Dear Alice,

I have been doing weed for about six months now and on occasion a few other drugs. I usually do it only on average three times a week and a lot more on the weekends. I feel that it is ruining my life because my concentration is terrible and my marks have dropped significantly (20 points). I feel like I'm in a dream all the time and it just isn't fun anymore. I have heard that pot is not addictive but I have tried to stop but I feel sick and irritable if I don't smoke up. I have realized I need to quit but I can't. Why can't I stop if this "soft drug" is not addictive? Am I crazy? Please help. I want my life back. Thank you so much.

— Permafried

Answer

Dear Permafried,

First and foremost, you are not crazy. Contrary to what many believe, current research indicates that people can become addicted to marijuana, especially those who begin using it in their teens. Additionally, some long term marijuana users report experiencing withdrawal symptoms when they stop using it. In this case, the feelings you describe could be the result of withdrawal.

You said that you felt sick and irritable if you don't smoke up. These symptoms have definitely been seen before in those going through withdrawal from pot. When trying to cut down or stop smoking, some people also report:

- Problems sleeping and frequently feeling tired
- Restlessness
- Feeling cranky or anxious
- Cravings
- Loss of appetite

Adapted from the National Institute on Drug Abuse [2].

You've mentioned that you find yourself continuing to use marijuana despite the fact that it no
longer brings you pleasure. Recognizing this and looking for help quitting are two very crucial steps — which you've already taken. Talking with a counselor or health care provider might be a next step to consider. There are a number of professionals who specialize in this area. There are also many chapters of Marijuana Anonymous [3], a self-help group modeled after the design of other twelve-step programs. Another option to consider is talking with a trusted friend or family member about how you've been feeling and your need for support. Talking with your dean or an academic advisor about the situation, even without specifics, may help you re-focus on your educational goals and get your studies back on track.

For more information about the nuances of addiction and dependence, take a look at the Go Ask Alice! Alcohol and Other Drugs [4] archives.

Best of luck,

Alice!

Category:
Alcohol & Other Drugs [5]
Helping & Getting Help [6]
Marijuana, Hash, & Other Cannabis [7]

Related questions

Marijuana made my heart pound [8]
Moderate marijuana use and health effects? [9]
Marijuana addiction? [10]
Drug rehab on the cheap-er [11]

Resources

Medical Services (Morningside) [12]
Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) (Morningside) [13]
Columbia Health BASICS program (Morningside) [14]
Medical Services (CUIMC) [15]
Mental Health Services (CUIMC) [16]
Student Health Service BASICS program (CUIMC) [17]

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[16] https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/mental-health-services-cuimc