by indigenous examples, and unwilling to deprive their children of the benefit of their own experience, some parents have chosen to create

rituals for their children using psychedelics. The following examples are from middle class California families that I interviewed in the 1990s. To protect the families, publication of these interviews was delayed until all children had reached age 18.

Providing guidance, of course, need not always involve families taking psychedelics together. The father interviewed below, an author of books about sacramental plants, chose to give his daughter the tools and information to create her own positive experience:

My daughter always knew that I used psychedelics because there are books about them all over the house, and I regularly attend conferences and seminars on the topic. When she entered junior high school, we made it clear to her that the biggest lie she would ever encounter was the propaganda that the schools teach about drugs. So she understood that the government's Drug War is a pernicious scourge: a Mafia-style campaign to exploit people. When she became a teenager, I asked her to inform me if she ever decided to take one of these drugs. I told her that I could help her prepare, not in an intrusive way, but in a manner that would enable her to take it in the best circumstances so it would be useful. The first time can be definitive in establishing a person's relationship with that state of consciousness. I told

her that it was important to take it in the intimate company of people she trusted, not in some noisy public situation like a rave. Our family would never take psychedelics together, because the parent/child boundaries are established on other bases.

Anyway, about six months after my wife died, my daughter called me from a state park where she was camping with her boyfriend. She said that they were planning to take MDMA together. She was calling because she had promised to let me know. I told her that sounded like an acceptable situation. It turned out that what they took was not real MDMA. From their description of its effects, I assume it was some kind of speed. She needed to have access to reliable material, so I gave her most of my

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personal supply of MDMA for her twentieth birthday. She had a mellow experience with her boyfriend. She does not drink because she considers alcohol to be an inferior drug. In contrast to the way I was at her age, she has no curiosity about different mental states. For her, MDMA was just helpful for getting a more honest relationship with her boyfriend. If she is ever ready to go deeper, we can work together so she can try LSD. She understands that I am a good source of information. In fact, I'm surprised at how little her friends know about psychedelics.

For some families, sharing an experience can be a powerful bond, just as native societies use psychedelic experiences to bring the community together. A U.S. federal prosecutor recounted:

I was having trouble communicating with my teenage daughter. We took MDMA together, hoping it might help our relationship. My daughter started crying. She said I never really listened to her. Wagging my finger at her, I adamantly insisted that I was always receptive to hearing what she had to say. Suddenly, I realized that I had interrupted her. Then I admitted that I had not really listened to her. After that, we began to work more closely on the specific things that were interfering with our intimacy.

The account below is by a 23-year-old son of a psychiatrist, who felt that his parents' openness about psychedelics helped him to make his own choices in his own time.

At the time when MDMA was becoming stigmatized as an illegal drug, I was about 11 years old. That is when I became aware that my dad was involved with it in a professional capacity. He was using it to treat patients in our home. I grew up around MDMA, so it was never strange to me. My parents were very straightforward and honest. When I became worried about the things I heard at school, my dad gave me a medical explanation about the effects of MDMA. He sat me down and said, "Not everything you learn at school will be true. Some things they teach you will be good, and some things will be bad. Even though we understand that MDMA is good, many people outside our family will think it is bad. So you can't tell people about what we do at home." That was okay with me. My impression was overwhelmingly positive when my parents used MDMA themselves. I enjoyed hanging around them when they did it.

it in the house, and that I use their stuff.

I used to rebel against my parents by staying away from psychedelics. I was real straight-edged. I did not have peer group pressure to trip; I had parent pressure. Because my parents were interested in it, I was non-interested—my way of rebelling. Then in my freshman year of college, I encountered other students who were tripping. I became open to the idea. My first drug experience was with my girlfriend. We had been seeing each other for about four or five months, and have been in and out of each other's lives ever since. I asked my father for some MDMA. He gave it to us, and left us with the home to use. We had a wonderful experience.

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Earlier this year, I had MDMA with my mom. My mother and I have such a good relationship that I don't think anything could make us closer, but it was a good experience. For her birthday present, she wanted to trip with me. That's what we did for her birthday. We talked and talked and talked and hugged. It was very sweet, very easy. Absolutely, I think tripping has been a positive thing for our family.

