

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a bikini, is sitting at a table covered with a dark cloth. She is holding a martini glass. On the table are various items related to cocaine use, including a spoon, a small bowl, and some papers. In the background, there are more items and a person sitting at another table.

# THE TRUTH ABOUT COCAINE

[drugfreeworld.org](http://drugfreeworld.org)

Blow Flake  
Sniff  
Charlie  
Snow

# WHY THIS BOOKLET WAS PRODUCED

There is a lot of talk about drugs in the world—on the streets, at school, on the Internet and TV. Some of it is true, some not.

Much of what you hear about drugs actually comes from those selling them. Reformed drug dealers have confessed they would have said anything to get others to buy drugs.

Don't be fooled. You need facts to avoid becoming hooked on drugs and to help your friends stay off them. That is why we have prepared this booklet—for you.

Your feedback is important to us, so we look forward to hearing from you. You can visit us on the web at [drugfreeworld.org](http://drugfreeworld.org) and e-mail us at [info@drugfreeworld.org](mailto:info@drugfreeworld.org).

# WHAT IS COCAINE?

The word *cocaine* refers to the drug in a powder form or crystal form.\* The powder is usually mixed with substances such as corn starch, talcum powder and/or sugar or other drugs such as procaine (a local anesthetic) or amphetamines.

Extracted from coca leaves, cocaine was originally developed as a painkiller. It is most often sniffed, with the powder absorbed into the bloodstream through the nasal tissues. It can also be ingested or rubbed into the gums.

To more rapidly absorb the drug into the body, abusers inject it, but this substantially increases the risk of overdose. Inhaling it as smoke or vapor speeds absorption with less health risk than injection.

\* In its crystal form, it is called crack cocaine.

See *The Truth About Crack Cocaine* in this series of booklets.

# A DEADLY WHITE POWDER

Cocaine is one of the most dangerous drugs known to man. Once a person begins taking the drug, it has proven almost impossible to become free of its grip physically and mentally. Physically it stimulates key receptors (nerve endings that sense changes in the body) within the brain that, in turn, create a euphoria to which users quickly develop a tolerance. Only higher dosages and more frequent use can bring about the same effect.

Today, cocaine is a worldwide, multibillion-dollar enterprise. Users encompass all ages, occupations and

economic levels, even schoolchildren as young as eight years old.

Cocaine use can lead to death from respiratory (breathing) failure, stroke, cerebral hemorrhage (bleeding in the brain) or heart attack. Children of cocaine-addicted mothers come into the world as addicts themselves. Many suffer birth defects and many other problems.

Despite its dangers, cocaine use continues to increase—likely because users find it so difficult to escape from the first steps taken down the long dark road that leads to addiction.

# STREET NAMES:

Of the dozens of street terms for cocaine in use today, the most common are:

- Aunt Nora
- Bernice
- Binge
- Blow
- C
- Charlie
- Coke
- Dust
- Flake
- Mojo
- Nose candy
- Paradise
- Sneeze
- Sniff
- Snow
- Toot
- White

You believe that coke will increase your perceptions, that it will allow you to surpass yourself, that you will be able to control things. It's bloody nonsense. After a while you don't pay your bills anymore, you don't wash yourself anymore, you give up your friends, YOUR FAMILY. YOU WILL BECOME DEFENSELESS AND ALONE." —Nigel

