THE TRUTH ABOUT
ECSTASY
X Hug
Love Drug XTC E
Beans
drugfreeworld.org

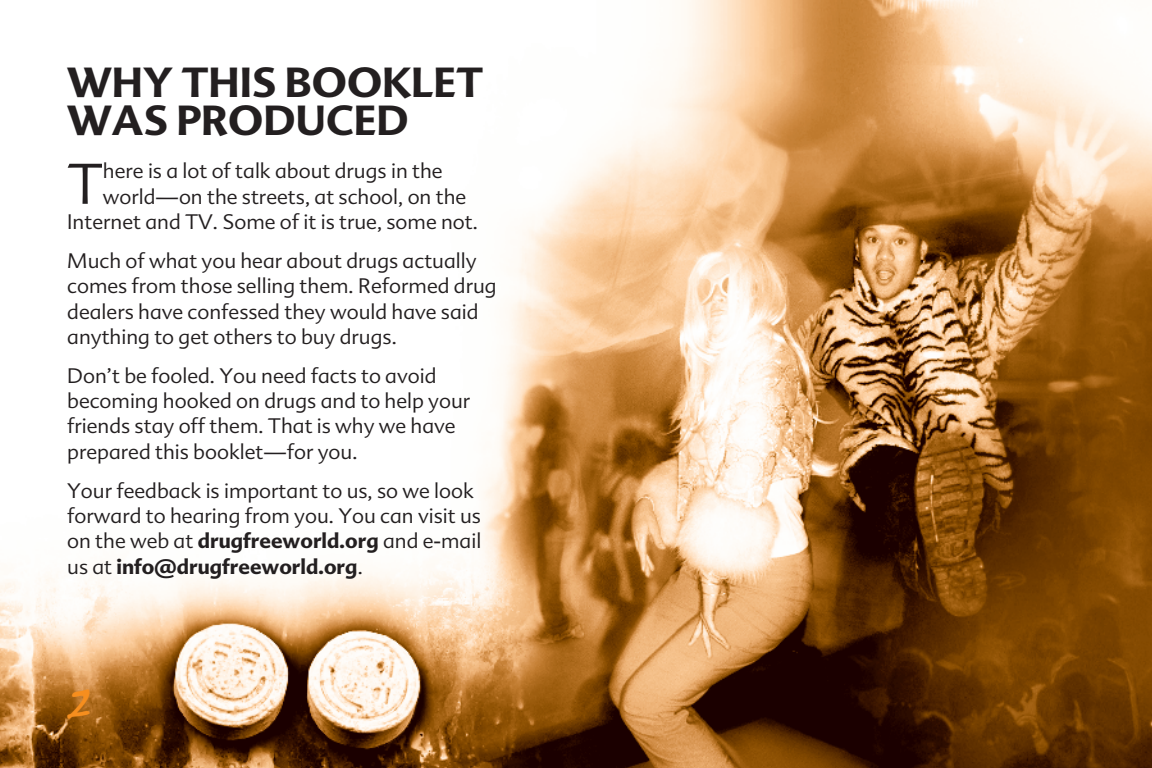
# WHY THIS BOOKLET WAS PRODUCED

There is a lot of talk about drugs in the world—on the streets, at school, on the Internet and TV. Some of it is true, some not.

Much of what you hear about drugs actually comes from those selling them. Reformed drug dealers have confessed they would have said anything to get others to buy drugs.

Don't be fooled. You need facts to avoid becoming hooked on drugs and to help your friends stay off them. That is why we have prepared this booklet—for you.

Your feedback is important to us, so we look forward to hearing from you. You can visit us on the web at **drugfreeworld.org** and e-mail us at **info@drugfreeworld.org**.



# Dancing with DEATH?

Ecstasy is illegal. The Drug Enforcement Administration classifies it as a Schedule I drug, a description reserved for dangerous substances with no recognized medical use. Other Schedule I drugs include heroin and LSD. Penalties for possession, delivery and manufacturing of Ecstasy can include jail sentences of four years to life, and fines from $250,000 to $4 million, depending on the amount of the drug you have in your possession.