When I was growing up, tripping wasn't a mystery; that gave it a good light. Looking back on my childhood, my parents never said, "I don't want you doing that, that's bad," except when it came to hurting people. Tripping was never forbidden, never taboo or mysterious. Therefore I came to it in my own time.

SET AND SETTING

The families interviewed above all appeared well-adjusted, and none indicated any problems as a result of using psychedelics. Each interviewee was asked if they knew of anyone who had suffered problems from being introduced to psychedelics by their families, and none had heard of any such difficulties. These families displayed a number of common factors that seemed to contribute to the success of their choices. These include:

- The children requested a session out of their own internal motivation. Curiosity and personal desire were the reasons for the session, rather than external pressure, macho one-upmanship, or expectations based on chronological age.
- The parents had a sophisticated understanding of psychedelics due to extensive personal experience and literature research. The parents were attuned to the individual needs of each particular child.

- The families had a network of sympathetic friends. This community support offset feelings of isolation that might have resulted from evading counterproductive laws against using psychedelics.
- The children were given appropriate amounts of pure materials on an infrequent basis. They were taught to avoid overindulging both in frequency and dosage.
- Given the prohibitionist laws in the United States, families and communities were “security conscious.” If the authorities ever became aware that parents were assisting their children to use psychedelics, then the parents could risk losing custody of the kids. It is ironic that while the parents would be prosecuted, the police or child protective service could inflict genuine trauma by removing their children from their homes.

Obviously, there would be a much greater likelihood of untoward results in circumstances where these safeguards are not in place. Sidney Cohen remarked on an early example of irresponsible psychedelic use in the family:

Another group who really ought not be given LSD is children...It is, therefore, chilling to read in a recent issue of *Life* (March 25, 1966) the following quote: “When my husband and I want to take a trip together,” says the psychedelic mother of four, “I just put a little acid in the kids’ orange juice in the morning and let them spend the day ‘freaking out’ in the woods.” Here, at least, is a refreshing absence of pretense that it will do them any good; it’s simply a pharmacological baby sitter.”¹⁴

Such disturbing stories, understandably, fuel the hysteria around the topic of families and psychedelics. In a more recent and highly publicized case, a single father offered various drugs to his children in a haphazard manner that amplified the instabilities of his dysfunctional family. The television documentary *Small Town Ecstasy*, produced by Allison Grodner and Arnold Shapiro for HBO, told the story of Scott Meyers, a 40-year-old resident of Calaveras County, California. Meyers took his three children—aged 13, 15, and 18—to raves and parties where he gave them alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, and MDMA. This caused him to lose custody of his children and to be convicted of misdemeanor drug possession.¹⁵ After the documentary was broadcast in 2002, he was arrested on two felony

charges of child endangerment.¹⁶ This father’s haphazard parenting was reflected in the irresponsible way he supplied his children with these substances. His behavior was clearly inappropriate, and it is distinct from the previous examples.

BETTER DRUG EDUCATION

Today’s “zero tolerance” style of drug education trivializes the factors underlying actual drug abuse and pathologizes normal adolescent experimentation. Research at the University of California at Berkeley has indicated that moderate use of marijuana and other illicit drugs is normal for U.S. teens. The researchers found that adolescents who occasionally experiment with drugs are emotionally healthier than both their peers who abstain from all drug use, and their peers who overindulge. When drug problems do develop, they are a symptom—rather than a cause—of personal and social maladjustment. The researchers stated:

Given current understandings of personality development, it would seem that the psychological triad of alienation, impulsivity, and distress would be better addressed through efforts aimed at encouraging sensitive and empathic parenting, at building childhood self-esteem, at fostering sound interpersonal relationships, and at promoting involvement and commitment to meaningful goals. Such interventions may not have the popular appeal of programs that appear to tackle the drug problem “directly,” but may have greater individual and societal payoff in the end.¹⁷

