

The **JOY** *of*
QUITTING
CANNABIS



THE ONLY BOOK YOU NEED TO FREE YOURSELF FROM MARIJUANA
A REMARKABLE WAY TO REGAIN
HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

CHRIS SULLIVAN

**The *Joy* of Quitting Cannabis:
FREEDOM FROM ADDICTION**

Chris Sullivan

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Smashwords Edition

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About Chris Sullivan

In his teens Chris Sullivan was a glue-sniffer, smoker, cannabis toker, drinker and devourer of any other drug or substance he could lay his hands on. A self-confessed '*no hoper*', Chris was determined to turn his life around and with help from Allen Carr – the multi-million international best-selling author of *The Easy Way To Stop Smoking*, he did so with considerable success! After escaping the clutches of drug addiction and alcohol abuse he trained in hypnosis and Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) under celebrity hypnotist and therapist Paul McKenna and creator of NLP Dr Richard Bandler.

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I take great pleasure in acknowledging Allen Carr, (1934-2006) author of *The Easy Way to Stop Smoking*, as a source of inspiration and influence on the subject of drug addiction. This book would not have been possible had it not been for Allen's revolutionary breakthrough and understanding of drug addiction.

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Start Here...

When I wanted to quit smoking cannabis a few years ago and found that I couldn't do it under my own steam I went in search of a self-help book to show me the way. Annoyingly all I could find were books on how to cultivate the damn stuff. So to exact my revenge on the world of publishing I decided to one day write that book myself.

I knew fine well cannabis did not present physical withdrawal symptoms but imagining what my day-to-day existence might be like without it was a depressing thought to say the least. I feared I might never again enjoy social occasions or handle stress and that perhaps I would be forced to sacrifice my friends and lifestyle in a bid to block out temptation. My desire to quit was supposed to be about regaining self-confidence, fitness and happiness – not becoming even more miserable!

I assume, like me, you **DON'T** want to be miserable and vulnerable to temptation after you quit either. Who would?

Back in those days I was stoned almost twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The difference today is that there is nothing you or anyone else could say to persuade me to inhale enough even to fill a flea's lung with cannabis. It's actually impossible to measure how fantastic I feel. That's because I eventually quit:

- Without using willpower
- Without dwelling on the disadvantages
- Without substitute drugs
- Without the feeling I was making a sacrifice
- Without psychobabble or gimmicks

And without question, so can you!

- You will not miss cannabis
- You will not suffer cravings
- You will not be vulnerable to temptation

The benefits of quitting cannabis with this book also include:

- Enhanced enjoyment of social occasions
- Physical health and fitness
- Clearer state of mind
- Financial savings
- Improved appearance i.e. skin tone

But above all, you will find the process of quitting:

EASY

I will not lie to you - it is of course true what the pro-campaigners say. There is no annual recorded death rate. There is no such thing as a cannabis hangover or comedown period. There is obviously little chance of you waking up in a derelict drug-den with hypodermic needles littering the floor alongside ashen-faced drug addicts. But wait...those *unarguable* facts are only half of the story.

Whether you are concerned about your mental or physical health, the financial cost, the drudgery of living your life stoned or because you want to distance yourself from your current lifestyle, your reasons to quit cannabis are as credible and worthy as any.

Reportedly, around 500 cannabis smokers in the UK seek out treatment every week. That statistic proves two important things: **a)** cannabis truly has the potential to ruin lives, and **b)** you are not alone in your desire to quit.

You are probably now wondering, perhaps with butterflies in your stomach, when exactly will you be directed to ditch the weed for good.

It takes just over a hundred or so pages (the length of this book) to explain how to quit successfully without willpower, cravings, substitute drugs or the miserable feeling you are making a sacrifice. Due to the legal status of cannabis it must be your personal responsibility to put the decision to quit on until you are prompted towards the final chapter. By which time you will be ready and confident of victory! The only step you need to take in order to quit cannabis easily, immediately and permanently is to read on diligently.

1 'Reefer Madness'

Have you seen the movie '*Reefer Madness*'?

'*Reefer Madness*' is an old black and white movie that was released in 1936. In reality the film is nothing more than a propaganda vehicle that drives home the message cannabis leads to insanity, violence and sexual deviancy. Owing to its ridiculous and hysterical depiction the movie has since become a cult classic for all the wrong reasons. So much so that it is the butt of sniggers and giggles the world over. I might add the effects of inhaling the weed are innocent of causing the laughter of this occasion! The film's embellished message comically attempts to scare its audience with as much subtlety as a knife-wielding Jack the Ripper! Rather than persuading viewers to avoid cannabis it provides point-scoring ammunition (even 70+ years on) for the pro-campaigners cause instead.