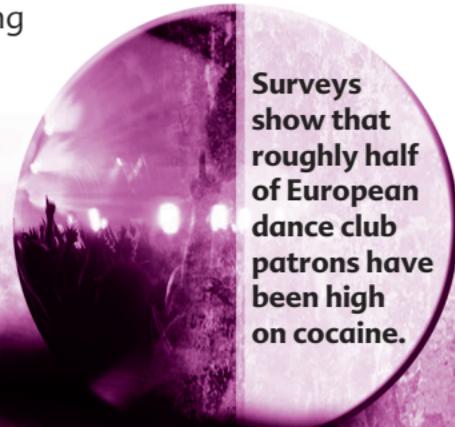
# INTERNATIONAL STATISTICS

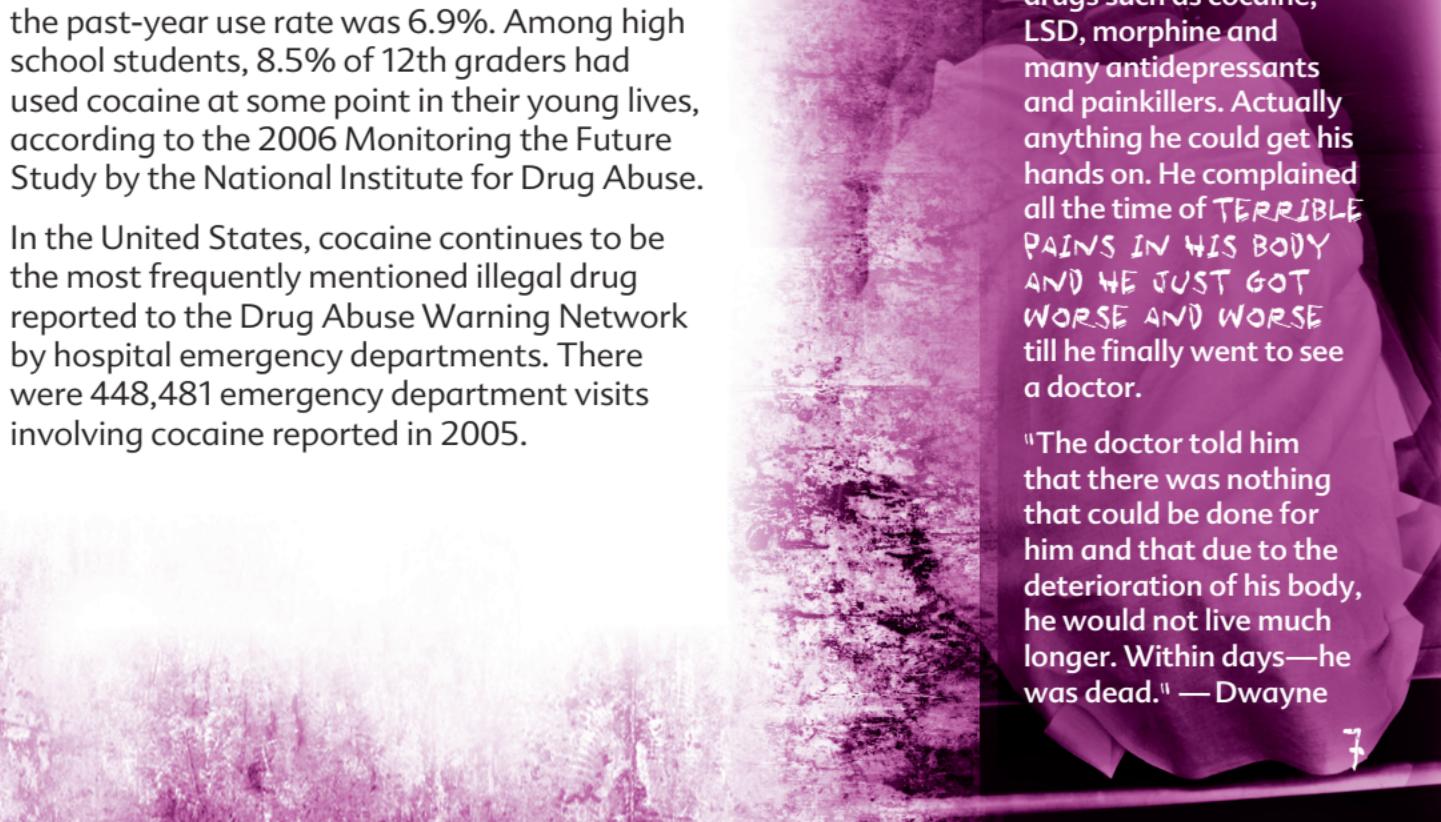
Cocaine is the second most trafficked illegal drug in the world. The most recent statistics show that international seizures of cocaine have continued to increase and now total 756 metric tons, with the largest quantities of the drug intercepted in South America, followed by North America.

