

I am a very infrequent cannabis user. I smoke a small amount maybe once every month or so. It's very pleasurable and relaxing. I am 36 years old. I first smoked cannabis when I was 20. Prior to this, I was vehemently opposed to any type of drug use as I was well indoctrinated by the Canadian schooling system. I "just said no" on the advice of Nancy Reagan (We Canadians are heavily influenced by American television). I didn't want to fall victim to "Reefer Madness", I was afraid... Meanwhile I had no compunction about hitting the bars every weekend, getting smashed. I had witnessed first hand the ravages that alcohol can affect on people, and there were no commercials on Television telling me to put the bottle down. When I first tried pot, I had a giggle fit (I was at a friends cottage - a safe, comfortable environment) and enjoyed exploring the strange new experience with my brother and a couple of friends. The next few times I did not feel any effect whatsoever: I started to believe that being "high" was a myth. And then it started working... I began to smoke on a regular basis. Always responsibly: never whilst driving, working, or any activity which required even an ounce of responsibility. I usually smoked after work, before concerts, movies, rollerblading on long stretches of abandoned bike-paths, or even just alone in my room listening to music or reading. Being a long time patron of the bar scene, I was acutely aware that a drunk was much, MUCH more prone to violence than a stoned person (Stoned on cannabis, that is... Cocaine users are a whole different story...) I began to consume pot outside of bars and order coffee or soda when inside as I found the social experience of being high on pot was much more agreeable than being drunk. After a couple of years of almost daily pot use, I found that my tolerance for cannabis was pretty high, and it took a lot more to get stoned. My usage slacked off until my present state: Occasional usage, once every month or so. I've had a baggie of an eighth of an ounce since last September that I'm only half finished. It's February 29th... I have never stolen anything to "get my fix". I have never allowed my "habit" to interfere with my professional, family, or social lives. I have never considered violence in a stoned frame of mind. The most illegal thing I've done whilst stoned is the act of being stoned. (Actually there was some trespassing, once... I've long since repented.) I have found this page by a link from The Guardian where I read some of Debra's account. I sympathize with Debra and her family, but I think it naive to blame cannabis for her son's problems: It certainly reads like cannabis was not the motivating factor in his more criminal activity. I believe with all my heart that he would be a "bad apple" even while not under the influence of pot. I do not know this man and I can not judge his problems, but while pot doesn't help his cause, it is most certainly not the root of his problems. I believe that Debra has written her diary from the perspective of a mother who cannot come to terms with her son's shortcomings and is looking for a scapegoat. I hope with all my heart that Debra's son comes around, stops acting like such a prat and peace is restored to Debra's family, but placing all the blame on marijuana is a band-aid at best and will not make the problems go away. Thank you for taking the time to listen, I hope that you have the courage and open-mindedness to publish my story to offer a view from the other side.

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