

'Drug Problem Aggravated By A Drug Culture ...'

WE NORMALLY perceive the drug problem as a youth problem. We tend to forget that our society represents a drug culture in which adults are the protagonists of illegal and legal drugs. It should not be forgotten that the drug problem has its genesis as an adult problem before youngsters become involved.

This is not simply because adults manufacture and sell drugs; it is also because they encourage their use by open or hidden means.

Young people try drugs after having observed adults around them. Many adults are also faced with drug and addiction problems. Drug abuse cuts across all age groups. Suicide rates by subscription drugs are highest among adults.

In a society inundated with illegal and legal drugs, sooner or later everyone has a personal encounter with drugs. The problem is that legal drugs are socially tolerated and are not considered to be of any harm to the human mind and body.

Alcohol is the most destructive drug known to mankind. Alcohol is a drug, not a beverage. In accordance with common custom, millions of people automatically

serve and consume alcohol whenever they want to relax, be sociable or celebrate. When is a fine meal complete without wine? What is a sports game without a few cans of beer, or New Year's Eve without a bottle of champagne?

Alcohol causes a lot of deaths; some of the victims are involved in alcohol-related automobile crashes. Others are victims of the violence that alcohol induces or the diseases that it causes.

It is the world's most abused substance; six out of 10 people use it, but still it is legal.

Tens of millions of adults and one-fourth of all teenagers over the age of 16 are addicted to nicotine, a substance that medical experts identify as the most addictive drug in use today.

Most smokers would probably admit that they cannot give up smoking when they want to; that they crave each successive cigarette and that the cigarettes they smoke are destructive to their health.

Despite its addictive

properties, few people think of tobacco as a true drug. After all, nicotine, the addictive component in tobacco, does not alter the perception of the user. Smoking a cigarette neither changes an individual's personality, not impairs his everyday functioning.

Smokers purchase cigarettes legally in a society that permits the advertising and promotion of tobacco, but the legality of tobacco cannot diminish its danger. Cigarettes are composed of substances that not only are addictive but also contribute to the deaths of people each year.

Internationally, efforts are being made to reduce the demand for drugs and therefore to work on prevention, but the drug problem is not the substance on its own, it is the personality of the person and the context in which he or she lives.

The context created by the schools and educators, the home and parents, the workplace, recreational area and the whole community.

On the one hand, the young person is receiving messages to say no to drugs, on the other, he observes adults abusing socially accepted drugs.

Even authorities sometimes do not fulfil their obligations, especially when it comes to applying laws regulating the use and sale of alcohol and cigarettes while they further benefit by imposing taxes.

Young people are being taught and shown contradicting values. We must therefore become aware of the responsibility we all have in the fight against drugs.

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