Despite these findings, “zero tolerance” remains the primary way that schools and youth programs teach about drugs. It is currently illegal for drug prevention programs that receive federal or California State funding to provide information about the beneficial uses of illicit drugs. Pursuant to 20 U.S.C. 7142 (United States Code), illicit drug use must always be portrayed as “wrong and harmful.” California Health & Safety Codes 11999.2 and 11999.3 prohibit educational messages about “responsible use” of illegal drugs.¹⁸ The federal government’s “style sheet” for conforming terminology in drug education literature “aims to prevent use—not abuse—of alcohol and other drugs by youth,” “since there is risk associated with all use,” and “all illicit drugs are harmful.”¹⁹

Nonetheless, drug use by young people shows no sign of decline. As an honest and pragmatic alternative to

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prohibitionist education, drug education in schools should be oriented toward harm reduction. Students should be given age-appropriate information on the risks and benefits of commonly used psychoactive materials. Teachers would emphasize that, like many things (fire, motor vehicles, etc.), these tools can have a destructive impact if used thoughtlessly. As in the ayahwasca and peyote churches, powerful substances would not be shrouded in a veil of secrecy and taboo. Young people could ask questions and expect honest answers, making their own informed choices.

While this vision may sound far-off, it's helpful to consider the example of alcohol. 23 states have "parental exception" clauses that allow minors to consume alcohol when given by a parent.²⁰ This policy implies a respect for families' autonomy, and a trust in parents as the best teachers for their children.

The cultural integration of psychedelics won't happen overnight, and the question of young people is perhaps the most difficult involved. The first step is for people who have knowledge of these substances to share it, "coming out" about their own experiences. Drug education should be honest and present a balanced picture of risks and benefits.

Next, if the resources that are currently squandered on the ineffectual prohibition of psychedelics were redirected toward establishing psychedelic training centers, then young people would at least have the option to get expert guidance on how to use these drugs in a responsible way. Over time, our society would build up its own body of knowledge, its own traditions, and its own rites. Just as families would feel safe creating their own rituals, these steps would mark a turning point for our society, a culture-wide rite of passage. •

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Imagine, for a moment, what it would be like if our society
openly recognized and supported the right of young people to get high and seek visionary experiences.

Only those who steal or harm others would be arrested. Police would go back to the business of
protecting life and property. Prisons would go back to the business of rehabilitating violent and
dangerous people. Real criminals, unable to traffic in drugs, would be hard-pressed to earn a living.

As America did after the repeal of Prohibition, we would return to a genuine respect for the law
and our democratic form of government. Young and old would no longer be at war.

The Bill of Rights would be restored. Age and wisdom would be held in high esteem and
the flower of youth would be blessed with the fragrance of joy and true liberation.

Our young would soar like eagles: Proud, strong, brave and *free*.

From *The Politics of Consciousness* by Steve Kubby

About the Artists

Dadara

Dadara first became well known in the music scene, with his flyers, record and CD sleeves, VeeJaying, and live painting events for various clubs and festivals in New York, Tokyo, Paris, Berlin, Amsterdam, and Istanbul. Special projects over the years have included the production of baby-shaped loudspeakers (B&W), video clips, tattooing events for the AIDS Fund, an animated soap on the Internet, and various designs for advertising campaigns: Absolut Vodka, building the *Greyman Statue of No Liberty* (8 meters high), merchandise for GreenPeace, the production of two short animated Greyman movies, designing a computer interface and console (Jamby), and a 60 meter long canvas for the Leiden University. Last year Dadara built a 15-meter-long boat, which was shipped to the desert in Nevada and set on fire during the Burning Man Festival, after appearing at the Overhetij Festival and Mysteryland. Like a phoenix, it rose from its ashes—returning (and burning again) at the Oerol Festival. See www.dadara.com.