Frankly, the illicit ingredient within your joint, bong or space-cake is unlikely to feature highly on any list of dangerous drugs. In my humble opinion anti-cannabis propaganda serves only to make it more alluring to those who are about to smoke it for the first time. In any event, no one is ever going to believe cannabis devastates lives in the same way drugs like heroin or crack are reputed to do, and neither should they! So regardless of which side of the pro or anti debate the misinformation falls upon let us simply agree now to just ditch it.

In order to quit any drug successfully it is essential to eliminate all of the myths and illusions associated with that drug. For that reason I want you to put yourself in the frame of mind of an impartial judge. Keep your mind as open as possible and use your personal experiences of cannabis to separate fact from fiction. Feel free also to scrutinize every word you are about to read in this book. If you can manage to do all of that with a willingness to accept new information should the old not be worth defending then your swift, permanent and ridiculously easy passage to freedom from cannabis is guaranteed!

Now, just how difficult can it be to quit cannabis?

2 Fear

Everyone has their own individual tale to tell as to why they want to quit. My reason was because I had gotten into a rut of smoking it all day, every day. Late at night or early morning, utterly convinced I enjoyed it, I would sit, roll and smoke joint after joint. As the years rolled on cannabis seemed more like self-prescribed medication to keep me calm than the fun, recreational drug I once considered it to be. Knocking on my dealer's door became a symbol of need and at times desperation. I often looked like I had been dragged through a hedge backwards and I completely lost my self-confidence and was unable to communicate with even my closest friends. But the dread of existing without my beloved daily fix of twelve or more joints was enough to force me to abandon each and every attempt to quit.

You probably know of at least one friend or colleague who boasts they can quit cannabis whenever they want to. An old friend of mine from way back called Sam used to brag that he could quit instantly without any fuss. All he had to do, according to Sam, was stub out his last joint and that would be the end of it. For a long while he had me utterly convinced that he could do it in the manner he described until that is I dared to put him on the spot. Then suddenly his boasts turned into the feeblest of excuses. For the first time ever I saw Sam's natural swagger desert him. Today, tomorrow or any suggested deadline to quit visibly unnerved him.

Sam didn't realize it but the easy to quit reputation that cannabis has is somewhat misleading. The level of ease or difficulty in terms of withdrawal symptoms is actually irrelevant. That's because the real problem of quitting is fear.

Prior to making an attempt to quit Sam was confident because he knew there was no physical withdrawal symptoms. He just didn't anticipate the fear of losing what he considered to be his stress-relieving helpmate and precious source of social pleasure.

The prospect of a boring and miserable existence without cannabis was enough to convince him to postpone the dreaded deed until such a time he forgot or rather until I forgot his boasts. Despite his initial confidence Sam and I shared the same problem - the fear of missing cannabis.

Have you heard the story of the man who fell from a 65-floor skyscraper and heard the voice of an angel?

Just as the man was certain to fall to his death on the pavement below he somehow managed to grab hold of a protruding ledge. Relieved but still in grave danger of falling a further ten floors all the poor man could do was hope and pray for a miracle to save him.

Then suddenly, a voice from the heavens bellowed down to him,

"Do you believe?"

Believing the voice to be that of an angel the man replied, *"Yes, yes, I believe."* But once again the voice from the heavens repeated the question, *"Do you believe?"* The poor man yelled back at the top of his voice, ***"I BELIEVE! I BELIEVE! I BELIEVE!"***

“Are you sure?” The voice asked again.

“Yes, Yes, I believe, I truly believe!”

“Okay,” said the voice, “*Release your grip on the ledge and you will be saved*”.

To which the man replied, “**SHIT!** *Is there anybody else up there who can help me?*”

Needless to say there wasn't and he eventually fell to his death.

Understandably the unfortunate man was too afraid to loosen his grip on the ledge. Former American

President Franklin D. Roosevelt famously said, “*All we have to fear is fear itself.*” When we think about quitting cannabis it is only natural to ask ourselves how will we ever enjoy social occasions, deal with stress and cope with boredom without it. Clearly the fear of giving up cannabis is not in the same ballpark as falling from a skyscraper to your death. Nevertheless, if you adopt the same attitude as Sam you might as well as keep your dealer's number on speed dial because quit and be happy you will never be!

But if we first remove the fear associated with quitting prior to stubbing out your final joint, victory is a nailed-on certainty. The goal is to be 100% certain that you will be both happier and healthier after you've quit. The only way to achieve that blissful state is to separate fact from fiction by asking mind-opening questions of cannabis.

Now, as Willy Wonka said to his excited golden ticket winners as they embarked upon their exhilarating adventure within the chocolate factory, “*We have so much time and so little to see. Wait a minute! Strike that. Reverse it. Thank you.*”

Without further ado then let's continue on our way by asking ourselves that most significant of questions - ‘*Is cannabis addictive?*’

What's your opinion?

