



Pot Stupid: I'm a Joker and a Midnight Toker — With a Low IQ?

“I once tried to light a joint with a fire ant, but what did I know? I was high on glue and in the third grade, just like grandpa.” — Jarod Kintz, *This Book is Not FOR SALE*

Pot is now hot, with many viewing it as just the Millennial Martini, no different than an after-work libation. But more and more, studies are revealing the straight dope on dope: Cannabis is a dangerous substance whose habitual use can lead to cognitive impairment and increased social ills.



The latest damning information comes from the *JAMA [Journal of the American Medical Association] Internal Medicine* (Hat tip: *American Thinker's* Sierra Rayne). First, a [group of international university researchers](#) found “past exposure to marijuana use to be significantly associated with worse verbal memory in middle age.” In the same issue of the journal, two researchers from the University of Queensland and Kings College London seconded this conclusion and expanded on it, [writing](#):

Case-control studies have generally found poorer verbal learning, memory, and attention in those who regularly use marijuana than in controls. The size of these differences usually has been related to the duration and frequency of marijuana use and, hence, to the cumulative dose of tetrahydrocannabinol received.

A New Zealand birth cohort study also found that those with heavy marijuana use over several decades had poorer cognitive performance than did those without such use.... Detailed analyses of the New Zealand study point to persistent use of marijuana as the most plausible explanation for the decline in IQ.

... Functional neuroimaging studies provide supportive evidence that those with heavy marijuana use have impaired cognitive functioning. These studies have generally shown reduced activity in those with long-term marijuana use in brain regions involved in memory and attention, as well as structural changes in the hippocampus, prefrontal cortex, and cerebellum.

... There are also other good reasons why we should discourage early and regular marijuana use by adolescents and young adults. This pattern of marijuana use increases the risks of developing dependence, which is associated with an increased risk of other adverse psychosocial outcomes in adolescence and young adulthood. These outcomes include leaving school early, experiencing psychotic symptoms, receiving a diagnosis of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, using other illicit drugs, and developing depression and anxiety disorders.

Next, Sierra Rayne reports that in “the *American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology*, researchers from the Baylor College of Medicine [found](#) that ‘marijuana use [during pregnancy] was associated with a significantly increased risk of maternal asthma, as well as preeclampsia. Infants born to mothers reporting marijuana exposure were smaller than their peers with smaller head circumference and lower



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birthweight at delivery.” Rayne also tell us of a [review article](#) from the *Journal of Cardiovascular Pharmacology and Therapeutics*, which warns that there is “strong evidence” marijuana has “deleterious effects on the cardiovascular system” that “are associated with elevated mortality.”

Of course, since smoking tobacco can have health consequences, both for adults and the unborn babies of pregnant tobacco users, it’s no surprise that inhaling marijuana smoke would have similar effects. It is warnings about the cognitive consequences, however, that are most often and most vehemently denied. Yet think about it: If something is known as a “mind-altering” substance — in that it alters our frame of mind — why would it surprise us that its regular-term use might affect our mind’s long-term function? Do we really think we can alter our minds, on a temporary basis but habitually, without risking permanent negative alteration?

Nonetheless, many will defend marijuana use by likening the drug to alcohol. Alcohol is legal, they will say, and the effects of abusing it are *far worse* than those of mainlining pot. Now, having watched someone close to me destroy himself with drink, I consider this quite true. Heavy drinking causes serious impairment and can kill a person relatively quickly, whereas heavy marijuana smoking won’t induce such an early death, assuming one doesn’t develop lung cancer or emphysema. But here’s where the argument falls flat: No sensible person advocates getting drunk (alcohol abuse).

Every proponent of marijuana use advocates its abuse.

In other words, responsible drinking means one, *maybe* two, alcoholic beverages daily at most; I and everyone I currently know drink far less than that, mind you. Tantamount to this with respect to pot use, however, is *one or two puffs*.

Of course, such a notion would be laughable to any cannabis user (non-inhaling Bill Clinton notwithstanding). It would defeat the purpose of using the drug, which literally is to get high — every time. Drunkenness via imbibing alcohol is more than frowned upon; it is illegal in public settings. But “drunkenness” is the aim when using pot.

Moreover, there is an old adage, “Everything in moderation.” It’s well known that highly immoderate alcohol consumption *can have* [seriously destructive effects on the brain](#). So what should we conclude about marijuana use, where moderation (one or two puffs) is out of the question?

What is not in question is the correlation between pot smoking and a host of social ills. Habitual use is [associated with](#) an increased incidence of domestic violence and hazardous drinking, and, when starting young, with greater welfare dependence and unemployment, and lower educational attainment. And while the aforementioned may be explainable by way of troubled people’s tendency to self-medicate, many experts do consider marijuana a contributing factor. As Mark Winstanley, of the charity Rethink Mental Illness, [put it](#) when discussing the drug’s “clear link with psychosis and schizophrenia,” “Too often cannabis is wrongly seen as a safe drug,” but smoking marijuana amounts to playing “Russian roulette with your mental health.”

In addition, regular pot use is [associated](#) with lower sperm counts in men. As for effects on intelligence, [studies show](#) that individuals who smoke marijuana during a number of their adolescent years suffer a loss of eight IQ points (more than half a standard deviation) from childhood to adulthood, and people who continue the habit over the longer term can show significant loss of IQ by age 50.

And if nothing else, one may want to bear in mind that, no matter how much pot is legalized and legitimized, its reputational effects can stay with you at least as long as the physical ones. As writer Kilburn Hall quipped, alluding to our commander in chief’s erstwhile “Choom Gang” membership,



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“President Obama smoked so much pot in college he never learned to spell. Which is why he’s confusing the word ‘ruining’ the country with ‘running’ the country.”

For sure, whether at issue is a drug-addled citizen or civilization, the reality is the same: Dope to change and hope — that’s what failures are made of.



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