



CANNABIS **ON** CAMPUS

Changing the Dialogue in the Wake of Legalization

JONATHAN BEAZLEY
and STEPHANIE FIELD

ROUTLEDGE 

Cannabis on Campus

Cannabis on Campus is a comprehensive resource on the implications of marijuana legalization for college campuses. It is essential reading for college administrators and other professionals responsible for overseeing drug policy and addressing marijuana use in higher education. The authors use their considerable experience in college alcohol and other drug (AOD) counseling to provide a sweeping look at the cannabis culture found in our universities. Chapters alternate between historical context, research and analysis, and student interviews, providing an evidence-based and nuanced understanding of the role of marijuana use in today's college campuses as well as insights and recommendations for a post-legalization future.

Jonathan C. Beazley, LADC, LMFT, is a licensed substance abuse counselor and marriage and family therapist with 38 years of experience. He has done numerous presentations, lectures, webinars, and podcasts on various aspects of substance abuse treatment and prevention, many of which have focused on college students and young adults. He is presently the AOD interventionist at the University of Connecticut and has a private practice in Chaplin, Connecticut.

Stephanie Field, PsyD, is a licensed clinical psychologist in private practice in Glastonbury, Connecticut, and sits on the board of directors for the Connecticut Psychological Association. She has served as the AOD specialist at the University of Hartford and is the principal author of *Treating Traumatic Stress in Adults: The Practitioner's Expressive Writing Workbook*. Her specialties include traumatic stress, substance use disorders, and expressive writing therapy.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Cannabis on Campus

Changing the Dialogue in the
Wake of Legalization

Jonathan C. Beazley
and Stephanie Field



Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
NEW YORK AND LONDON

First published 2018
by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

and by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2018 Jonathan C. Beazley & Stephanie Field

The right of Jonathan C. Beazley and Stephanie Field to be identified as authors of this work has been asserted by them in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Beazley, Jonathan C., author. | Field, Stephanie Leigh, author.

Title: Cannabis on campus : changing the dialogue in the wake of legalization / Jonathan Beazley and Stephanie Field.

Description: New York, NY : Routledge, 2018.

Identifiers: LCCN 2017041537 (print) | LCCN 2017048493 (ebook) | ISBN 9781315160177 (eBook) | ISBN

9781138039117 (hardback) | ISBN 9781138039124 (pbk.)

Subjects: LCSH: College students—Drug use—United States. | Marijuana—United States. | Marijuana abuse—United States.

Classification: LCC HV5824.Y68 (ebook) | LCC HV5824.Y68 B4326 2018 (print) | DDC 362.29/50973—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2017041537>

ISBN: 978-1-138-03911-7 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-138-03912-4 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-16017-7 (ebk)

Typeset in Sabon
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	ix
<i>Introduction</i>	xiii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xvii
1 Tom	1
2 Cannabis, the Plant, and Its History With Humankind	4
3 Jack	31
4 The Culture on Campus	35
5 Nora	57
6 The Widening Schism	63
7 A Battleground of Facts	73
8 Nate	105
9 From Prohibition to Prevention and Intervention	108
10 Cannabis Use Treatment	128
11 Scottie	153

12	In the Wake of Legalization	157
13	Changing the Dialogue	170
	<i>Index</i>	184

Expanded Contents

<i>Preface</i>	ix
<i>Introduction</i>	xiii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xvii
1 Tom	1
2 Cannabis, the Plant, and Its History With Humankind	4
3 Jack	31
4 The Culture on Campus	35
<i>Evolving Attitudes</i>	36
<i>A Rapidly Expanding World</i>	38
<i>Campus Housing</i>	44
<i>Greek Life</i>	45
<i>Athletics</i>	46
<i>Legal Tangles and Administrative Headaches</i>	50
5 Nora	57
6 The Widening Schism	63
<i>Accusations of Bias</i>	65
<i>The Other Voices in Their Ears</i>	67
<i>A Shift in the Media Portrayal</i>	68
7 A Battleground of Facts	73
<i>Is Cannabis Addictive?</i>	73
<i>Does Cannabis Cause Cognitive and Learning Deficits?</i>	81