3 Addiction

The answer as to whether or not cannabis is addictive might not be what you were expecting to read but after umpteen years of personal experience, study and careful observation the truth is what it is.

It is common knowledge quitting cannabis is all in the mind and that all we really need to quit is a little willpower. Common knowledge it may be but accurate it is not. I will go as far as to say the problem is at least 99% psychological; meaning with a little understanding we have it in our control and can quit easily, immediately and permanently but only if we take into account the remaining 1% that is **not** psychological in origin. On the subject of willpower, there is nothing but good news; you don't need willpower is simply not required! Before we give willpower the once over let's first discuss the non-psychological element in relation to quitting.

According to the definition of chemical addiction the main active ingredient within cannabis, Delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol or THC for short, is not chemically addictive on the grounds that it does not cause dependency.

Recently a young lady contacted me via email. She wrote:

‘When I can’t get hold of cannabis or if I know that I will be unable to have any for that night, I immediately turn into a different person. I am angry and emotional and I feel so depressed that I won’t get that sense of relaxation and calmness from the cannabis. I really hate feeling like I need it to make myself feel better.’

Now, let's play Sherlock for a moment. If her email had mentioned cocaine, alcohol or even nicotine would there be any doubt in our minds that she is addicted to that drug?

In her words when she runs out of cannabis she becomes ‘angry’, ‘emotional’, and ‘depressed’. But how does she feel really so different from that of other addicts, when they too can't get hold of the drug they are addicted to?

Remember, the definition of chemical addiction rules out cannabis but isn't the woman's **psychological** state equally dependent upon whether or not she is in possession of cannabis?

If the answer is **yes** it means cannabis is indeed addictive.

For the sake of a healthy debate let's say the woman's unstable psychological state is not caused because cannabis is addictive but because it is highly pleasurable. Meaning that essentially she misses cannabis and this is what causes her roller-coaster emotions when she runs out of it.

I concur that her belief in the pleasurable and beneficial effects of cannabis accounts for 99% of the problem. Unfortunately the scenario fails to account for the remaining 1% - the withdrawal symptoms.

Quitting cannabis unaided produces symptoms that are frankly not caused by disappointment alone. There is a period usually accompanied by feelings of stress, sleeplessness, unhappiness, boredom and aggression. (Not when you quit with this book)

The simple fact of the matter is if THC had no effect upon would-be-quitters there would never be an issue with quitting since there are no physical symptoms. Many things in life are pleasurable but we don't usually become stressed, bad-tempered and depressed for days and even weeks on end when we're unable to participate in the activity.

So, could the missing 1% of the equation be that she has gotten into habit of smoking cannabis regularly?

Let's suppose your future happiness depends upon you stopping biting your nails. Do you honestly believe that you would suddenly become moody, desperate and panicky because you weren't allowed to continue the habit? I agree that it may take some conscious effort to adjust to not biting them but such a thing doesn't dominate our lives. Habits are broken all the time without the accompanying hullabaloo.

Clearly something else is happening something other and indeed additional to habitual behavior and missing out on pleasant cannabis experiences.

An alcoholic or heroin addict may well suffer delirium tremens or flu like symptoms when they are forced to abstain. With cannabis the symptoms are purely psychological. Even so the lack of physical symptoms does not mean non-addictive. Neither does it mean that THC is not in part responsible for the psychological symptoms.

Oftentimes the person boasting they've quit succeeds only in substituting cannabis for alcohol. They swap one substance for a much more sinister poison and try to kid us into believing they have greater mental strength. The motivation behind why they substitute alcohol for cannabis is to try to negate the ordeal of quitting and because they truly believe they can't possibly enjoy life or cope with the stresses and strains of everyday living without being stoned or intoxicated.

Perhaps you've experienced that tense miserable state yourself. Like when your dealer is nowhere to be found and you can't relax or find enjoyment in anything you do.

That sense of missing/needing a drug to feel 'better' is a common characteristic of addiction. The drug causing it in our case is cannabis.

As an ex-smoker of cigarettes I can still recall roughly twenty to thirty minutes after smoking each cigarette the urge to smoke another came in the form of a slightly tense, insecure feeling. There is no physical pain or illness involved in craving a cigarette but the longer the smoker goes without lighting up the more un-relaxed and uptight they become. The nicotine rapidly leaving the body is the cue to light up another. The replaced nicotine restores your previous calm state and the cycle continues endlessly until you eventually quit (or sadly die).

Regardless of whether or not cigarette smoking is physically addictive there is an irrefutable chemical relationship with nicotine and the smoker.

Unlike nicotine and indeed most other drugs the 'chemical' urge to replace dwindling levels of THC in the body is notably less frequent and this also adds to the mystery. Whilst you are actually smoking cannabis the frequency is dependent upon how stoned you are or can stand to be. It isn't usually until the next day that you begin to feel tense and somewhat out of sorts. When you eventually inhale cannabis smoke from a joint, pipe or bong that feeling is immediately relieved and you feel relaxed and 'normal' again. But it is essential to know that it is cannabis that makes you tense and miserable in the first place.

