

Hi Debra,

I saw the interview that you took part in on Newsnight last night. I'm sorry to hear about the problems that you have had with your son. I disagree strongly with the conclusions that you draw.

Your story about the decline in your relationship with your son and his change in behaviour struck a chord with me. I too went off the rails when I was 15. I even had an infamous party one weekend whilst my parents were away - somewhat to my embarrassment, it is still talked about 20 years later. The only difference is I didn't start smoking cannabis until I was 18. My delinquent behaviour was not a symptom of cannabis use - rather the reverse. Can you be sure that there is a direct causal relationship between your son's use of cannabis and his change in personality?

In asking for a tougher line to be taken with regards to cannabis users you are effectively calling for the persecution of people who are harming no-one except perhaps themselves. If your campaign is successful then the inevitable result will be that cannabis users will be arrested, will be strip searched, will have their houses broken into and searched by the police and some may even end up in prison.

Just stop to think what it is like to be taken in to custody and have your clothes removed against your consent in front of strangers and to then have every part of your body examined, every orifice probed. It is an extremely brutal and degrading experience and a defacto punishment that will be meted out with the police acting as judge and jury. Imagine what it is like to have your door smashed in early in the morning, to be dragged out of bed and then to watch your house being turned upside down, to have all of your possessions inspected, your most personal effects rifled through, your underwear, your diary...

Be clear that this is what you are condoning.

I no longer smoke cannabis. I gave up when I stopped smoking cigarettes and to be honest I never really enjoyed it anyway. I started smoking cannabis in part just because it was illegal. I'm that kind of person - tell me that I'm not allowed to do something without a pretty good reason and I'll most likely go and do it. I suspect that many drug users share my bloody mindedness. I'm not pro cannabis or drug use. I recognize that illegal drugs can have a negative effect upon health, but so can poor diet, lack of exercise, legal drugs like alcohol and tobacco and there are many leisure activities which expose the participants to considerable levels of risk: horse riding, swimming, recreational vehicle use, rock climbing etc.

I fly paragliders - a dangerous habit that verges on addiction. I have spent thousands of pounds in pursuit of a my flying fix. If the weather's good and I am unable to get out onto the hill I actually feel anxious. I know that there is the potential for injury or even death every time I venture out. Should paragliding and other similarly dangerous leisure activities be criminalised to protect people like me from ourselves? That is the inevitable logic of your position.

I feel very strongly that criminal sanctions should not be used against individuals to prevent them from doing harm to themselves.

Please carefully consider what it is you are calling for when you ask for the reclassification of cannabis.

Chris Kay