According to the European Monitoring Centre on Drugs and Drug Addiction, cocaine is also the second most commonly used illegal drug in Europe. Among young

people (15 to 34 years), an estimated 7.5 million have used cocaine at least once in their life, 3.5 million in the last year and 1.5 million in the past month.

In the United States, the 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health reports that 35.3 million Americans aged 12 and older reported having used cocaine. Among young adults aged 18 to 25,





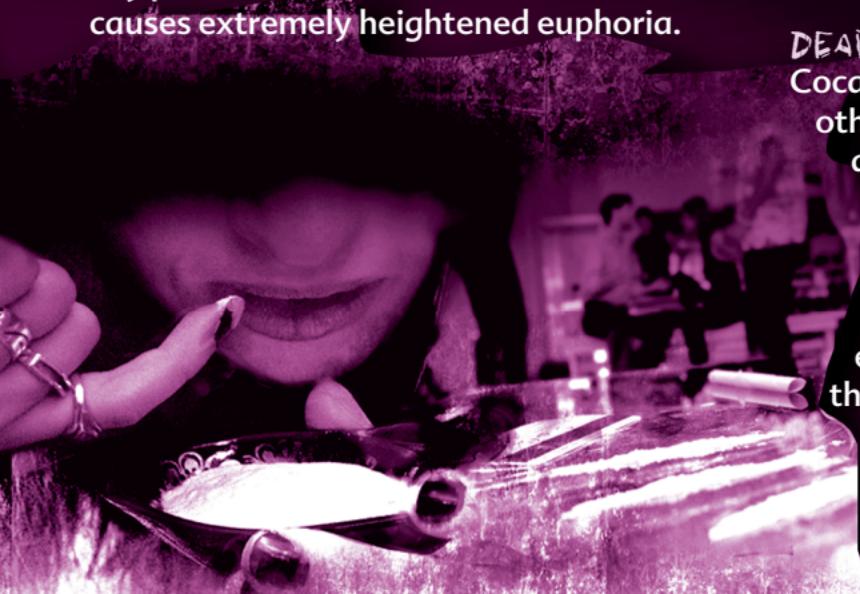
the past-year use rate was 6.9%. Among high school students, 8.5% of 12th graders had used cocaine at some point in their young lives, according to the 2006 Monitoring the Future Study by the National Institute for Drug Abuse.

In the United States, cocaine continues to be the most frequently mentioned illegal drug reported to the Drug Abuse Warning Network by hospital emergency departments. There were 448,481 emergency department visits involving cocaine reported in 2005.

**M**y friend was on drugs for four years, three of which were on hard drugs such as cocaine, LSD, morphine and many antidepressants and painkillers. Actually anything he could get his hands on. He complained all the time of **TERRIBLE PAINS IN HIS BODY AND HE JUST GOT WORSE AND WORSE** till he finally went to see a doctor.

"The doctor told him that there was nothing that could be done for him and that due to the deterioration of his body, he would not live much longer. Within days—he was dead." —Dwayne

# WHY IS COCAINE SO HIGHLY ADDICTIVE?



Next to methamphetamine,\* cocaine creates the greatest psychological dependence of any drug. It stimulates key pleasure centers within the brain and causes extremely heightened euphoria.