Alex Grey

Alex Grey is a visionary artist best known for his depictions of the human body that “x-ray” the multiple layers of reality, revealing the complex integration of body, mind, and spirit. His paintings have been featured on the cover of albums by the Beastie Boys, Tool, and The String Cheese Incident, in *Newsweek* magazine, on the Discovery Channel, rave flyers and sheets of blotter acid, and have been exhibited throughout the world. His books include *Sacred Mirrors: The Visionary Art of Alex Grey*, his philosophical text *The Mission of Art*, and the recent *Transfigurations*. Sounds True released *The Visionary Artist*, an audiotape of Alex’s art, philosophy, and vision practices. He lives in Brooklyn, NY with his wife Allyson Grey and their daughter, actress Zena Lotus Grey. See www.alexgrey.com.

Naoto Hattori

Naoto Hattori was born in Japan in 1975. He has won numerous awards and his work has been featured in countless galleries as well as the pages of *Airbrush Art + Action*, *The Entheogen Review*, *Heads*, *Juxtapoz*, and other magazines. Of his work, Naoto says: “My vision is like a dream, whether it’s a sweet dream, a nightmare, or just a trippy dream. I try to see what’s really going on in my mind, and that’s a practice to increase my awareness in stream-of-consciousness creativity. I try not to label or think about what is supposed to be, just take it in as it is and paint whatever I see in my mind with no compromise. That way, I create my own vision.” See www.wwwcomcom.com.

Martina Hoffmann

Martina Hoffmann was born in Germany and spent much of her childhood in West Africa. In the 1970s she studied art education and sculpting at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt, and later went to Spain where she met the Fantastic Realist artist Robert Venosa. Inspired by his work, she took up painting. She has also developed her own line of jewelry and clothing. In the 1990s she joined with a group of women artists, “Vox Femina,” in Boulder, Colorado, who perform multi-media stage shows. Her psychedelic-inspired work has been exhibited internationally, and appeared in books, calendars, and magazines. See www.martinahoffmann.com.

Rabbi Matthew S. Kent

Matthew Scott Kent was born in Pennsylvania on August 5, 1952. His artistic ability was nurtured by his mother, and in his youth he received awards as both a vocalist and an actor. He won a music scholarship to Temple University in 1970, where he majored in English. He has travelled to twenty three countries, with an extended stay in Southern India living with Shivite Sadhus, and studying comparative religion at Edinburgh University in Scotland. After starting a Rock and Roll band in Edinburgh and working in a steel mill in Norway, he returned to Pennsylvania, where he met his wife, Anne Zapf. Matthew and Anne were married September 18, 1976. They traveled throughout the American Southwest and Central America, and settled in the remote Aravaipa wilderness of southeastern Arizona, where they met Rev. Immanuel Trujillo, Apache artist and former Native American Church Roadman. Together they founded the Peyote Way Church, an all race peyotist community, on December 21, 1977. Matthew is the father of three children with his wife Anne, and the President of Mana Ceremonial Earthenware Pottery. To see some other examples of his work on canvas and pottery see www.peyoteway.org.

Stacy B. Schaefer

Stacy B. Schaefer received her B.A. in Anthropology/Latin America Studies from UCSC in 1979, her M.A. in Latin American Studies from Stanford University in 1982, and her Ph.D. in Anthropology from UCLA in 1990. She is director of the Museum of Anthropology and assistant professor of anthropology at California State University at Chico. Stacy has been studying and photographing the Huichol Indians since she undertook ethnographic fieldwork and apprenticed with master weavers in two Wixárika families. She is the author of the book *To Think with a Good Heart: Wixárika Women, Weavers, and Shamans* and co-editor (with Peter T. Furst) of *People of the Peyote: Huichol Indian History, Religion, & Survival*. See www.csuchico.edu/anth/schaefer.

Additional Resources

FROM MAPS

www.maps.org/news-letters/v06n1/06139spi.html

Foldes, A. et al. 1995. "Youths and Entheogen Use—A Modern Rite of Passage?" *MAPS Bulletin* 6(1): 39–42.

Addresses the question, "What relevance do these ancient traditions have to the experience of a modern adolescent growing up in the western world?"

www.maps.org/news-letters/v07n1/07127wha.html

"What Do We Tell the Kids?" 1996/97 *MAPS Bulletin* 7(1): 27–45.

