

I GREW UP during the final years of the Cold War. Being artistically inclined, and with a penchant for reading fantasy and fairy tales, I was curious about visionary drugs. But not knowing at the time that LSD is physiologically safe, and believing the anti-drug propaganda I heard during my pre-teen years that told me “acid” would fry my brain, I decided that it really should only be taken at the end of one’s life. So I figured when I heard that the Russians were going to nuke the USA, I would pop a hit right before the end. Ah, misguided youth; these days I can’t imagine a worse scenario for an acid trip.

The first topical book that I saw was Schultes and Hofmann’s 1979 *Plants of the Gods*. I suspected that my parents would not approve of this tome, so I didn’t purchase the book, but rather just read it when I visited the bookstore. Then it went out-of-print, and shortly thereafter the whole “drug books” section vanished entirely! This was during what Jonathan Ott calls the “Reagan/Bush Dark Ages.” Nancy’s “Just Say No” slogan pressured bookstores to stop carrying titles that “promoted” illicit substances. My sojourns to Tower Books for drug education were brought to an abrupt halt. Left with no access to information, eventually the only recourse seemed to be to hunt down the drugs themselves.

I took LSD for the first time when I was 17. It wasn’t anything like what I had expected, but it was entirely fascinating. While I can count the occasions I smoked *Cannabis* during my high school years on one hand, I took LSD many times. Both the good and the bad trips provided psychological insights that were highly valuable in helping me to form my identity. Primarily, they allowed me to realize that a life spent in pursuit of materialistic goals was an absurd waste of time, as well as being harmful to people and the planet.

Kids growing up these days don’t have the same problems that I had in obtaining information. We are currently witnessing the first generation of youth who have lived most of their lives plugged in to the Internet, able to access all manner of good and bad information about drugs. Having access to realistic data from sites like Erowid allows today’s youth to realize at an early age that the “drug education” they receive in school is largely inaccurate. Consequently, when I interacted with some of these kids while working on this issue of the *Bulletin*, I

was quite impressed by the scope of knowledge that they had and the sophisticated approach that they took toward the topic. I was surprised to find myself with a hopeful outlook. Kids these days *are* getting a decent education on the topic of drugs—not in the classroom perhaps, but on their own by visiting web sites. And of course there has recently been a Renaissance in publishing on the topic, so the book store is once again a reasonable tool.

I was also impressed by some of the teenagers I spoke with whose parents openly use psychedelics. These kids stated that, although they have an interest in drugs, they have decided to wait until they get older to try them. Perhaps this is an example of a “if the parents are Democrats, the kids will be Republicans” type of rebellion.

Ironically, the best way to keep your kids off drugs may be to use them yourself.

Coming of age frequently does include some acts of rebellion against adults or established society. Becoming an adult is largely about asserting independence. Making one’s own choice rather than blindly following what one is told is an important step in the growth of an individual. Breaking the

laws prohibiting certain drugs can be seen as a part of this process. Yet it is much easier for kids to adopt an attitude of disrespect for *all* laws when they feel that they have been lied to by adults. Hence, it is important to be truthful with children.

My own daughter just turned five years old. She is blissfully unaware of most of the world’s problems. As our nation offensively bombed Iraq, she didn’t see the horrors up close on TV; instead she watched her *Shrek* DVD. Similarly, at the moment, she has no real concept of illicit drugs. For her, “drugs” come in sickly sweet “cherry” and “bubblegum” flavored syrups—cold medicines and antibiotics. Needles carry vaccines rather than vacations. At this point in her life, there are few questions about drugs that need to be fielded. But as the topic arises, I will strive to make high-quality fact-based information available. I will be honest with her about my own past use and my belief in the importance of cultivating a responsible attitude. If she trusts me, she will be more likely to come to me when she has questions or problems.

— Jon Hanna, Editor