Does Marijuana Cause Schizophrenia? 84

Does Medical Marijuana Really Work? 87

Is Marijuana a “Gateway Drug”? 92

8 Nate 105

9 From Prohibition to Prevention and Intervention 108

The Science of Prevention 109

College Substance Abuse Prevention 115

College Cannabis Use Prevention 117

10 Cannabis Use Treatment 128

A Rapidly Growing Demand 128

Peer Support Groups 130

Motivational Interviewing: A Paradigm Shift 134

Toward Integrated Treatment 138

The Era of Psychopharmacology 143

Recovery on Campus 145

11 Scottie 153

12 In the Wake of Legalization 157

Proponents and Opponents of Legalization 158

Consequences for College Students 163

A Glimpse at the Future: Colorado 164

13 Changing the Dialogue 170

Moving Toward a Harm-Reduction Model 171

Prevention Strategies to Include Longer-Term

Follow-Ups 174

Increased Use of Technology 175

Focus Research on College-Specific Consumption 175

Understanding Them Versus Them Understanding Us 176

We Need to Talk Openly About Marijuana 180

Index 184

Preface

A few years ago I found myself being in charge of a game called “Stump the Expert” at a university-sponsored student information fair. These events are routinely held on college campuses at the beginning of each academic year as part of student orientation and are characterized by rows of booths sponsored by clubs and organizations, all with the goal of introducing students to the vast array of activities available. Others promote social, political, and health issues. Very often these groups will employ games as a way of luring students to their booths. I was asked to run such a game by the Wellness and Prevention Department, focusing on substance abuse awareness. As the university’s alcohol and drug interventionist, my attraction was named “Stump the Expert” and involved a “Wheel of Alcohol and Drug Questions” where curious students spun the wheel and read aloud the question selected. I encouraged each contestant to try to answer the question before I offered mine, lending at least some suspense and competition to the activity. One question on the wheel was, “Smoking marijuana is less dangerous than tobacco, true or false?” The official answer was “false”: an average marijuana joint contains up to five times as much carcinogenic chemicals as a regular tobacco cigarette; smoking four joints was the equivalent of almost a pack of cigarettes.¹ Not only did I know this to be factual, but I had been supplied a cheat sheet with answers as well (why it was thought their so-called expert needed a cheat sheet still eludes me). But I found myself nagged by one small problem, then and now: if this is true, then where are all the bodies?

After decades and millions of dollars in research grant money, we still have not been able to show a robust relationship between cannabis smoking and later terminal respiratory illnesses—bronchitis, yes, but not cancer or Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).² Meanwhile, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that tobacco is strongly associated with the deaths of one in ten adults over age 30 throughout the world³—not one in ten smokers; one in ten adult human

beings, period. The WHO further predicts that if current trends continue, tobacco, by the end of this century, will be directly associated with close to one billion fatalities. To put that number into perspective, and with a little research and arithmetic, we could sum the estimated total deaths caused by AIDS, World Wars I and II, the Spanish influenza pandemic of 1918, the Black Death of the fourteenth century, the Plague of Justinian, and even throw in the biblical flood and still not reach that number. Perhaps adding smallpox and malaria to that list would tilt the scale back, but the point remains inarguably that the relative dangers between the two substances would not be remotely close. And tobacco is a legal substance for those over age 18.

Despite this knowledge, I became aware of a reticence to inform students of this factual distinction. Somehow it did not seem right. In truth, it felt heretical. So, I did what seemed to be the only course available to me at that time: I waffled. While admitting that tobacco was statistically a much more dangerous substance, I quickly cautioned that it did not mean smoking marijuana was safe, adding that research was hampered by confounding variables—the jury was still out. I emphasized the potential consequences of breathing hot gasses and debris of any kind regardless of what research demonstrated and then educated about marijuana's short-term effect on memory and cognition. What I was really doing was not so much educating but trying *not* to convey the message that marijuana was—in any way, shape, or form—acceptable to use.