But the way it appears to you at the time is as if reality without cannabis is miserable and depressing ~~can assure you it is the other way around. It is why the 1% of the equation needs to be fully~~ understood. Although mathematically insignificant, its influence is immense.

Because quitting produces no physical symptoms it always appears ridiculously easy so long as you have enough willpower to get you through the initial few days – but how long does that miserable and tense period really last for? Almost immediately doubts begin to raise their ugly head in the mind of the would-be-quitter. Panic sets in. Will you **ever** feel normal, relaxed and happy again without cannabis? It is the subtle but powerful effect of THC leaving the body that creates the tension within us. That tension gives birth to panic when we run out of cannabis and ultimately an irrational fear of existing without it. It is a very powerful illusion that ensures we remain miserable stoned and ironically miserable when we are without it. We can't win!

For a modern analogy there is none better than a pay as you go mobile phone to explain how cannabis and specifically THC manipulates us.

When you have credit the mobile phone will function to its maximum potential. That is to say you can make local and international telephone calls, send text messages and even connect to the Internet. But the moment you run out of credit your phone no longer functions to its maximum potential. Of course you can still use it to receive calls - you just can't use all of its functions. To get it back to a fully functioning phone again you have to top it up with credit. This basic principle is what happens with THC in our bodies. When levels of THC run low (usually after a period of 1 or 2 days) it creates a psychological state similar to what smokers undergo when they haven't had a cigarette for a while. Increasingly we become uptight and restless, until that is, we go to our dealer's house and top-up with cannabis. Only after lighting up a joint or bong do we suddenly feel like our normal selves and a fully functioning human being again. But if cannabis is not readily available it ignites the fear we won't be able to relax or enjoy the rest of the day or evening without it. When you run out what matters most is searching out a reliable dealer. Eventually when you manage to get hold of some the sense of relief and relaxation upon inhaling it feels genuinely pleasurable. But the point is it isn't genuine pleasure or relaxation at all.

All we are really doing in fact is temporarily removing the tension that THC itself creates and drugging ourselves literally up to the eyeballs in the process.

Before taking up cannabis the need to control how we feel, think and function with regular doses of the drug does not exist. It should be remembered that cannabis artificially creates that need to get back to feeling calm and relaxed again.

Like the Willy Wonka quote, the situation is in complete reverse. We feel out of sorts only when we've run out of cannabis. Once we get hold of some we return to a calmer frame of mind. We therefore mistakenly give praise to cannabis for relaxing and comforting us. Each time we top up with cannabis it ensures we will endure that restless, agitated state again and again. (If you find this hard to accept, please keep reading. The main focus of the book will shortly address your concerns about the pleasure and benefits of cannabis. Just how few genuine benefits of cannabis there are may somewhat surprise you!)

Albeit very subtle, (compared to other drugs) cannabis creates a desire or hunger for more THC.

Imagine heroin or cocaine as a maximum-security jail and cannabis a low-security open prison. Regardless of the regime and conditions found inside the prison, the bottom line is; in spite of how

thin and flimsy the walls are or how weak the security at the main gate is, the function of a prison is to restrict freedom. In this case, your happiness and enjoyment of life. Don't worry! Once you accept that cannabis is addictive it becomes even easier, not more difficult to quit!

As promised, let's take a look now at willpower and why it just isn't needed...

4 No Willpower? No Problem!

To me adventurer Sir Ranulph Fiennes epitomizes the very meaning of willpower. Not only was he the first man to reach both the north and south poles and cross Antarctica on foot, he went on to climb Mount Everest at the grand old age of 65!

It is often said that all we need to quit any drug is willpower. Ironically, willpower is the one characteristic most people grumble they lack and it is the most common reason given as to why quitting cannabis seems harder than it should be, especially when you consider there is no physical pain or symptoms of illness involved.

Willpower of course is your determination and strength of mind. Truly an admirable quality, *EXCELLENCE* for the damning fact that willpower makes quitting cannabis harder, not easier, to achieve!

Even if willpower were the key to quitting, which I stress it isn't, is willpower really in such short supply? I have serious doubts about that. Let me use myself as an example:

One particular summer holiday, or rather, holiday from hell typifies how on occasion I would employ willpower during times of no cannabis to try to continue my addiction to it.

What should have been a relaxing stress-free holiday to Africa sadly turned into a swift return journey by means of 8 trains, 3 ferries and finally climaxing in a dreary coach trip back to Manchester – all because I failed to make the right connections to purchase even a joint's worth of hash from the locals!

Such was my *IRON-WILL* to not go without cannabis I even managed to get myself lost in the Sahara desert! Yet, I am absolutely confident had it been a race between myself and Sir Ranulph Fiennes to my dealer's house, I would've beat him easily. My will reigns supreme!

