

Once again we seem to be on the theme of legalizing marijuana. I was a youth in the 1960s so I have some knowledge of the subject and I even remember seeing the grainy images of beatniks in the 50s lounging in coffee houses in Greenwich Village. They always looked a little "far out," as the saying goes.

Those days seem rather far removed from the reality of our current drug-saturated society. As a whole we have more experience and more information about the use of drugs now, both legal and illegal.

At the same time, the drug product itself has matured. Marijuana and hashish are laced with poisons that one would not even consider keeping in the house let alone ingesting. As my daughter has told me, "Mom, this is not the flower-power weed of old."

One thing we definitely know about marijuana is that it is amotivational. Adding that little 'a' at the front of the word gives it the opposite meaning. It is the total lack of motivation that signals marijuana use to teachers and counsellors in the school system and to the parent who is paying close attention to their child's behaviour in the home.

You don't have to follow your child around every day to figure out what is happening. All the signs are available to you in your own home if you pay attention.

Poor memory is a by-product of smoking marijuana. In days gone by we all laughed uproariously at the Cheech & Chong depictions of the forgetful stoners and their laid-back antics. Now the laughter seems rather pathetic.

Not that we didn't have this information many years ago. As far back as the mid-1800s a man name Schroff experimented with the use of hashish. His idea was to smoke the hash and then make notes. Can you guess what went wrong? Exactly! He realized that when he was under the influence he could not take notes so he planned to do it the next day. On the following day he couldn't remember a thing.

There is enough evidence to establish that marijuana use takes away motivation and seriously affects memory. We also know that every youth who smokes marijuana does not become a drug addict, contrary to the fear-mongering message of that classic documentary 'Reefer Madness.'

If we imagine for a minute the effect a motivation-reducing drug that extinguishes memory has on a growing brain, I think we can come up with a reasonable answer to the campaign to legalize marijuana. Marijuana may not lead directly to addiction for some, but it is the gateway drug for others. The 60s and 70s proved that beyond a doubt. But even if addiction doesn't necessarily follow, what is the lasting effect on the brain, on the executive functions that support problem-solving and decision-making?

Legalizing marijuana is not a good thing, folks!