Tragically, Ecstasy is one of the most popular drugs among youth today. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime estimates Ecstasy users to number approximately 9 million worldwide. The vast majority of users are teenagers and young adults.

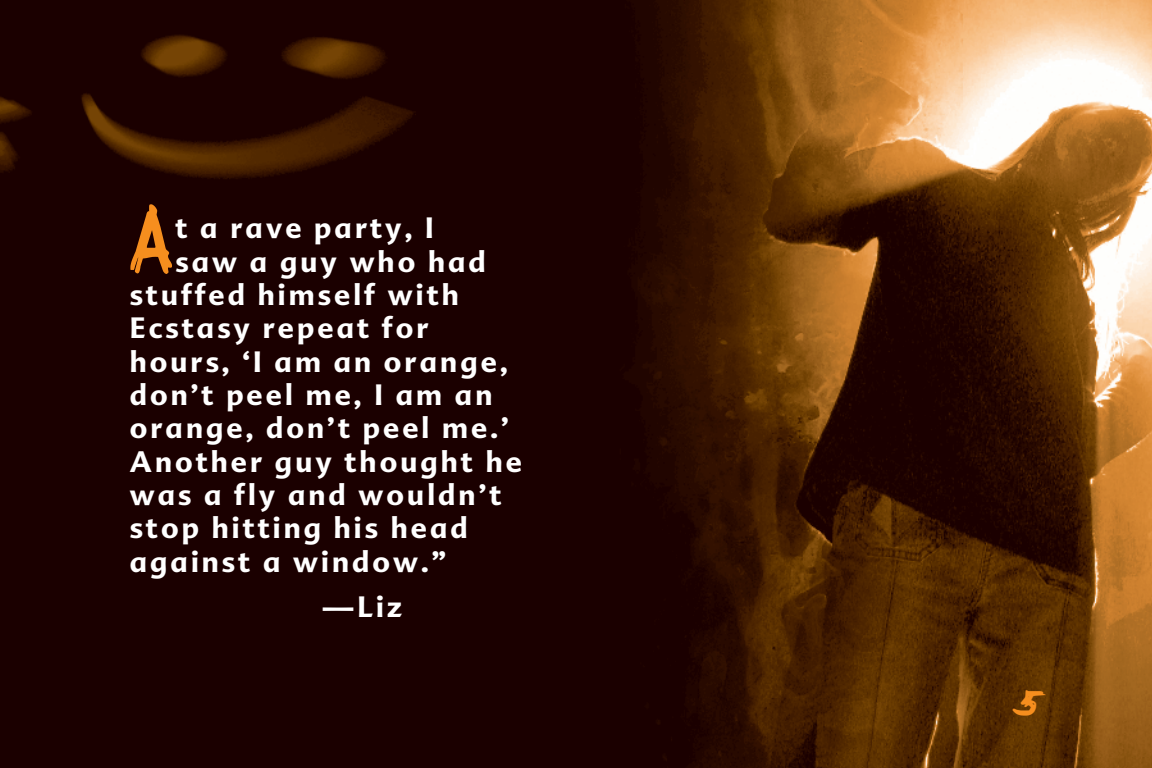
Mixed with alcohol, Ecstasy is extremely dangerous and can, in fact, be deadly. So widespread has been the harm of this "designer drug," that emergency room incidents have skyrocketed more than 1,200% since Ecstasy became the "club drug" of choice at all-night "rave" parties and dance clubs.

# Do you really want to party?

Nikki was like many who went to rave parties. Hoping to escape her problems and have a good time, she planned to party through the night with several friends. One of them had a bottle of liquid Ecstasy in his car, so they all decided to take some. Soon the drug started to take over. Nikki danced and danced and danced, pushing herself well beyond her usual limits. As one of her friends later said in a police report, "Nikki wasn't feeling anything."

The next morning Nikki was dead. The cause: drug (Ecstasy) poisoning.