Thinking back also to when I was a schoolboy I noticed even then that it was typically the stronger-willed kids that would loiter in a huddle behind the bike sheds puffing away on single-skinners joints whilst the obedient kids were busy attending piano lessons or some such thing. I know also from personal experience that the clientele of dealers' who temporarily run short of cannabis are *never* loyal and willpower plays its part in that too.

You know like when your dealer is unavailable for several days, or he breaks the bad news that he does not have any cannabis to sell to you - when that happens do you just go home and accept the situation without caring one way or the other?

Well if you are anything like the majority, it isn't usual for 'customers' to submissively go home, turn on the TV and accept that there is no cannabis to be had for that day or week. Rather, at the very least they will frantically phone around or text every contact in their phonebook to seek out a supplier until they exhaust every possibility to get hold of some.

Unscrupulous dealers, particularly during the severest supply droughts, occasionally sell what is commonly known as '*formula*'. That is to say a substance that looks very much like hash but it either

has minimal or no psychoactive effects whatsoever. What it gives you instead is a sore throat and pounding headache. ~~But rather than go without many of the stronger-willed smokers, having been duped into buying it, will smoke it regardless in the full knowledge that they will not get stoned. "It's better than nothing" you will often hear them say. Such is the abundance of willpower to not meekly give in!~~

So, let me ask you, where does all that will and determination suddenly disappear to when it comes to quitting cannabis?

Answer: It doesn't disappear!

Rather willpower is the wrong tool for the job in hand. Have you ever changed a plug on your iron TV with a knife from your cutlery draw? It is doable but a screwdriver is far easier and more efficient. The same principle applies to quitting cannabis. There is the one easy way or several difficult ways which to achieve it. Willpower represents unnecessary difficulty and torment.

Picture an egg timer - when it is turned upside down the sand gradually falls to the bottom chamber. A similar inevitability takes place in the mind when we rely upon willpower to quit. To better explain I'll use my old pal Sam once again as an example. We join him a week or so into his attempt to quit.

The hacking cough Sam has had for a couple of years' has since eased to all but an occasional splutter. Gone too is the once permanent stoned expression from his face. For the first time in a long time Sam feels re-energized and clear-headed. He has more money in his pockets and he feels on top of the world. Alas, if only the temptation to light up the occasional joint would leave him alone he would be home free.

Temptation particularly got to him the afternoon Sheila and Mark his best friends from college rang to invite him to share a joint or two. Although sorely tempted to join them Sam remained true to his decision to quit. But the very next day for one reason or another he was bored and stressed. He found himself hankering to smoke just the one joint. Curiously, the more he tried to resist he felt closer to giving in to temptation.

At two weeks....

All of the symptoms of smoking cannabis that motivated Sam to quit had by then all but disappeared. This should have been good news except that whenever temptation reared its ugly head now all he had in his armoury to resist was an ever-fading memory of why he had originally wanted to quit. Sam was hoping that somehow the urge to smoke cannabis would diminish over time or that he would lose interest and find something better to do with his time. But it was becoming apparent that the longer he went without satisfying that urge the more his mood plunged into a pit of frustration, trying not to think about cannabis.

Meanwhile Sam couldn't trust himself to socialise with his old friends or enjoy the things he once used to, just in case temptation got the better of him. In short, poor Sam was utterly miserable.

Eventually he arrived at the conclusion that even if he were to hold out and wrestle with temptation for several more days, weeks or months he felt he had nothing to look forward to anymore. He knew no other way to relax, relieve boredom and enjoy social occasions that suited him. Alcohol made him aggressive; ecstasy freaked him out and other drugs were either not worth the risk or too expensive. To Sam, the future without cannabis looked very bleak. All he really wanted was temptation to leave him alone but with each passing moment temptation increasingly invaded his every thought almost

the point of obsession.

“*One joint wont do any harm*” is the typical statement uttered by someone in Sam’s shoes. Consequently that one joint turns into one session and so on until ‘*square one*’ looms large on the horizon. Please accept the willpower approach is inherently flawed. Just like the dwindling sands in the upper chamber of an egg timer cannot avoid falling, inevitably when using willpower the psychological struggle against temptation shifts in favour of cannabis regardless of whose mind it is being fought in.

By far the majority of attempts to quit survive less than one week. The really, really determined souls like Sam manage about three!