It was only later and after much reflection that I could pinpoint some of the origins of my discomfort. Among them was an early experience that I had almost forgotten and that involved my first exposure to drug prevention education when I was around 10 or 11 years old. Rather than at school, it happened at a church father-and-son dinner in the late 1960s. After a serviceable meal, probably consisting of some sort of chicken stew slathered over a couple of biscuits, we were given a drug-abuse presentation by one of the area policeman. Whether this was a local effort or part of a larger initiative, I cannot remember, for this was over 20 years before the onset of the D.A.R.E. program. The officer started by pulling out a fold-up display case with fake or inert samples of various illicit substances to inform the youth of what to avoid and the fathers of what to dread. This was followed by a film of maybe a half hour in length.

Memory this remote is always clouded, fragmented, but what remains with some clarity are images from a scene in the film about marijuana use at a party. The protagonist is a young male hanging out with other teenagers and young adults. The party is in a large living room, or maybe a finished basement, with psychedelic flashing lights and a soundtrack of canned mod music, all of which now seems a feeble attempt to make the message sound hipper to the younger members of the audience. The

narrator's voice is staccato-like and inflectionless. With an economy of words, he educates the viewers about marijuana, alternately using its street aliases such as pot, grass, tea, and Mary Jane. He tersely lists the initial effects of smoking this substance, speaking the words "pleasurable" and "euphoric" in such a flat, colorless way that it belies their denotation. The young man "tokes" on the joint being passed. The scene quickly begins to shift; the lights become brighter, glaring, flashing, as the background music melds into the sound of the participants' growing laughter. He takes another hit. The narrator's voice, suddenly grave, cautions the viewers that marijuana use will inevitably lead to another experience: "A bummer. A bad trip." At some point, the scene begins to change, devolving into something nightmarish, a depiction of hell from a Hieronymus Bosch painting. The laughter turns maniacal, the lights a blinding, rapid strobe; the music increasingly cacophonous. Where the surroundings had been previously mirthful, the hapless protagonist suddenly finds himself encircled by faces now distorted, grotesque, malevolent, while all he can do is close his eyes, cover his ears, and curl whimpering into a fetal position.

How accurate is my memory? I do not know, as I could not find anything resembling the film for comparison. Memory is not a faithful recording; the brain's reconstruction of events is never perfectly replicated and is subject to gradual loss over time. What is probably more significant was the lasting emotional impression it had on me. Of all the events in my life those decades ago, these scraps of memory were among those that remained. How influenced was I by this and other early prevention messages? Upon what sort of fear-imbued foundation had I built my own beliefs about cannabis and other illicit substances, and how was this influencing my work in treatment and prevention to this day?

We are now in the midst of a nation-wide tectonic shift in how we approach marijuana. As of this writing, eight states and the District of Columbia have legalized the recreational use of cannabis. Twenty-eight states have passed medical marijuana laws, over half of the United States. Throughout the country, there is an increasingly accepted belief that these states are but the first trickle in an impending torrent of statutory changes, all centered on this controversial plant, this weed. Where it is now legal, new cannabis consumer cultures are taking root and becoming part of the normal social and commercial landscapes. These states hope to earn millions in taxes and potentially win back substantial funds from those previously drained by marijuana's cost of law enforcement, judicial processes, and incarceration. The immensity of this transformation cannot be overstated: legalization would represent the reversal of a policy on cannabis that has guided this country since the 1930s, dismembering a major appendage from the trillion-dollar apparatus that is the War on Drugs.

For those who counsel college students, or any young adult, the conversation about marijuana has always been sticky. Discussions on the dangers of more heavyweight illicit drugs such as heroin, crack cocaine, or methamphetamine are much easier for professionals like myself. Even talking about alcohol is more straightforward from a health standpoint. The dangers are known and generally accepted. In contrast, cannabis is and always has been different. We may feel as though our feet are not firmly planted, our convictions more malleable. We may wrestle with a perception of hypocrisy—while an overwhelming majority of us can claim to have never tried heroin, far fewer of us can do so with marijuana. Persuading students who fully embrace the marijuana culture can sometimes seem like trying to achieve a religious conversion. We may feel like unwelcome missionaries: preaching a god they find absurd and even repugnant. Our literature, our research, our facts fall on deaf ears. These students may view us as misinformed at best or at worst as tools of a long-standing, immoral government hegemony.