A collection of relevant articles including: "Drug Education and Democracy [In]action" (by J.H. Brown), "High School Students talk about Drug Education Programs" (an interview conducted by J.H. Brown), "Stumbling on His Stash" (by Alice B.), and "The Rite of Passage: A family's perspective on the use of MDMA" (anonymous).

www.maps.org/research/mdma/pregnancy.html

"MDMA and Pregnancy." MAPS web site, 1999.

A discussion of the October 1999 paper in *Lancet*, titled "Congenital anomalies after prenatal ecstasy exposure."

JOURNAL ARTICLES

Abramson H.A. 1967. "The Use of LSD (d-lysergic acid diethylamide) in the Therapy of Children (a brief review)." *Journal of Asthma Research* 5: 139–143.

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ON-LINE

<http://actioncenter.drugpolicy.org/ctt.asp?u=8590&l=3677>

Research Supporting Alternatives to Current Drug Prevention Education for Young People by Rodney Skager (Feb 2003). A selected set of annotated references on changes necessary to drug prevention education for young people.

www.druglibrary.org/schaffer/kids/default.htm

A Collection of References on Drugs and Children—What Causes Drug Problems Among Children, and How to Deal With Them When They Happen. Schaffer Library of Drug Policy.

www.erowid.org/psychoactives/families

The Erowid Families & Psychoactives Vault provides documents and resources on the topic of families' relationships to psychoactive substances. It isn't really clear how people in our culture can integrate psychoactive substances usefully and coherently into their lives with their children. There are many complexities: legal, social, dependency, abuse, access, fears, personal freedom, parental responsibility, etc. In order to lay the groundwork for humans to have more balanced relationships with psychoactive substances, the first step may be to simply collect and share the experiences of people who have faced these challenges. While we have information about what happens in traditional cultures, modern society is so removed from family-oriented villages that it is not at all clear what to do with such wisdom teachings. With this Vault, Erowid hopes to cover: families who value psychedelics; coming out of the psychedelic closet; mentoring and rites-of-passage; families torn apart: when dialog breaks down; pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding; drug education; other stories of how drugs or the discussion of drugs have impacted a family; media treatment of these issues. Articles, ideas, and comments can be sent to families@erowid.org.

www.famm.org

Families Against Mandatory Minimums is a national nonprofit organization founded in 1991 to challenge inflexible and excessive penalties required by mandatory sentencing laws.

www.granta.com/extracts/1319

Anonymous. "Confessions of a Middle-Aged Ecstasy Eater." *Granta* 74 (May 2001).

A distinguished writer makes an anonymous confession and defends a habit: his son supplies him with Ecstasy.

www.mamas.org

Mothers Against Misuse and Abuse. Formed in 1982 to address the multifaceted issues of substance use, misuse and abuse. MAMA's approach is based on personal responsibility and informed decision making, with respect for human dignity.

BOOKS

Barry, L. 1999. *Cruddy*. Simon & Schuster.

[Fiction] On a September night in 1971, a few days after getting busted for dropping two of the 127 hits of acid found in a friend's shoe, a sixteen-year old who is

grounded for a year curls up in the corner of her ratty bedroom, picks up a pen, and begins to write.

Huxley, A. 1962. *Island*. Harper & Row.

Classic tale of a utopian society with psychedelic rites-of-passage.

Johnson, J.T. 2001. *The Thundering Years: Rituals and Sacred Wisdom for Teens*. Inner Traditions.

A guidebook of approaches to rites-of-passage; praises altered states but has a negative approach toward drug use to reach these.

Levine, N. 2003. *Dharma Punx*. Harper San Francisco.

Noah Levine—son of Buddhist teacher and author Stephen Levine—updates his father's path to enlightenment in this memoir. As with many self-destructive kids, the author's search for meaning led him first to punk rock, drugs, drinking, and dissatisfaction. Fueled by his anger and so much injustice and suffering, he now uses that energy and the practice of Buddhism to awaken his natural wisdom and compassion.

Weil, A.T. and W. Rosen. 1983 (Revised 1993). *Chocolate to Morphine: Understanding Mind-Active Drugs*. Houghton Mifflin.