At quitcannabis.net we offer free advice and support to anyone who has an enquiry or desire to quit cannabis. Several weeks ago a young woman contacted me saying that she would find it impossible to quit because she “*loved cannabis too much*”. I too remember feeling exactly the same way as she did. Regardless of how strong my own reasons to quit were, it was the ‘*exquisite pleasure*’ I’d be missing out on that made cannabis difficult to abandon. Unwilling to waste another day of my life stoned I was equally reluctant to exist without it. I agonized over the good and bad reasons to continue or quit. It was clear that I was miserable stoned yet equally depressed without it. I was lodged firmly between a rock and a hard place as they say. Until that is I raked over my experience of cannabis and began to doubt the pleasure and benefits I thought I gained from it. Suddenly the opposition to my attempt melted away quicker than an ice-cube dropped into hot water.

The willpower method is based on dredging up as many of the disadvantages of cannabis as possible and reasoning that it is bad for us - then naively hoping that the desire to get stoned will fade away because of our newfound disgust of it.

However the disadvantages of cannabis help only inasmuch as they motivate us to think about quitting. But crucially they do nothing to remove the desire for cannabis, nor quell the fear and pain of living a dull and boring life without it. What I am trying to say is, willpower is only required if you still want or believe that you need cannabis. It is actually your belief that cannabis is pleasurable and/or beneficial that causes the conflict.

If you still desire or believe that you need cannabis to relax and enjoy social occasions after you quit then temptation will undoubtedly stalk you night and day until your resolve is weak and eventually you run out of willpower altogether. The young woman who contacted me had indeed correctly identified the problem. She did ‘*love*’ cannabis too much but what she failed to ask herself was...

5 What's The Point Of A Joint?

Forgive me for asking the following question, especially if you do not enjoy football! Have you ever watched a cup final on TV or perhaps visited Wembley stadium itself when it is full with 90,000 supporters? Without fail at some point during the match the referee will blow on his whistle to signal a foul has been committed only for 45,000 fans supporting one of the two teams to cheer the referee's *just* decision and 45,000 supporters from the other team to rue the referee's *unjust* decision! One set of supporters' apparently witnesses a gruesome foul and the other set sees only a fair tackle.

A similar thing happens when two politicians from rival parties open a debate on a point of fact. They each take the opposite viewpoint of the other and yet both passionately claim to be correct. Suggesting perhaps that just because we passionately believe something to be true it doesn't necessarily follow that it is true.

It is a widely accepted '*fact*' the effects of cannabis provide a sense of well-being, relaxation and euphoria. It is a widely accepted '*fact*' that quitting involves a certain amount of misery, willpower and deprivation.

As stupid as it may sound to you at this moment in time, those so-called '*facts*' are illusions! One by one, keeping your personal experience fresh in your mind, we can dispel those so-called facts by asking ourselves the question:

Is cannabis really as pleasurable and beneficial as we think it is?

If you discover that there are no genuine advantages to cannabis whatsoever – it will mean that it is impossible to be tempted after you quit. Conflict between wanting and not wanting cannabis simply cannot exist in your mind because all doubt that it is enjoyable, relaxing or an aid to creativity and boredom etc will be erased once and for all. Hence no need for willpower or to feel deprived.

All I ask of you is to be prepared to examine the truth. There is no place for trickery to fool ourselves into believing we do not enjoy, need or want cannabis anymore. As we progress through each chapter and discuss the giggles, euphoria, relaxation and other assumed benefits of cannabis you will indeed be asking yourself '*What's the point?*' and soon enough you will know the true answer to the question and as a result keen to quit, supremely confident of your success.

But do not worry if you are still somewhat skeptical or apprehensive. Instead of quitting outright you will also investigate whether or not cutting down is a viable option. But first, are you as lost as I was?

6 Finding Your Way Out Of The Bermuda Triangle

I was just 14 when I smoked my first joint. After about ten minutes or so I collapsed into a delirious heap on the floor giggling my head off. From that moment on I was smitten.

Thirteen years later, now 27 years old, I smoked cannabis almost all day, every day. One of the symptoms that caused me to contemplate quitting (it may be different for you) was glassy eye syndrome and lack of confidence. Glassy eye syndrome happens when you are in conversation with someone trying to give the impression that you have confidence. You're not actually looking the other person in the eye but at a pimple on their forehead or right through them without any focus in your eyes. In essence it's the lights are on but nobody's at home look. I couldn't look people in the eye because I was self-conscious and believed they could detect imperfections in my appearance and personality.

Arrrgh, if I am being totally honest with you, it wasn't just the stupid expression on my face; my lack of confidence whilst stoned was I that I used to sound like a badly dubbed martial arts movie. Perhaps even worse, I had the junkie appearance of Frank Gallagher from the Channel 4 drama series *Shameless*.

Sometimes an hour or more would pass before the meaning of some conversations became clear to me. It wasn't that I was stupid but constantly stoned. With each new day my life disappeared further and further into a Bermuda Triangle of cannabis smoke. Smoking one or two joints made me sensitive to every nuance in the person's tone of voice, their facial expressions, the different interpretations and the context of their speech.

