

Perusing the newspaper a couple of days ago in order to look for something in our Community ^{to} Comment ^{upon}, I noticed one front page article mentioned a young man who had been driving the wrong way on Broadway. He was apparently swerving all over the road; and when four lanes were not enough, he would drive on the sidewalks. He hit at least one vehicle and narrowly missed several pedestrians. Finally he was stopped by police and arrested. Fortunately, no one was badly hurt. Mr. Tanner Nutt, no kidding, that's his real name, was allegedly under the influence of heroin and other medications. On page three there were four different articles about drug use and abuse. One article described two separate busts in Eureka of persons who possessed and were selling marijuana, hashish, heroin, and other drugs. In the other bust, you can add methamphetamines to the mix. In Santa Barbara County ^{a boat} washed ashore with four million dollars worth of pot – which the dealers had abandoned.

Meanwhile, in Mendocino County, county officials and the US attorney for Northern California are squabbling over medical marijuana laws. And Washington State, which recently legalized marijuana, has ^{now} picked a Massachusetts based firm to be its official marijuana consultant. Then, there's the abuse of liquor: six adults were recently cited in Arcata for buying alcohol for a minor. I turned the page and read about the two Steubenville High School football players who were both found guilty of raping a 16 year old girl—who was reportedly so drunk that many at the party thought she was 'dead.' "The girl, who acknowledged drinking, testified she had no memory of the assaults."

Why is it so many teens want to get so utterly inebriated that they lapse into unconsciousness and therefore risk getting in trouble, perhaps humiliated? I am not blaming the victim: the young football players were at fault. But would it not be a safe assumption that the young men too, were drinking on the night when they raped an unconscious 16 year old?

The bigger question in all this: why is it that so many are prone to want to take a perfectly sound mind and take in chemicals that make us "out of our mind." Are human beings so disillusioned with life that we are prone to get wasted as ^a quick and easy form of escape?

The billions of dollars we have spent on drug prevention and interdiction, along with the countless billions spent on drugs themselves, continue to produce casualties that are much like the ravages of war... But I seldom see anyone demonstrating in the streets with a sign that says: "Clean Now!" or Stop the Marijuana Industrial Complex...

Yet, we continue our wanton slide into chemical highs of every type, destructive as they may be. Are drugs always bad? No. One of the ~~few~~ good uses of pain killing drugs can be seen, for example, in the palliative use of morphine for someone with a terminal illness. But for those who are young and vibrant, the proliferation of drugs, and abuse of alcohol, should be seen as nothing less than a national, indeed an international, tragedy.

This has been Dan Price for Community Comment