

# Slowing Drug Use in America

Drug laws are not working to their full effect here in America. We still have many people that are abusing illicit drugs and getting away with it. There are a ton of addicts out there that use illegal drugs everyday and that are hurting themselves and others. Drugs usually destroy the body and even the physical appearance of people. They can cause harm to others because they impair those that use them so that their senses are not as sharp and they don't know what they're doing. They also hurt people to get drugs and that causes people to get hurt and some are even killed so that someone can feel "better" somehow. I think that the only way to slow this phenomenon down is to enforce a zero tolerance drug policy. I believe that this would slow down drug use and help people that use drugs right now and stop people from using drugs in the future.

Sweden has one of the toughest drug policies in the world. They have what's called a *zero tolerance* drug policy against illicit drugs. The main goal here is a drug free society. Drug usage became a punishable crime in 1988. They have had a major crackdown on drugs ever since. Some of the prevention includes wide spread drug testing, and the penalties range from fines for minor drug offenses up to a 10 year prison sentence for aggravated offenses. The condition for suspended sentences could be regular drug tests or submission to rehabilitation treatment. Drug treatment is free of charge and provided through the health care system and the municipal social services. Drug usage that threatens the health and development of minors could force them into mandatory treatment if they don't apply voluntary. If the usage threatens the immediate health or the security of others (such as a child of an addict) the same could apply to adults. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reports that Sweden's work has resulted in one of the lowest drug usage rates in the world and has significantly reduced drug usage in their country. The reason why this policy works is because it helps to find people that are on drugs and actually helps those people that use illicit drugs get clean. Instead of just tossing them in jail, they put them in a facility that will help them through the process of quitting drug usage. Another reason that this works is because a lot of it is mandatory. There is not a choice in whether or not someone gets clean like there is here in America. Most of time, druggies do not want to get clean and don't even try. They continue to use illicit drugs and spend most of their life in and out of jail. If they got help and quit using, this would keep them out of prison and probably free up space there that we need to hold criminals with more serious problems. I believe that if we adopt a policy similar to Sweden, then the criminal use of illicit drugs will decrease and reduce significantly here in the United States and help get our drug users off of drugs for good.

There are some people that would like the drug laws to either stay the same, relax, or even become de-criminalized in order to get better. After 40 years, the United States' war on drugs has cost \$1 trillion and hundreds of thousands of lives. It is simply not working. We cannot keep drug laws the same and expect it to get any better. We have not gained much ground in the fight to ward off drugs and stop the drug use. So why continue to waste money and resources on doing something that doesn't work? Some people want to relax or legalize drugs in order to keep crime rate down and think that this will reduce drug use also. An officer in the DEA said this, "Not only do these officers see the terrible results that their work has had on individuals' lives, but a lot of what I hear from beat officers and undercover narcotics agents is they've seen

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colleagues die in the line of fire trying to enforce laws that have no positive impacts," says Tom Angell, a spokesman for Law Enforcement Against Prohibition (LEAP) in Washington. "For a lot of them, this is about trying to keep good cops alive by repealing stupid prohibition laws." Some are simply giving up on our current laws in order to help others be safe. The legalization will keep crime down and especially reduce violent crimes in the United States. It will not be necessary to fight for drugs if they are legal and therefore keep the country safer. It would also save us money. The LEAP, in a recent statistic, said that the United States could gain \$77 billion in revenue a year by legalizing--and taxing--marijuana, cocaine and heroin. This would give us extra money to do other things and let us focus on other issues such as the economy and education. Another argument is that the legalization of some illicit drugs would free up police officers for more serious crimes. This would also help to keep our country safer and let the policemen be more effective in their work. There is also the argument that users will stop using drugs because it will take the "rebel" aspect out of it. There won't be that thrill for some people and it won't be as fun for them to use drugs if it is not against the law. Keeping drugs laws the same as they are right now will just not do anything in the fight against drug use and crime and I think that legalization is definitely an option to consider in the efforts to reduce drug use.

I believe that the legalization of certain illegal drugs will reduce the crime rate and help in some other ways, but is not the best way to handle drug use. Even the drugs that are legal right now, such as cigarettes and alcohol, are abused every day and are getting worse by my account. Legalization will only open up dangerous drugs to the public and hurt people. I believe that the drugs would still be widely abused and cause physical and economical harm to the United States. I believe that there is a better way to go at the problem of drug use in this country. If we use a similar program to that of Sweden, drug use will go down. That policy does not punish the user harshly, yet it doesn't relax drug use enough to let people be comfortable if they use drugs. It gives help to those that are addicted to drugs and help them get off of using. It stops them from future use and keeps them out of the drug life. This will reduce the future drug use of this individual and to anybody that he or she would have interacted with. This will also help to keep people out of the prisons. If they get clean, they can get out and stay out if they don't use anymore. If we can help people to stop using drugs instead of punishing them over and over again or just letting them do whatever they want then the problem will almost take care of itself. The future will be a safer place and illicit drug use will reduce significantly.