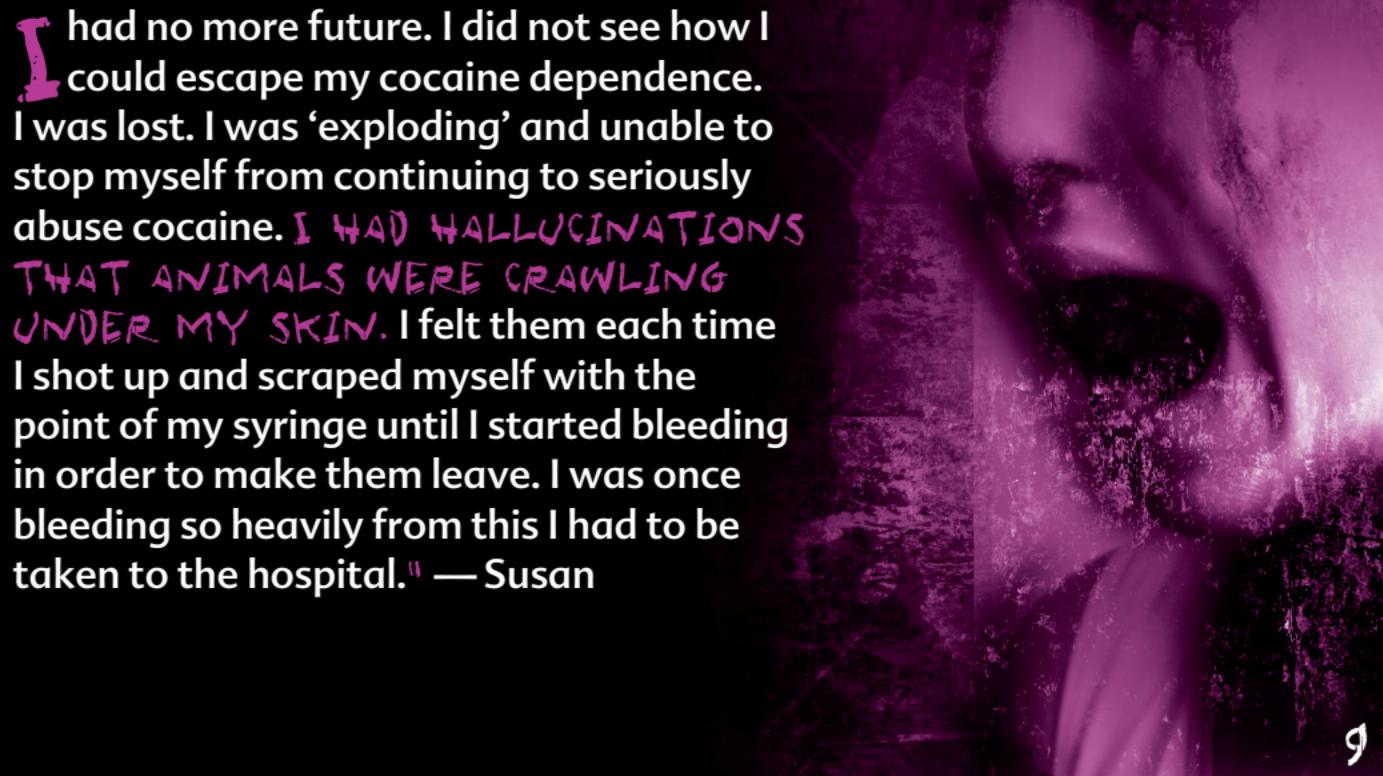
A tolerance to cocaine develops quickly—the addict soon fails to achieve the same high experienced earlier from the same amount of cocaine.

## DEADLY COMBINATION OF DRUGS

Cocaine is sometimes taken with other drugs, including tranquilizers, amphetamines,<sup>†</sup> marijuana and heroin. Such combinations greatly increase the danger of using cocaine. In addition to the likelihood of developing a two-drug habit, one can easily create a mixture of narcotics that proves fatal.

\* methamphetamine: a highly addictive central nervous system (brain and spinal cord) stimulant.

† amphetamine: a central nervous system stimulant, often called "speed."



I had no more future. I did not see how I could escape my cocaine dependence. I was lost. I was ‘exploding’ and unable to stop myself from continuing to seriously abuse cocaine. **I HAD HALLUCINATIONS THAT ANIMALS WERE CRAWLING UNDER MY SKIN.** I felt them each time I shot up and scraped myself with the point of my syringe until I started bleeding in order to make them leave. I was once bleeding so heavily from this I had to be taken to the hospital.” — Susan

# EFFECTS OF COCAINE

## WHAT ARE THE SHORT-TERM EFFECTS OF COCAINE?

Cocaine causes a short-lived, intense high that is immediately followed by the opposite—intense depression, edginess and a craving for more of the drug. People who use it often don't eat or sleep properly. They can experience greatly increased heart rate, muscle spasms and convulsions. The drug can make people feel paranoid,\* angry, hostile and anxious—even when they aren't high.