It is our hope this book will start a discourse on ways to breach the divide. It is important that we continue to try, for many of the students we work with are convinced that cannabis is not only completely benign and non-addictive but unquestioningly good for them in any amount or frequency. They cling to this conviction even in the face of plummeting grades, failed relationships, empty bank accounts, increased anxiety, unstable mood, and lost jobs. To be heard more clearly, we must first *really* listen to them. We must examine our own filters. We must take an honest look at how we have been acculturated through our experiences with marijuana and at how it has shaped our beliefs, just as our students' beliefs have been shaped by their own experiences. We need to start this discussion now because as Bob Dylan, that Pied Piper of marijuana use in the early 1960s, sang: "The times they are a-changin'." And they are changing fast.

Jonathan Beazley
July 2017

Notes

- 1 BMJ Specialty Journals. (2007, August 2). Impact on lungs of one cannabis joint equal to up to five cigarettes. *Science Daily*. Retrieved July 17, 2017 from www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/07/070731085550.htm.
- 2 Tashkin, D. P. (2013). Effects of marijuana smoking on the lung. *Annals of American Thoracic Society*, 10(3), 239–247. doi:10.1513/AnnalsATS.201212-127FR
- 3 World Health Organization. (2012). *WHO global report: Mortality attributable to tobacco*. Retrieved from www.who.int/tobacco/publications/surveillance/fact_sheet_mortality_report.pdf?ua=1

Introduction

Over half a century since the start of the Information Age, we have begun to experience profoundly and personally the dark side of that era's vision of exponentially increased communication, knowledge, and productivity. As the universe of information continues to expand, we may find it harder and harder to sort out what is factual from what is specious. Complex theories are expounded on the internet, in books, or in other media—many constructed on a foundation of data that have been misinterpreted, taken out of context, or completely fabricated. The collective effect of all this reached a peak during the presidential election in 2016. Democratic and Republican voters, often sitting at the same family dinner table, argued to constant stalemate over the issues influencing their political positions. Both sides were armed with evidence derived from sources that did not intersect at any point, seemingly originating from entirely separate dimensions. In 2017, the words “alternative facts” entered the national vocabulary. In what may be the seventh decade of the Information Age, we also found ourselves in a Misinformation Age.

Students may be struck the first time they experiment with cannabis by the discord between what older adults have taught them and how good the drug makes them feel. Their friends spread even more doubt. To find some truth in this confusion, they look to what is being touted in the media. In our research, the sheer amount of conflicting information was eye opening and daunting—a dilemma that we will further explore. We hope to provide a guide through that informational morass to clarify the extent and effects of this ongoing debate.

In constructing this book, we sought opinions from researchers and higher education prevention and treatment professionals. Since this continues to be a controversial topic, some of these individuals are identified while others remain anonymous so that an honest yet unpopular opinion will not mar their careers. Chapters are also interspersed with interviews and shorter comments provided by students to capture the wide and diverse spectrum of relationships and experiences with marijuana.

Given the sensitive nature of the topic and to promote honest disclosure, students will remain anonymous with disguised identities. We are both thankful for and humbled by all their courage and candor.

Following the first of the student interviews, *Cannabis on Campus* will begin with a description of cannabis and a history of its evolution from an essential crop at the dawn of civilization to a controversial and illicit drug in most countries. We must revisit the history preceding our current situation to fully understand our present set of beliefs about cannabis, as well as how we came to this point. It has also been our experience that many working in the field of substance abuse prevention and treatment know surprisingly little about the fascinating and controversial stories behind this substance. It is not our intention for this volume to serve as an exhaustive text on the history of cannabis, since other writers have already offered more comprehensive and valuable accounts. We beg the readers to forgive the whirlwind tour; it is difficult to boil down 10,000 years of our past with marijuana into a single chapter while still providing something of substance. Instead, we employ a series of brief biographical sketches depicting key figures that have played major roles in influencing the course of how we view marijuana, thereby putting a human face on the history. Their stories are woven into the book to contextualize current issues surrounding cannabis prevention and treatment and how we can proceed moving forward. There are noticeably more “heroes” in the pro-marijuana historical pantheon, while several of those characters that orchestrated and enforced prohibition come off as misguided, or worse. We have tried to present a balanced depiction of the latter group. This overall bias suggests something about the available record. It could be that the pro-marijuana movement self-identifies as the underdog in this struggle, and underdogs in any major movement tend to cultivate Robin Hoods. Or it reflects a basic part of us that connects with those who defy authority—that is how this country began, after all. As Wilt Chamberlain—not enormously popular despite his immense basketball prowess—once conceded: “Nobody pulls for Goliath.”

