

Tekst 8

Why no one just says no

Drugs may be bad for us, but banning them is not the answer

Nigella Lawson



- 1 A MONTH OR SO ago, following Julie Burchill's *Guardian* piece on her earlier, admirably unrepentant, extravagant cocaine use, columnists queued up to reveal the exciting details of their own lives in the druggy fast lane. Some had a wild old time, others no more than the odd toke, blow or snort which they now rather regret. But all were now sure that however good it might have felt at the time, drugs were as dangerous for them as they were for less sensitive self-observers.
- 2 True, they were usually hard put to explain precisely why feeling good was bad, but they were agreed that that was then and this is now. And now we – or rather, *they* – should just say no.
- 3 Of course they would say that, wouldn't they? The national press, of whatever political stripe, is far too responsible an institution to allow its columnists to advise readers to turn on and drop out. But at least they went half-way to the truth, which is: most drugs are fun and safe. (Bear with me: the qualifier is yet to come.) Last week on Radio 4's *Today* programme, the Deputy Drugs Tsar, Mike Trace, turned up to talk about the number of only-just teenagers using and even dealing in drugs.
- 4 Trace was worried. Teenage drug use is growing and the kids have to be persuaded that drugs are bad for them, that they're dangerous, that they should leave them alone. It is a valid point... at least if you're a grown-up Deputy Drugs Tsar or a newspaper columnist or a parent or anyone else who has blanked the memory of what it's like to be young and have nothing more pressing to worry about on a Saturday night than which club to go to and what top to wear.
- 5 The point is, teenagers aren't stupid. They are, like the rest of us, empiricists. They hear that drugs are bad for them, will enslave their

souls, sap their youthful spirit, deprave, even kill them. But that isn't what they see. For all Leah Betts' parents touring schools warning pupils of the dangers of Ecstasy, the teenagers know better. And I'm not being ironic: the evidence they have is precisely the opposite of that which their elders and betters present to them. Every weekend they see hundreds, thousands, hundreds of thousands, of their peers taking E and having a wonderful time. The chances of them ever coming across another Leah Betts are tiny: only some 60 users have died in Britain as a result of taking Ecstasy.

- 6 If he wants merely to save lives, Mr Betts would be better off telling children not to fly, not to eat nuts, not to get stung by wasps, not to play by the railtracks, not to do any of the things which kill more than the half dozen teenagers who each year die taking Ecstasy.

- 7 If teenagers go to a different sort of club – the sort where booze rather than drugs help the night along – there's more likelihood that they'll see the effects of the intoxicant of choice: punch-ups, loud-mouthed drunken oafishness, blood, vomit, the post-euphoric depression that inevitably follows drunkenness. And on that evidence why should they believe the Government official who tells them what they're doing is dangerous and illegal, but what the man with the black eye retching into the gutter is doing is legal and relatively safe?

- 8 The recent Euro 2000 was a case in point. The Dutch police at Eindhoven turned a blind eye to the dope peddlers. Thus, when Holland lost to Italy, the Dutch supporters were seen, on camera, stoned into inoffensive passivity. Cut to any English match and I can't help concluding that selling joints rather than cans of lager on the terraces might be a rather more effective way of combating hooliganism.

- 9 I have an equal distaste for all substances, legal or otherwise, that make the user out of control to the point of unsociability, but the facts are shocking. These are the known drug-related deaths in the UK, 1990: tobacco, 110,000; alcohol, 30,000; volatile substances, 112; morphine, 91; methadone, 84; heroin, 62; barbiturate type, 7; anti-depressants, 4; cocaine, 4; pethidine, 3; MDMA (Ecstasy), 3;

amphetamine type, 2; hallucinogens, 0; LSD, 0; psilocybin, 0; cannabis, 0.

10 If the figures above are right, then the case against drugs is a difficult one. Those of us with children see beyond the figures to our little loved ones in later years being zonked out at best, and annihilating themselves at worst. It's hard not to have that picture, and I would assume that most of us know enough people who have more or less destroyed themselves with drugs. But still, despite my parental fears and susceptibility to scare stories, I feel that drug use doesn't make a junkie any more than getting drunk makes an alcoholic.

11 I worry more that there are so many children who have lives so utterly lacking in hope or promise that the junkie way doesn't seem such a bad idea. It's easy for middle-class parents (and there is no shortage of middle-class children on drugs) to worry over

what a mess their offspring are making of their lives, how they're squandering their potential, but there is a whole class, or underclass, out there who are, fairly understandably, trying to block out the fact that they have no chances, no recognised potential.

12 But whatever one feels about alcohol or any other drug, it appears to be the case that the desire for intoxication is innate in humans. Any primitive society investigated by anthropologists depicts peoples who either danced themselves into whirling states of frenzy or who ate berries calculated to induce hallucinations (or both). Both my children, from the age when they were barely stable, used to twirl themselves around until they fell down helplessly dizzy. I agree, just because something is innate doesn't make it good, but whatever, prohibition can never be the answer.

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- 1p 35 ■ What does the writer make clear about the “columnists” (paragraph 1) in the first two paragraphs?
- A They communicate a mixed message in the way they describe their own drug use.
 - B They exaggerate their own experience with drugs only to impress their readers.
 - C They present too rosy a picture of what it is like to use drugs.
 - D They should have told the truth about their own past drug use a long time ago.
- 1p 36 ■ What does “Bear with me ... to come.” (paragraph 3) make clear?
- A The writer is also going to deal with the negative aspect of drugs.
 - B The writer is going to approach drugs in a lighthearted way.
 - C The writer is going to illustrate further on in the text why drugs are safe and fun.
- 1p 37 ■ What is the function of the phrase “have nothing ... to wear” in paragraph 4?
- A To illustrate the narrow view that the young have of the world.
 - B To provide examples of things other than drugs that may preoccupy the young.
 - C To show that the young and the middle-aged live in different worlds.
- “the teenagers know better” (alinea 5)
- 1p 38 □ Wat is voor teenagers het doorslaggevende argument volgens de schrijfster?
- 1p 39 □ Vat samen wat de schrijfster betoogt in alinea 6.
- “The recent Euro 2000 was a case in point.” (paragraph 8)
- 1p 40 ■ What does the writer want to demonstrate?
- A Alcohol generates more trouble than drugs do.
 - B Drugs and alcohol are an explosive mix.
 - C Football matches in Britain are an excuse for alcohol abuse.
 - D The police must deal firmly with public drunkenness.
- “the facts are shocking” (alinea 9)
- 1p 41 □ Waarom?
- 1p 42 ■ Which of the following characterises paragraph 10?
- A It compares the dangers of alcohol to those of drugs.
 - B It contains a plea to let reason prevail over emotion.
 - C It specifies the groups most at risk because of drug use.
- 1p 43 ■ What point does the writer make with regard to drug use in paragraph 11?
She blames
- A children who do not grasp their chances in life but escape into the dreamy world of drugs.
 - B parents for failing to teach their children to believe in the future.
 - C social conditions, which encourage young people to sink into a life of drugs.
 - D the middle classes for ignoring the huge problems of the lower classes.
- De schrijfster eindigt het artikel met “prohibition can never be the answer”.
- 1p 44 □ Welke reden voert zij hiervoor aan in de laatste alinea?
Geef antwoord in de vorm van een citaat.