Regardless of how much of the drug is used or how frequently, cocaine



increases the risk that the user will experience a heart attack, stroke, seizure or respiratory (breathing) failure, any of which can result in sudden death.

## WHAT ARE THE LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF COCAINE?

The phrase “dope fiend” was originally coined many years ago to describe the negative side effects of constant cocaine use. As tolerance to the drug increases, it becomes necessary to take greater and greater quantities to get the same high. Prolonged daily use causes sleep deprivation and loss of appetite. A person can become psychotic and begin to experience hallucinations.

\* paranoid: suspicious, distrustful or afraid of other people.

As cocaine interferes with the way the brain processes chemicals, one needs more and more of the drug just to feel "normal." People who become addicted to cocaine (as with most other drugs) lose interest in other areas of life.

Coming down from the drug causes depression so severe that a person will do almost anything to get the drug—even commit murder.

And if he or she can't get cocaine, the depression can get so intense it can drive the addict to suicide.

**D**on't touch cocaine. I spent two years in jail because of this drug. AND WHEN I GOT OUT, LIFE WAS SO HARD I STARTED TAKING THE DRUG AGAIN. I know 10 girls who became prostitutes because of coke. It's much more extreme and degrading than we believe. At the time we don't realize to what degree it destroys us." — Shawne

## SHORT-TERM EFFECTS

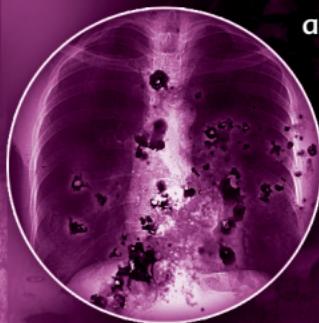
- Loss of appetite
- Increased heart rate, blood pressure, body temperature
- Contracted blood vessels
- Increased rate of breathing
- Dilated pupils
- Disturbed sleep patterns
- Nausea
- Hyper-stimulation
- Bizarre, erratic, sometimes violent behavior
- Hallucinations, hyper-excitability, irritability
- Tactile hallucination that creates the illusion of bugs burrowing under the skin
- Intense euphoria
- Anxiety and paranoia
- Depression
- Intense drug craving
- Panic and psychosis
- Convulsions, seizures and sudden death from high doses (even one time).



Cocaine causes heart, kidney, brain and lung damage.

## LONG-TERM EFFECTS

- Permanent damage to blood vessels of heart and brain
- High blood pressure, leading to heart attacks, strokes, and death
- Liver, kidney and lung damage
- Destruction of tissues in nose if sniffed
- Respiratory failure if smoked
- Infectious diseases and abscesses if injected
- Malnutrition, weight loss
- Severe tooth decay
- Auditory and tactile hallucinations
  - Sexual problems, reproductive damage and infertility (for both men and women)
  - Disorientation, apathy, confused exhaustion
  - Irritability and mood disturbances
  - Increased frequency of risky behavior
  - Delirium or psychosis
  - Severe depression
  - Tolerance and addiction (even after just one use)



# CHILDREN: THE MOST INNOCENT VICTIMS OF COCAINE

One often hears the statement, "Yes, I take drugs, but that's my business!" But drug use always has its innocent victims, from those who become prey of addicts seeking through desperate means to finance their drug habit, to those who die in traffic accidents caused by drivers under the influence.

The most tragic victims of cocaine are babies born to mothers who use the drug during pregnancy. In the United States alone, tens of thousands of cocaine-exposed babies are born in a year. Those not addicted often suffer

from a variety of physical problems which can include premature birth, low birth-weight, stunted growth, birth defects and damage to the brain and nervous system.

