

LOSING THE WAR ON DRUGS

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Did you know?

- The National Center for Health Statistics reported 14,843 deaths in 1996 as a result of using illegal drugs. For that same period of time, *The New England Journal of Medicine* reported 16,500 deaths as a result of using anti-inflammatory drugs such as aspirin and ibuprofen - **1,657 more deaths than caused by all illegal drugs combined**. And that does not include deaths caused by legal drugs other than anti-inflammatories.
- *The Journal of the American Medical Association* reported in February of 2000 that the use of certain psychotropic drugs, like antidepressants and stimulants, in 2-to 4-year-olds doubled or even tripled between 1991 and 1995.
- In 1999, the pharmaceutical industry spent \$1.8 billion to advertise prescription drugs, encouraging a projected 21.2 million consumers to "ask their doctor" about a drug they were not using.
- A Merck-Medco Managed Care report found sales of prescription drugs in 1990 to have generated \$50 million; by 1998 that figure had risen to \$90 million due in part to a 30% increase in the number of users and a 34% increase in days of use per user.
- *Forbes* magazine in 1999 found that the top 12 pharmaceutical companies generated a profit of \$27.3 billion.
- The United States consumes 90% of the world's Ritalin, production of Ritalin is up 700% since 1990 and nearly 5 million people in the U.S —mostly children—are on Ritalin.
- Between 1990 and 1996, the number of children in the U.S. using Ritalin grew by 250%.

There is a legal, massively funded and astoundingly *profitable* drug war being waged in this country and the pushers are winning. The pharmaceutical companies have been educating our society, starting at an increasingly young age, to reach for a drug for every malaise, be it attention deficit, indigestion, headache, depression, shyness, allergies, insomnia, impotence or virtually anything that may trouble us.

For years, alternatives have been systematically repressed, ridiculed or legislatively barred from competing. We are creating drug addicts at the preschool level. We are barraged daily with the message that drugs can and should rescue us from every ill and then we cringe and cry "Just say no!" What hypocrisy.

The war on drugs must be waged in our own medicine cabinets. Adults must set an example that drugs are not the first option of choice, that many times improved eating habits, exercise, stress-reduction and other natural approaches will resolve problems *with time and commitment*, that the quick fix is usually no fix at all. Only when we change our mind-set as a society will we see any true progress in a war on drugs.
