



## Dealing with dope

Victorian Psychologist, Herbalist and Massage therapist Dean Smith specialises in treating anxiety, depression and addictions holistically. The Australian Practitioner's Fellowship spoke with Dean about his interest in working with cannabis users and his preferred treatment protocols for addiction.

After starting work at Windana Holistic Drug Rehabilitation Centre in Melbourne fifteen years ago, Dean began learning about holistic treatment protocols for addiction. 'I fell into it by default because the job offered me an opportunity to integrate my three main qualifications'. Although Dean had gained some experience with alcohol and cannabis use in other low-cost counselling services, Windana offered a full-time opportunity to work intensively with addicts in a holistic setting. Although in private practice now, Dean still works with clients struggling with cannabis, alcohol and pharmaceutical abuse and dependence

Dean believes holistic treatment is misunderstood. Dean believes therapies that work directly with head, heart, body and spirit simultaneously are holistic and have the deepest impact. Therapies such as somatic psychotherapies (eg. The Bodydynamic System from Denmark, Hakomi and Bio-synthesis), Gestalt Therapy, Emotion Focused Therapy, Naturopathic Medicine, Somatic and Body Process work all have had the most impact on his work. 'I have always been interested in getting to the cause of peoples problems and find characterological issues are commonly at the heart of most addictions', Dean says.

'Most dope smokers have been through several hoops before they come to me', says Dean, 'so they tend to be quite honest with me about the extent of their usage'. Dean's clients usually arrive in a crisis of relationship, employment or deterioration in their mental health. 'I usually deal with clients who have been using for ten years or more and smoke daily'.

Dean says the big issue with dope is the cumulative effect. Even smoking once every three weeks can be too much for many people, sometimes resulting in psychosis. Cannabis is a unique drug in that it has the ability to build up in the body due to its ability to build up in fat cells to produce a cumulative effect.

'One glass of wine a week has a negligible effect compared to one smoke'. He says if people have a strong adverse reaction to smoking dope in the beginning, they are not likely to continue using. It's the ones who have a less extreme reaction and where the drug fills a need in their life who continue to abuse the drug long term. He also insists that the real personality of the client only emerges four to twelve weeks after withdrawal. When this happens people can become very distressed and often lapse or relapse.

Research suggests a definite relationship between cannabis use and damage to almost every body system, including the endocrine, immune, nervous, heart, lung and digestive systems. Early studies on Vietnam veterans showed a lower birth weight for offspring, with poor immunity and general health. Cat scans on the brain reveal that cannabis use has a psychotic effect, even without an underlying disposition. The results are similar to a non-smoker with a psychotic mental illness. Therefore, smoking with a predisposition can definitely make a mental illness surface.



Studies on European soldiers found that the chance of developing schizophrenia increases by five-fold when using cannabis.

Having trained with Dorothy Hall, Dean uses Iridology to help determine the needs of the client. He says gaps in the nerve wreath can often be seen in many cannabis users. Immune system signs are common, with a darkened lymphatic rosary around the lungs (or nerve rings), throat and liver. Sometimes radii solaris also appear in the head area. Unusual symptoms with no obvious causation are a common experience for users, such as bleeding from the bowel, hair loss in definite round patches and ulcers.

Dean uses a six to twelve week plan for withdrawal using herbs, diet, exercise, massage, spas and saunas with meditation, relaxation and counselling. 'I always give herbs such as Dandelion root and St.Mary's Thistle', says Dean. Practitioners are advised to use detoxification and restorative measures for longer periods of time, even up to eighteen months to remove the cumulation of cannabinoids. Nervines such as Valerian, Passionflower and Skullcap may be required for sleep disturbance and possible agitation. Mugwort was a favourite herb of Dorothy Hall's specifically to repair any damage to the nervous system, particularly where delayed responses are evident.

"I agree with other practitioners who say addiction is a desire to achieve balance in the mind-body system. Although painted as destructive, addictions are often the best strategy the person has at the time to get through a situation. It serves a purpose. It's the drug they choose which is interesting to me and the void it has filled in their life. The problem is, most drugs work very well for these people in their lives in the short-term. However, dependency sets in and the multiple issues following it cause many long term problems. Dope is often used to cope with many emotions like fear, anger, trauma, anxiety and depression, although the result is never positive. Individuals need to become more creative during their treatment and learn how to deal with all the things in life that dope use to help them block out.

For further information about how Dean works with addictions he can be contacted on 9384 2700.