Low-birth-weight babies are 20 times more likely to die in their first month of life than normal-weight babies, and they face an increased risk of lifelong disabilities such as mental retardation and brain damage.

The impact on society of this human tragedy has yet to be fully measured.

# COCAINE: A SHORT HISTORY

Coca is one of the oldest, most potent and most dangerous stimulants of natural origin. Three thousand years before the birth of Christ, ancient Incas in the Andes chewed coca leaves to get their hearts racing and to speed their breathing to counter the effects of living in thin mountain air.

Native Peruvians chewed coca leaves only during religious ceremonies. This taboo was broken when Spanish soldiers invaded Peru in 1532. Forced Indian laborers in Spanish silver mines were kept supplied with coca leaves because it made them easier to control and exploit.

Cocaine was first isolated (extracted from coca leaves)

**What began as a religious tradition in the Andes has turned into abuse throughout the world.**

in 1859 by German chemist Albert Niemann. It was not until the 1880s that it started to be popularized in the medical community.

Austrian psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, who used the drug himself, was the first to broadly promote cocaine as a tonic to cure depression and sexual impotence.

In 1884, he published an article entitled “Über Coca” (About Coke) which promoted the “benefits” of cocaine, calling it a “magical” substance.

Freud, however, was not an objective observer. He used cocaine regularly, prescribed it to his girlfriend and his best friend and recommended it for general use.



While noting that cocaine had led to “physical and moral decadence,” Freud kept promoting cocaine to his close friends, one of whom ended up suffering from paranoid hallucinations with “white snakes creeping over his skin.”

He also believed that “For humans the toxic dose (of cocaine) is very high, and there seems to be no lethal dose.” Contrary to this belief, one of Freud’s patients died from a high dosage he prescribed.

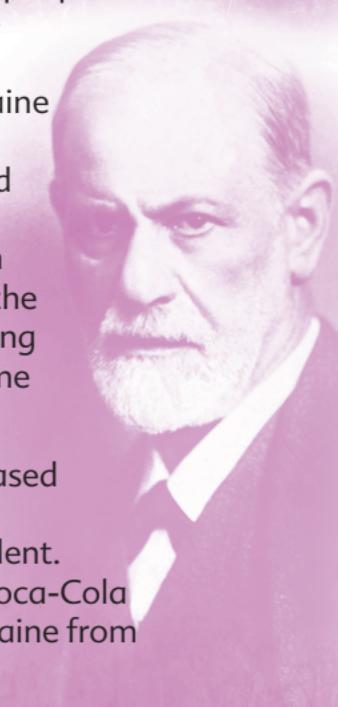
In 1886, the popularity of the drug got a further boost when John Pemberton included coca leaves as an ingredient in his new soft drink, Coca-Cola. The euphoric and energizing effects on the consumer helped to skyrocket the popularity of Coca-Cola by the turn of the century.

From the 1850s to the early 1900s, cocaine and opium-laced elixirs (magical

or medicinal potions), tonics and wines were broadly used by people of all social classes. Notable figures who promoted the “miraculous” effects of cocaine tonics and elixirs included inventor Thomas Edison and actress Sarah Bernhardt. The drug became popular in the silent film industry and the pro-cocaine messages coming out of Hollywood at that time influenced millions.

Cocaine use in society increased and the dangers of the drug gradually became more evident. Public pressure forced the Coca-Cola company to remove the cocaine from the soft drink in 1903.

By 1905, it had become popular to snort cocaine and within five years, hospitals and



medical literature had started reporting cases of nasal damage resulting from the use of this drug.

In 1912, the United States government reported 5,000 cocaine-related deaths in one year and by 1922, the drug was officially banned.

In the 1970s, cocaine emerged as the fashionable new drug for entertainers and businesspeople. Cocaine seemed to be the perfect companion for a trip into the fast lane. It “provided energy” and helped people stay “up.”

At some American universities, the percentage of students who experimented with cocaine increased tenfold between 1970 and 1980.

