

NEW YORK MAGAZINE

LETTER TO THE
EDITOR

JUNE 17, 1985

The Agony and the Ecstasy

I AM THE "PSYCHEDELIC CHEERLEADER" in Joe Klein's article about MDMA ("The New Drug They Call 'Ecstasy.'" May 20). I'm also the son of a physician who administers an in-patient drug-abuse-treatment facility. If it seems I proselytize or cheerlead, it is for more effective methods of healing, not for the use of the drugs themselves.

Mental illness in the U.S. costs about \$100 billion each year. This figure also represents massive suffering. How can we afford to throw away a very promising adjunct to psychotherapy? It was suggested that the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Food and Drug Administration want to put MDMA in Schedule I because they care about the long-term effects of the drug. Putting it in Schedule I may effectively end research. In an effort to replace fear with facts, the Earth Metabolic Design Foundation sponsored an MDMA human-physiology study. Of the 25 subjects who took an average of about 125 milligrams of MDMA on October 20, 1984, none was found by physicians to have suffered any damage, either from that single dosage or from the cumulative effect of an average of 8.5 experiences per experimental subject. This is not to say that MDMA is safe, only that it doesn't appear to cause damage within the parameters we tested for. The evidence from the street—where there have been about a million administrations of MDMA since the early 1970s—has also been reassuring.

I do not condemn recreational use *per se*, because the therapeutic-recreation dichotomy is a false one. Norman Cousins needed laughter and recreation in his successful battle with his illness. MDMA may be useful therapeutically and "recreationally," but it should never be used casually. Contributions for the work of Earth Metabolic Design Foundation have come from many people whose lives have been improved by therapists and researchers using MDMA and from those who simply want to know more about the relationship between consciousness and health. I am not responsible for personally financing this work. An estimated five years and \$10 million will be needed to investigate the healing potential of such compounds as MDMA within the FDA's testing requirements. It is my hope that medical foundations, the government, and the public will join to support this research.

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Editor's note: The government has apparently decided not to support the research. On May 31, it announced that on July 1 MDMA would be placed in Schedule I, which is reserved for the most dangerous drugs.