Even a simple '*Hello, how are you Chris?*' could take me twenty to thirty minutes to process before being satisfied that the person meant well. The person conversing with me might not have been able to detect whether I was stoned out of my head, but in my book that was worse because they'd put my lack of confidence, stupid grin and oddness down to my real personality and character. In other words their opinion of me was that I was a complete and utter moron!

My monthly expenditure on cannabis was several times greater than my food bill. If I had to go without cannabis for just one day I would consider it an extremely dull and depressing day. On such occasions I would wrestle with mundane household chores and then glumly retire to bed ridiculously early. To go two days without - well it just didn't happen!

I considered myself the equivalent of a Skid Row alcoholic. I smoked at least twice as much cannabis than any of my friends did. If cannabis is supposed to make you euphoric and relaxed I should have been the happiest most chilled out man alive. Instead, I was close to the edge of despair. I used to admire '*social*' smokers and think they were so lucky to have only a little desire to get stoned. Unfortunately for them the shoe is now on the other foot. Almost all of them have reached the same wretched stage I had once descended to. In fact, they form part of the reason of why I wanted to write this book. Knowing that the benefits of quitting are far greater than I could possibly have imagined back then.

I am not saying that you will become like me or that your problem with cannabis isn't more or less serious. ~~The important thing was that my experience of cannabis was so unpleasant that I couldn't keep myself any longer that I was enjoying it, or that it was helping me in some way. I had reached rock bottom. It was my unpleasant experience that opened my mind and made me face facts.~~

Clearly it was time to think about cutting down or perhaps even to quit altogether. Trouble was that was easier said than done. Before I eventually quit I tried smoking it only in the evenings after six. I tried throwing it away, rolling only three joints a day and buying it only every other day. I tried using other peoples, herbal alternatives, alcohol and other drugs. I tried arguing with my dealer so he wouldn't sell cannabis to me anymore. I tried going away on a long holiday. I tried changing my friends, taking a college course and getting a job. I tried phoning the misinformed National Drug Helpline, or 'FRANK' as it is now known, but nothing worked. Some techniques helped in the short term but over a longer period the amount of cannabis I smoked actually increased. It was like being tied-up in one of those knots where the more the victim struggles the tighter the knot becomes. I succeeded only in becoming more of a junkie!

It didn't make it any easier when people told me that cannabis was a '*fun recreational drug*' and all I had to do was to '*stop smoking it*'. I knew I wasn't hooked on a hard drug but essentially, I might as well have been. I was fed-up stoned, but noticeably out of sorts when I wasn't.

When cocaine and heroin addicts finally hit rock bottom they have all the reasons in the world to quit. With cannabis the decline is slow and barely observable. Its squeeze upon our lives is seemingly very gentle. So gentle in fact we get used to feeling sluggish and stoned and forget what it's like to wake up in the mornings bursting with energy and vigour. Instead, listlessness, reddened eyes and drained skin tone become normal. Even when it becomes apparent we should at least consider stopping, the benefits always seem to be weighted in favour of continuing.

Such is the subtlety of cannabis most people have difficulty deciding if cannabis is their enemy or helpmate. The same drug it appears has the ability to soothe stressful situations and cause stressful situations by way of anxiety and paranoia. Likewise, cannabis appears to be a relaxant yet it's not uncommon to experience introspective self-doubt and lack confidence in social situations.

It's the subtlety of cannabis that also creates the confusion over whether we are simply in the habit of smoking too much or psychologically addicted to it. Whatever the truth of the situation is, it's all too easy to trudge through your teens, twenties and thirties permanently stoned; yet feel terminally bored and deprived of fun and relaxation without it.

But cannabis doesn't actually supply pleasure or any of the benefits we think it does. A case in point is '*the giggles*'...

7 The Giggles

Whenever cannabis is depicted on TV and in films the stoned character is typically portrayed giggling like an immature schoolboy in a sex education lesson. We accept often without question that cannabis and ‘*the giggles*’ go together in the same way as say Laurel and Hardy or traditional English fish and chips, but how often does cannabis make you giggle these days?

Have you heard the Sherlock Holmes joke of the time he went camping in the countryside with his faithful friend and colleague Dr. John Watson?

Suddenly Watson awoke in the middle of the night to ask the famous detective a question, “*What can you deduce from looking up at the night sky Holmes?*”

“Well, it is elementary itself my dear Watson, the apparent complexity of the planetary system leads me to consider the possibility the universe is populated with alien life forms”.

“No, Sherlock, you bungling idiot! Our tent has been stolen!”

I hope that joke raised at least a tiny smile or curling of the lip on your face. Well it made me laugh. Now, how would you react if I were to repeat that same joke again in every chapter until we reach the end of the book? Would it continue to amuse you? I very much doubt that it would. Even the funniest thing you have ever experienced would cease to make you laugh if it was repeated again and again endlessly, as is the case with cannabis.