In the late 1970s, Colombian drug traffickers began setting up an elaborate network for smuggling cocaine into the US.

Traditionally, cocaine was a rich man’s drug, due to the large expense of a cocaine habit. By the late 1980s, cocaine was no longer thought of as the drug of choice for the wealthy. By then, it had the reputation of America’s most dangerous and addictive drug, linked with poverty, crime and death.

In the early 1990s, the Colombian drug cartels produced and exported 500 to 800 tons of cocaine a year, shipping not only to the US but also to Europe and Asia. The large cartels were dismantled by law enforcement agencies in the mid-1990s, but they were replaced by smaller groups—with more than 300 known active drug smuggling organizations in Colombia today. As of 2008, cocaine had become the second most trafficked illegal drug in the world.

# WHAT DEALERS WILL TELL YOU

When teens were surveyed to find out why they started using drugs in the first place, 55% replied that it was due to pressure from their friends. They wanted to be cool and popular. Dealers know this.

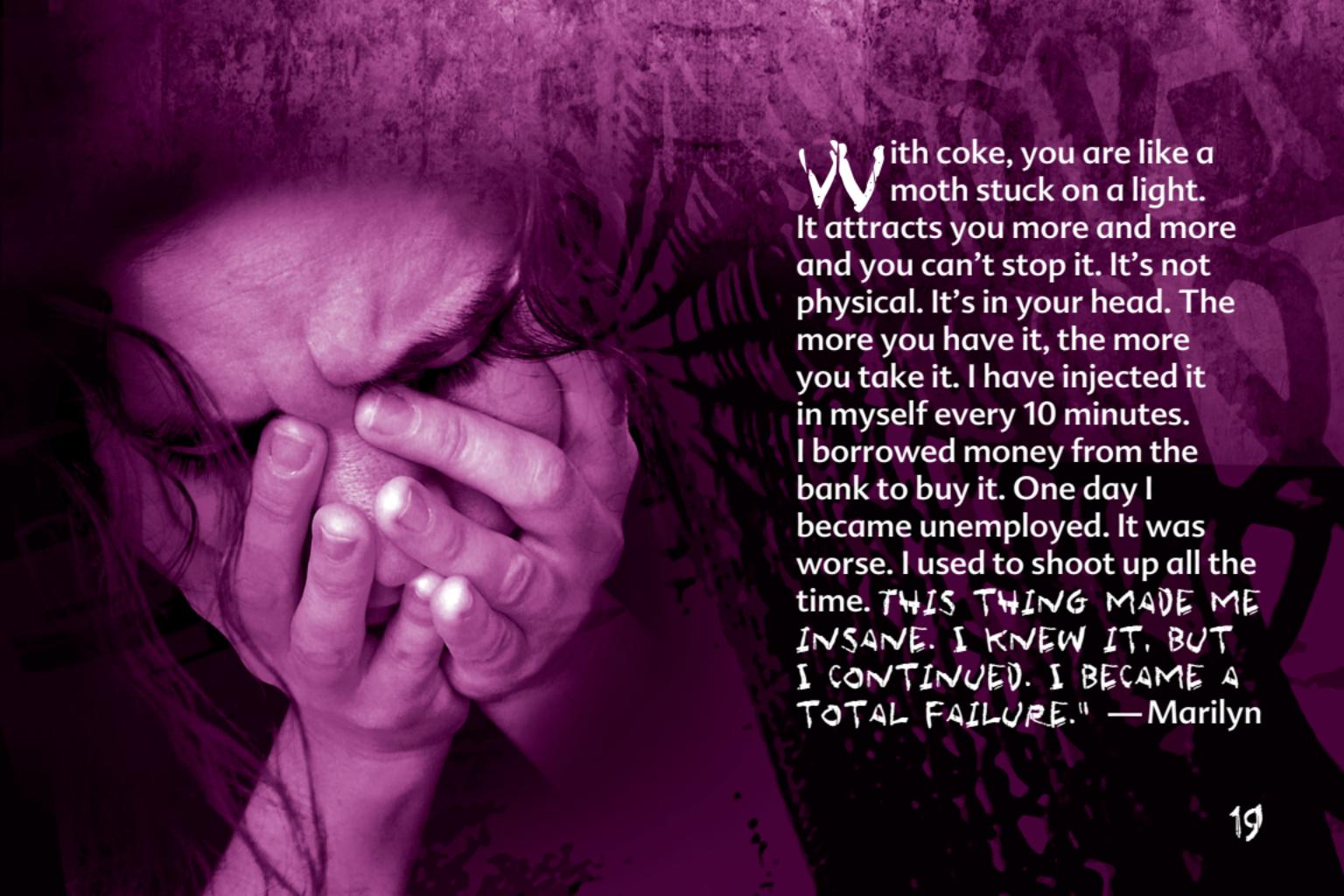
They will approach you as a friend and offer to “help you out” with “something to bring you up.” The drug will “help you fit in” or “make you cool.”