We also recognize that the issues surrounding marijuana will change swiftly. Therefore, elements of this book will become historic markers within a very short time. This is inevitable and unavoidable with a subject this dynamic and fluid. The text required numerous updates before being finished. But any snapshot capturing a moment in time is important to the entirety of the evolving record.

Chapter 5 will be an interview with a pro-legalization student activist, and Chapters 3, 8, and 11 will be interviews with other student consumers from across the nation, each with a very personal story to share about cannabis. There was no intention in these interviews to ultimately arrive at some predetermined point guided by an ulterior agenda. Any moral to their stories will be the interpretation of the reader. We simply wanted to

give these students the opportunity to share their histories, their relationships, their thoughts, their fears, and their hopes about this substance that has played such a central role in their lives.

Chapter 4 is a panoramic view of cannabis within the college milieu: how students obtain, experience, use, and share it as well as the role it plays in the domains of Greek life, student conduct, law enforcement, housing, and collegiate sports. In surveying this landscape, we hope to show how imbued the overall fabric of collegiate culture is with cannabis use—how pervasive it is compared to years ago when it was a little-known drug used only by those on the fringe of university life.

Chapter 6 serves as a prelude to Chapter 7 and explores the multitudes of different information about cannabis that students are regularly exposed to and how these influences inform their beliefs. The sources of this material have their own agendas and biases; examining these sources should be part of any overall determination students need to make. The trick is in weighing those biases accurately. Readers already influenced by one side or the other can easily dismiss sound data as propaganda or embrace the latter as fact.

In Chapter 7, we will examine some major issues in the point and counterpoint existing between those who believe that marijuana should remain illegal, if decriminalized, and those that want it made legal to adults, regulated like alcohol. We do not intend this to be a polemic, nor at the conclusion will we declare a winner in the argument about whether marijuana is something beneficial or harmful to humankind. That would contribute little more than adding another contestant to the debate. Rather, we hope to provoke (re)thinking about cannabis during this period of great uncertainty.

Chapters 9 and 10 cover the past and present state of cannabis prevention, intervention, and treatment in higher education. As in previous chapters, we will describe how understanding the evolution of both fields as they pertain to marijuana led to our present status. Unlike other domains within the arena of health and wellness promotion, the fields of college substance abuse prevention and counseling have been influenced and entwined with its criminal status—fiscally, administratively, and theoretically—hampering efforts at meaningful discourse.

In Chapter 12, we will attempt to peer into the future, painting a picture of what this country might look like and how legalization could alter the present landscape of college campuses. We already have such glimpses in universities in states such as Colorado and Washington that have a several-year head start, and representatives from those institutions are already beginning to forecast what is coming for the rest of the nation's schools.

In the final chapter, we will attempt to consolidate the information amassed in the writing of this book and offer some recommendations

for improving communications between college officials and student consumers of marijuana. This chapter will be viewed through the lens of the psychotherapists (that we are), and our suggestions will reflect that bias. We are neither professional researchers nor prevention specialists—though we have a great deal of exposure to both and have delved deeper into these areas to prepare this book. What component we do offer is innumerable hours of intimate, often intense, conversations with individuals who use marijuana and other substances, much of which occurs in the college environment. We find that students, if given the chance, free of judgment, *want to talk about this*. Accordingly, as psychotherapists, we further recognize in our work that when our clients are unwilling or unable to change, hammering away at them with the same interventions and expecting different results usually ends in impasse. Therefore, *we*, as college professionals from all facets of higher education, need to self-examine and make a shift ourselves. Change our script.