Excellent non-biased introduction to psychoactive substances for pre-teens.

Weil, A.T. 1972. *The Natural Mind: A New Way of Looking at Drugs and the Higher Consciousness*. Houghton Mifflin.

Postulates that the desire for altered states of consciousness is an inborn human drive.

Zimmer, L. and J.P. Morgan. 1997. *Marijuana Myths Marijuana Facts: A Review of the Scientific Evidence*. The Lindesmith Center.

Excellent overview that dispels many myths regarding the harms of *Cannabis*, providing factual information based on scientific studies instead of propaganda.

AUDIO TAPE

Schaefer, S.B. 1996. *Pregnancy, Children and Peyote in Huichol Culture*. Cassette tape of lecture at San Francisco Entheobotany Conference. Botanical Preservation Corps.



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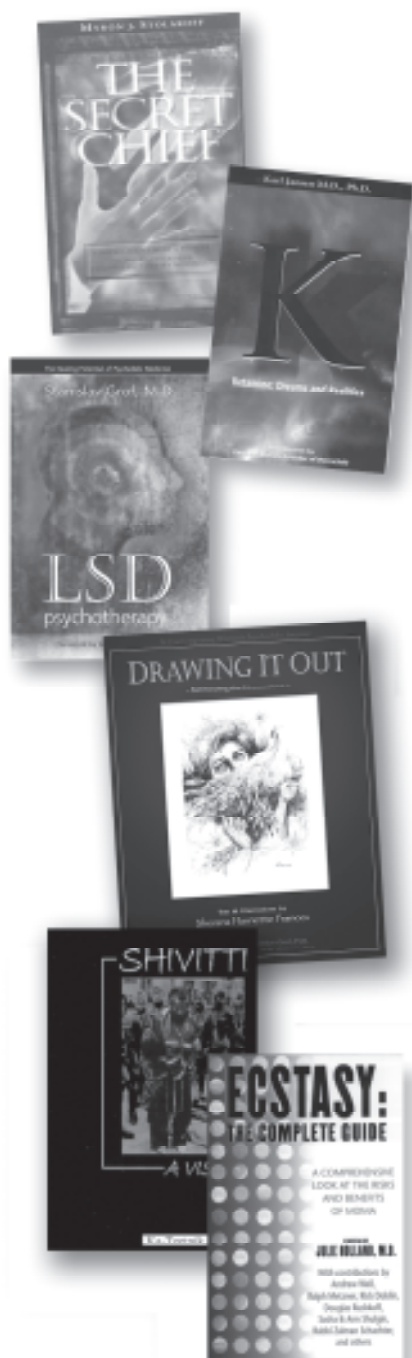
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2. *Ketamine: Dreams and Realities* by Karl Jansen, MD, PhD • 355 pp, \$14.95
3. *LSD Psychotherapy* by Stanislav Grof, MD • 352 pp, \$12.95
4. *Drawing It Out: Befriending the Unconscious (A Contemporary Woman's Psychedelic Journey)* by Sherana Harriette Frances • 128 pp, \$19.95
5. *Ecstasy: The Complete Guide* by Julie Holland, MD • 281 pp, \$15.00
6. *Shivitti: A Vision* by Ka-Tzetnik 135633 • 144 pp, \$15.95

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BETTY GROVER EISNER

September 29, 1915 — July 1, 2004

*If I have a mission in life, I feel it is to put the mystic back into the healing:
to make the integrative experience lucid and to be desired in psychiatry.
And who knows, maybe some small part of the cosmic can be worked in.
I don't think I shall get very far with this, but I want to make a start...*

Betty Grover Eisner, Ph.D., was a pioneering psychedelic psychotherapy researcher who first experienced LSD in 1955.

In 2002, almost 50 years later, she completed *Remembrances of LSD Therapy Past* (www.maps.org/freebooks.html), which reported about and reaffirmed the value of her research and experiences.

She was a therapist for Bill Wilson, co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, when he first tried LSD and become convinced that alcoholics could benefit from LSD psychotherapy.



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