**Essential revision: RELIGIOUS ATTITUDES TO DRUG ABUSE**

What is a **drug**?

A drug is a substance which, when taken, affects the body or mind

What are **prescription drugs**?

Drugs legally obtained only with a doctor’s consent e.g. painkillers

What is **drug abuse**?

Using drugs in a way that harms the user

What are **social drugs**?

These are legal drugs such as alcohol, nicotine and caffeine etc. which are still addictive but age controlled

What are **illegal drugs**?

Illegal drugs are drugs which are against the law to possess, sell or use e.g. **heroine**, **cannabis**, cocaine, LSD etc.

Why do people take them?

* Addiction e.g. heroine
* Enjoyment (the ‘buzz’)
* Peer pressure (mixing with people who take and deal)
* Copying role models e.g. pop stars/actors etc.
* Think it helps improve poor self-esteem
* Coping mechanism (e.g. crisis in life)
* “It’s my life and I’ll do what I want with it”
* Drugs which are natural (Rastafarians use this logic when justifying smoking cannabis)

What *can* illegal drugs do to people?

* Negative effects on health e.g. strain put on the heart/smoking links with cancer/psychological effects (some studies link cannabis use to Schizophrenia)
* Effects on motivation/inter-personal relationships and ability to function at work
* Affect the ability to drive
* Lead to crime if addict cannot function at work and therefore afford them
* Dominate family life and probably hurt family members ending up in family disowning them e.g. after stealing/theft

What are religious attitudes to illegal drugs?

* Buddhism, Islam and Sikhism forbid use of illegal drugs (same reasons as alcohol and tobacco)
* Christians teach against their use because of the harm to individual, family and society
* Jews state that their use is breaking the law, encourages a lack of self-control and causes harm (although Jews and Christians believe in compassion i.e. help should be given to addicts)

Should people who take illegal drugs be punished?

**Agree**

* Illegal drugs are against the law so users should be punished by the law
* All religionsinsist believers obey the law
* With punishment comes chance of rehabilitation which isin line with religious beliefs
* Punishment could provide supervision and a structure tohelp users
* Many users harm others whilst under the influence of drugs or in acquiringmoney to buy them and this should lead to punishment
* Forgiveness does notmean no punishment

**Other views**

* Helping users to come off drugs is a long term solution leading to a normal life and ismore constructive than punishment
* Religious people should help anybody in need e.g. love your neighbor etc. and this is more important than punishment
* Addiction can be seenas an illness which can be cured rather than punished /punishment achieves little
* People will be punished by God?

Religious attitudes to drinking alcohol and smoking tobacco

* Buddhism does not allow the use of alcohol or tobacco because of the potential harm to the user and others, potentially creating bad karma.
* Hinduism allows smoking and drinking alcohol, as long as users don’t become dependent
* In Islam, alcohol is completely forbidden (haram) because it makes the mind unfit to concentrate on Allah and the duties involved in being a Muslim
* Many Muslims do not smoke because they do not want to harm the body Allah gave them (like Christians) but is only actually forbidden during Ramadan
* Judaism and most of the Christian Church allow the drinking of alcohol in moderation (used in Holy Communion)

Why do religious believers disagree with drink driving?

* Can cause accidents which can be fatal
* Illegal and religions expect followers to obey the law
* Antisocial
* Lack of care for others
* Religion prohibits killing or harming
* Concern for life
* Love your neighbour
* Sanctity of life
* Alcohol is haram and the mother of all vices (Islam)

Should religious believers only use medically prescribed drugs?

* All religions permit the taking of medically prescribed drugs
* They are legal so religions are happy with this
* Intention of taking them is to do good not harm
* Ideas of sanctity and quality of life
* God inspired scientists to invent medically prescribed drugs
* Most come from natural sources
* They are taken under medical supervision and are therefore safer
* Some concern about testing on animals in development of the drugs
* Taking medically prescribed drugs is unnatural and may be against God’s wishes
* Should rely on God for healing

Religious beliefs and teachings about the mind and body

* One of the main reasons for not using or prohibiting the use of illegal drugs is because of concern over the detrimental effect they have on the mind and body (physical and mental health)
* All mainstream religions believe that illegal drugs create false illusions and make meditation and prayer more difficult.
* Self harm of body and mind which drugs cause is also against teachings of each religion. None of the 6 religions permit the taking of illegal drugs apart from a few Hindu Sadhus and Nihang Sikhs who both take bhang – derived from hemp and the Ethiopian Coptic Christian Church which permits cannabis use. Rastafarians also allow cannabis because it is a herb given to us by God.