In the previous chapter I mentioned the day I first took hold of a joint. I collapsed on the floor into a giggling heap. I didn’t really know what I was laughing at but I gave praise to the marvelous effects of cannabis. It was strange however; I could never get the giggles to return after I had been smoking cannabis for a while.

I don’t know if you’ve noticed but when you smoke cannabis regularly ‘*the giggles*’ tend to dry up. Only coming back if you abstain for a prolonged period. Curiosity and the psychological kick of playing with fire are all part of the first experience. But our bodies respond by building up resistance to cannabis so that if we persist we manage to achieve at least a modicum of self-control over the effects. In the beginning we can barely smoke an entire joint to ourselves. Several months on and it’s a different story, we can cope quite easily with two or more but the effect of giggling all but disappears.

When first-timers get the giggles they will typically laugh at things that are not expressly funny. Of course, we don’t know that at the time, we rather think every stoned experience will be funny (even if some of us were sick as a dog or had bad dreams the first time). Not surprisingly, we look forward to our next encounter with cannabis...

8 Social Skills

Cannabis tends to be a magnet for teenagers more than any other age group. It's also a time when socialising and the opposite sex are at the forefront of their thinking and amorous ambitions. I wonder how Romeo and Juliet would have got on had the romantic couple dated whilst stoned out of their heads.

Juliet: *"Oh, Romeo. How art thou Romeo?"*

Romeo: *"I is not takin' thou out tonite Juliet coz I is feelin' para' 'n' knackered mine sweet knickers."*

Juliet: *"Thou call me 'sweet-knickers' again Romeo 'n' I shall kick you hard between thy legs! How art thee knackered when thou hast done nothink but sit n smoke mine weed?"*

Romeo: *"Did you know mine true love that a shark will only attack if it is wet? You can walk down the road and be safe from it, innit?"*

Juliet: *"Oh Romeo, you are awful but I like you!"*

Romeo: *"I was trying to lick my own elbow earlier but I think it is an impossible feat."*

Juliet: Say what?

Romeo: *"Juliet, I has the munchies! Where art mine cake?"*

Juliet: *"Oh Romeo, I hope thee can forgive me. I swears I was proper starving mine sweet lover. I was as hungry as a big scary crocodile with only an ickle baby goldfish in its big empty belly."*

Romeo: *"Oh, cake, where art thou mine cake?"*

Cannabis doesn't improve our ability to communicate with strangers, friends or the opposite sex. In fact, it impedes communication often to the point where we become introvert, lack confidence or are too jaded to socialise. Sure there are moments when we have sufficient energy to talk the hind legs off a donkey. However, even plastic flowers will wilt at the lost in thought ravings of a pothead.

According to my friends, if long monotonous conversations were an Olympic event I would win gold every time. Subtle hints like; *"I really must be going now,"* and, *"Gee I was hoping to be home for Christmas,"* simply flew over my head!

But let's look beyond the drooping eyelids and the sagging posture and take a journey into the mirror itself. Substances like alcohol and ecstasy may lower inhibitions, but with cannabis you get the opposite effect. Dancing naked at dawn around Stonehenge or waking-up next to a traffic cone wearing your sexiest Calvin Klein underwear aren't effects normally associated with cannabis. Instead, the mind is a sensitive hive of activity.

In some people cannabis occasionally induces paranoia. (Not everyone experiences paranoia when stoned). Paranoia is a disconcerting state of mind that is characterized by anxiety and the belief that

we are in imminent danger. On the many occasions that I suffered cannabis paranoia, I believed the threat was real and blamed it partly on violent Britain. I now accept that the anxiety I felt was unnecessary. Whenever I was in a genuinely alarming situation I would go directly into panic mode and fall apart at the seams. Cannabis therefore lessened my ability to deal and cope with the real emergencies.

Even popping out for chocolate and milk from one of those all-night petrol stations can turn into a very unnerving experience. The adrenalin begins to pump through the body, as if expectant of a physical attack by the guy standing behind you in the queue who suspiciously resembles Freddie Krueger - but all that is taking place is we're stood in that queue waiting our turn to be served. Strangers and unfamiliar places are enough to turn an enjoyable social evening into an evening of gruesomeness found only in a Crimewatch reconstruction. I've lost count of the times I hurried home as timid as the fearful lion in *The Wizard of Oz*.

Paranoia aside, insecurities can easily become like an open wound as the mind obsesses over trifling matters.

Typical thoughts when stoned frequently include subjects like; who we are, what kind of person we are, how we fit into our social surroundings, or even how we don't fit in. As if switched to autopilot the mind whirrs away stirring up latent worries that exist on some level, but over-thinking magnifies them into larger than life problems.

Certainly cannabis is not a drug you should opt for if you are looking to improve your confidence in your social life, that's a certainty!

But perhaps cannabis helps to overcome boredom and helps us to be more creative, right?

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