When we started, we had only our basic theses and a vague idea of where our journey would lead us. The final objective crystallized only when we were well on our way. The creativity in the process was organic, exploratory. As Frank Gehry, world famous architect, stated, “I’ve always felt if you know what you are going to do in advance, then you won’t do it. Your creativity starts with whether you are curious or not.”¹ So, for our readers, we invite you to join us in the process.

Note

- 1 MasterClass. (2017, March 10). *Frank Gehry teaches design and architecture*. [Video film]. Retrieved from www.youtube.com/watch?v=8LwK5-yN_NE

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank all of the higher education professionals who took time out of their hectic schedules to provide essential insights into this book. I know how difficult it can be just to carve out time and answer emails. Secondly, I am also in debt to those students willing share their experiences openly and, at times, fearlessly. They brought to the text an intimate component that speaks in ways no amount of research or skilled writing can match.

Thirdly, I owe starting this journey to my co-author and colleague Stephanie, who over lunch one day, three years ago, suddenly challenged me with the following: “So, you want to write a book with me?” Taken by surprise, my immediate response was, “I don’t know if I have the discipline to write a book.” To this she responded swiftly, “Well, then, I guess *that’s* off the table.” Having been in sales long ago as a young man, I now recognize this gambit as “the old take-away.” When I backtracked with, “Well, let me think about it,” the hook was set. Well played, Stephanie.

Finally, I owe so much to my loving wife, Kim, for her patience and understanding as this effort consumed much of the time available to us outside our normally busy lives. Your days as a book widow are over Hon. Thank you.

—Jonathan Beazley

Thank you, Jonathan, for challenging my proposal. Your persistence through hectic periods of transition has been impressive and openness to learning with me very much appreciated. I am also grateful for the leagues of patience and support shown by loved ones. Dan, you too are a book widower no more!

—Stephanie Field



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Tom

“I actually started smoking weed kind of late, my senior year of high school.” Tom has a slight build and is politely soft-spoken, with dark hair and gauges in both ears. He shares an apartment in an old late-Victorian house just outside of Boston, typical of the places students inhabit in that college-rich city. The décor is classic college male, and so starkly functional. Chairs and the sofa are for sitting, listening, and watching; tables are for writing and eating. Beds remain unmade. Old plaster walls, in need of fresh paint, are intermittently covered with posters that might also hide damage from past renters. There is a singular variant: covering much of a small kitchen table is an impressive display of specialty teas. It is dark inside, the sun’s rays blocked by flags of various countries covering the windows, affording some privacy from passersby on the street just feet away. Levity comes into the living room in the form of a purring, flopping cat named Zoe, who is preternaturally friendly to complete strangers.

“My father owned a wood-carving business. He did the carving you see on some of the historical buildings in the city. He had intended on being a state policeman, so he was very against marijuana. Anyway, he couldn’t be a cop because he accidentally cut his hand really badly while working on a carving one day. He used to fly into rages—we both have borderline personality disorder, I think—and he would accuse me of being stoned, even when I wasn’t. I hadn’t started yet.” It becomes clearer as the interview progresses that the relationship with his father is complex, with intense emotions including sadness. “My father is an alcoholic. He’s not going to be with us much longer.” Tom states this as fact, undeniable and unavoidable. He does not linger on this subject.

We move on to the beginnings of his relationship with weed. When asked about the first time he ever smoked marijuana, Tom is clear about his experience. “It was right before college, on a drive during that summer. I felt the loss of anxiety that I had held in my chest. I think it helped with my depression. So, I started smoking regularly. I became more

social. It helped with sleep. If I haven't smoked, I won't fall asleep." This led to the question of whether he had tried any prescription medications for his insomnia, anxiety, and depression. He asserts that he had tried Benadryl and melatonin for sleep and was prescribed citalopram for his anxiety and depression. "I didn't like the effects. It was worse than the borderline personality stuff." As for other therapy: "I had seen a number of therapists as a kid and I was tried on a bunch of things that just messed me up." He adds that he also suffers from severe acid reflux, and cannabis helps him cope with that condition.