Drug dealers, motivated by the profits they

make, will say anything to get you to buy their drugs. They will tell you that “cocaine will make your life a party.”

They don’t care if the drugs ruin your life as long as they are getting paid. All they care about is money. Former dealers have admitted they saw their buyers as “pawns in a chess game.”

Get the facts about drugs. Make your own decisions.



**W**ith coke, you are like a moth stuck on a light. It attracts you more and more and you can't stop it. It's not physical. It's in your head. The more you have it, the more you take it. I have injected it in myself every 10 minutes. I borrowed money from the bank to buy it. One day I became unemployed. It was worse. I used to shoot up all the time. THIS THING MADE ME INSANE. I KNEW IT. BUT I CONTINUED. I BECAME A TOTAL FAILURE." —Marilyn

# The Truth About Drugs

Drugs are essentially poisons. The amount taken determines the effect.

A small amount acts as a stimulant (speeds you up). A greater amount acts as a sedative (slows you down). An even larger amount poisons and can kill.

This is true of any drug. Only the amount needed to achieve the effect differs.

But many drugs have another liability: they directly affect the mind. They can distort the user's perception of what is happening around him or her. As a result, the person's actions may be odd, irrational, inappropriate and even destructive.

Drugs block off all sensations, the desirable ones with the unwanted. So, while providing short-term help in the relief of pain, they also wipe out ability and alertness and muddy one's thinking.

Medicines are drugs that are intended to speed up or slow down or change something about the way your body is working, to try to make it work better. Sometimes they are necessary. But they are still drugs: they act as stimulants or sedatives, and too much can kill you. So if you do not use medicines as they are supposed to be used, they can be as dangerous as illegal drugs.

**The real answer is to get  
the facts and not to take  
drugs in the first place.**



## WHY DO PEOPLE TAKE DRUGS?

People take drugs because they want to change something in their lives.

Here are some of the reasons young people have given for taking drugs:

- To fit in
- To escape or relax
- To relieve boredom
- To seem grown up
- To rebel
- To experiment

They think drugs are a solution. But eventually, the drugs become the problem.

Difficult as it may be to face one's problems, the consequences of drug use are always worse than the problem one is trying to solve with them. The real answer is to get the facts and not to take drugs in the first place.



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Corbis; page 16: Freud Museum  
Photo Library.

Millions of copies of booklets such as  
this have been distributed to people  
around the world in 22 languages.

As new drugs appear on the streets and  
more information about their effects  
becomes known, existing booklets are  
updated and new ones created.

The booklets are published by the  
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materials, advice and coordination for its  
international drug prevention network.  
It works with youth, parents, educators,  
volunteer organizations and government  
agencies—anyone with an interest in  
helping people lead lives free from drug  
abuse.

# **FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW**

This booklet is one in a series of publications that cover the facts about marijuana, alcohol, Ecstasy, cocaine, crack cocaine, crystal meth and methamphetamine, inhalants, heroin, LSD and prescription drug abuse. Armed with this information, the reader can make the decision to live a drug-free life.



**For more information or to obtain more copies  
of this or other booklets in this series, contact:**

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