

HipPocrates

Eugene Schoenfeld M.D.

1970



Dr. Eugene Schoenfeld speaking at Community Arts Auditorium, May 28, 1969 at a benefit for Open City.
Photo: Alan Gotkin.

Dear Dr. Schoenfeld:

To be blunt, I'm scared. I was smoking some grass about 3 weeks ago and I started to feel dizzy. Next thing I remember is waking up on the floor and being told I'd been unconscious about 7 minutes.

This wouldn't bug me so much except that I can remember coming close to blacking out 4 times when I was younger: in pre-school, at the blackboard in a writing class in the third grade, at confirmation when I was about 11, and at a wedding when I was about 15.

All of the times I've fainted were when I was very uptight, like wanting to be somewhere else, so I've usually figured it's just some psychological trip—like I shut myself off when I'm threatened.

Do you think seeing a head doctor would do any good? I can't afford a private doctor.

Answer: Recently I treated a student for bizarre symptoms after he'd smoked marijuana from a waterpipe with a group of friends. He had been noncommunicative for several hours before being brought to the hospital.

When I first saw him he was lying on the floor face down trying to crawl away from his friends. Then he crawled into a corner under a stretcher, obviously terrified. He couldn't be talked down (as most people can on bad trips) so I had the nurse give him a tranquilizer by injection. Within a few minutes, long before the effects of the tranquilizer could have taken effect, he was responding in a normal manner.

The student told me similar experiences had occurred before he had ever used marijuana. I referred him to a neurologist to determine whether any physical cause could be found for his behavior.

You should have a thorough physical examination soon. Perhaps you are eligible for private medical care through one of the welfare programs even if you are otherwise self-supporting. Call your county welfare department to learn whether you qualify as a "medical indigent."

Dear Dr. Schoenfeld:

Recently, our area has been bombarded with a spot radio commercial “presented in the public interest by the AMA” regarding marijuana, which refers to it as a “noxious weed,” implies that its use could lead to mental disorders and ends with the exhortation that “minds are for thinking, not fumigating.”

What is your opinion of this sort of advertising on the part of the AMA?

Answer: Marijuana is neither a noxious weed nor a harmless flower. Most people find its effects beneficial or merely enjoyable when used in moderation. Others receive no effect from the drug, bum out or, in rare cases, become temporarily psychotic. The same description could be given to alcohol.

The AMA marijuana message is considered by some to be an anti-drug induced distortion of reality.

Dear Dr. Schoenfeld:

Would you please tell me why a condom sometimes breaks during intercourse? I had this experience lately and was uptight about it—don’t want pregnancy.

Was I too vigorous? Should I wait until just prior to orgasm to put it on or should I put it on before entry as I have been doing?

Answer: Sometimes the pre-ejaculatory fluid contains large numbers of sperm. If you don’t don the condom until just prior to orgasm you may be locking the barn door after the horses have escaped. Besides, what a drag to stop at that moment.

Condoms sometimes break when there’s a combination of exuberance and insufficient lubrication. A small amount of K-Y jelly or similar lubricant both inside and outside the condom should help make things smoother for you.

Dear Dr. Hip Pocrates is a collection of letters and answers published by Grove Press. \$.95 paperbound. Dr. Schoenfeld welcomes your letters. Write to him at 1611 San Pablo Avenue, Berkeley, California 94702.

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