Tom now smokes daily. "I smoke a concentrated form of marijuana. I now tend to do dabs because I developed a slight case of asthma from smoking the plant so much." On the topic of dabs, he becomes the teacher: "Dabs are highly concentrated with THC, 80%–95% versus the 19%–20% even really good weed has. I have an array of devices to use it; it depends on the form I am using. There are the oils, or it can be waxy. I also use a lot of what is called 'shatter,' because it looks like drops of amber and breaks into shards." Tom confides that he gets this cannabis product from a person whom he watched process it. He describes this person packing high-quality marijuana plant into a pre-frozen large glass tube, with one end covered in cheesecloth. Butane is then pumped through the tube, separating active from inert ingredients. "Only the cannabinoids pass through the cheesecloth onto a collection dish, except for maybe 5%–10% of the plant material or butane." When oils or waxes are unavailable, Tom must buy whatever cannabis is available for sale through connections. The varieties and quality vary, but it is generally not a problem, because he has several friends who smoke regularly.

"When I got to college my smoking became an amplified version of what it was in high school." No longer having to co-exist with his volatile father, Tom paints a picture of unbridled substance exploration. "College was an incredible sense of freedom. I had this roommate who was very much into the pot culture—you could say she was a hippie. Weed was a social lubricant and I had smoked enough to be able to handle myself in social situations. Non-smokers became curious. I remember there were these girls who asked to smoke with us because they wanted to study the effects." Tom's voice becomes more solemn: "Then, further into college, things got darker." He describes moving into a place with one roommate who was a serious drug dealer. "We even had a gun in the house and if someone came into the house, we might have [needed] to shoot him." Tom admits to being exposed to a variety of drugs. "For a while I did a lot of MDMA, cocaine, and Adderall." Throughout this period, he was trying to write his thesis, despite blacking-out one time while high on cocaine and trashing the apartment. His roommates moved out. "I was using so much Adderall that I eventually got sick from uppers. I ended up being hospitalized after taking 200mg of Adderall. Alcohol took over at this point."

Tom becomes painfully open about his losses as his life spiraled downward. “I failed out of college and got real depressed. I became dependent on alcohol. I was drinking 151 rum, 1.75 liter bottle and killing half of it in a day.” Somehow during this period, he developed a serious relationship with a girl and intended to get married. “But alcohol and depression took too much. She left. I take full responsibility for destroying my relationship. I wasn’t able to really get my shit together.” After a pause, he becomes more upbeat: “I haven’t drunk in several months, and before that a whole year. But, I am extraordinarily dependent on oil. I can’t say that it is necessarily good, but it has replaced alcohol, amphetamines, cocaine, and prescription drugs.” He notes discovering that the combination of dabs and caffeine seem to mimic the effect of Adderall on his brain; this is significant, as he has returned to writing. “It took me years to be able to write without amphetamines.” Asked about the differences between what he uses now and speed, he answers, “Adderall made relationships with family and others difficult, dabs don’t.”

What does he like most about cannabis? Tom is unequivocal: “It is comforting to know that in a flash I can change how I am feeling. I’ve been very suicidal in the past, but it has kept me away from that.” He has considered stopping or severely limiting his use. “I have [reduced use] several times, usually for financial reasons. But friends have helped by pitching in.” He is asked for any negatives about his relationship with marijuana. “More of the social. It’s tough, always having it around; I have a lot of friends who are also fans. People will come over and expect to get high. I might not have enough.” He goes on to tell about a time when a friend, in preparing to do dabs with him, tried to break off a piece of some of the “shatter”—which did exactly that, sending expensive shards all over the room. Travelling is also nerve-racking: “How do I do this on the road?” It is clear that dabs create a lot of complications in his life. It is just as clear that he is not yet prepared to stop.

Tom ends on an upbeat note. “Lately, there have been a lot of positive things happening.” He has been working as of late. He is writing. He declares that he intends to finish his degree. “Having goals has been much more of a saving grace.”