"But that won't happen to me," you think. Maybe not, but do you really want to take the chance?



**At a rave party, I saw a guy who had stuffed himself with Ecstasy repeat for hours, 'I am an orange, don't peel me, I am an orange, don't peel me.' Another guy thought he was a fly and wouldn't stop hitting his head against a window."**

**—Liz**

# What is Ecstasy?

Ecstasy was originally developed by Merck pharmaceutical company in 1912. In its original form, it was known as "MDMA." It was used in 1953 by the US Army in psychological warfare tests, and then resurfaced in the 1960s as a psychotherapy medication to "lower inhibitions."* It wasn't until the 1970s that MDMA started being used as a party drug.

By the early 1980s, MDMA was being promoted as "the hottest thing in the continuing search for happiness through chemistry," and the "in drug" for many weekend parties. Still legal in 1984, MDMA was being sold under the brand name "Ecstasy," but by 1985, the drug had been banned due to safety concerns.

Since the late 1980s, Ecstasy has become an embracive "marketing" term for drug dealers selling "Ecstasy-type" drugs that may, in fact, contain very little or no MDMA at all. And while MDMA itself can produce harmful effects, what is called Ecstasy today can contain a wide mixture of substances—from LSD, cocaine, heroin, amphetamine and methamphetamine, to rat poison, caffeine, dog deworming substances, etc. Despite the cute logos dealers put on the pills, this is what makes Ecstasy particularly dangerous; a user never really knows what he is taking. The dangers are increased when users increase the dose seeking a previous high, not knowing they may be taking an entirely different combination of drugs.

Ecstasy most commonly comes in pill form but can also be injected and taken in other ways. Liquid Ecstasy is actually GHB, a nervous system depressant—a substance that can also be found in drain cleaner, floor stripper and degreasing solvents.

* inhibitions: ideas or rules that tend to stop a person from doing something.

## Street names

- Cadillac
- Adam
- Beans
- California Sunrise
- Clarity
- E
- Essence
- Elephants
- Eve
- Hug
- Hug Drug
- Scooby snacks
- Love pill
- Lover's speed
- Roll
- X
- Snowball
- XE
- XTC

## Dream or Nightmare?

- According to the 2007 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, an estimated 12.4 million Americans aged 12 or older tried Ecstasy at least once in their lives, representing 5% of the US population in that age group.
- Results of the 2007 survey indicated that 2.3% of eighth graders, 5.2% of tenth graders and 6.5% of twelfth graders had tried Ecstasy at least once.
- 92% of those who begin using Ecstasy later turn to other drugs including marijuana, amphetamines, cocaine and heroin.

# Imaginary love pill

## Off with the mask

Ecstasy is often called “the love pill” because it heightens perceptions of color and sound and supposedly amplifies sensations when one touches or caresses another, particularly during sex.

But Ecstasy often contains hallucinogens, which are drugs that act on the mind and cause people to see or feel things that are not really there. Hallucinogens can throw a person into a scary or sad experience from the past, where he or she gets stuck without even realizing it.

**Rave parties are okay so long as you don't take Ecstasy. But as soon as you start, you think people who advise you to stop are idiots. You start to believe you have found something great and others must not try to tell you the contrary. When you start liking Ecstasy, it's too late, you're sunk."**

**—Pat**

The image of Ecstasy as a "love pill" is one of many lies that are spread about the drug.

Ecstasy is emotionally damaging and users often suffer depression, confusion, severe anxiety, paranoia,* psychotic behavior and other psychological problems.

* paranoia: suspicion, distrust or fear of other people.

"Luckily, I am alive, but I'm left with the days, months, and years after the trauma. I have to deal with what it's done to me for my whole life.... I've been experiencing everything, you name it. Depression, anxiety, stress, [recurring] nightmares of the night, and bad headaches were a few things that affected me after I took Ecstasy. I almost died. It only took one night, a few [Ecstasy] pills, and drinking alcohol. This drug is very fatal, and I'm so thankful I'm alive. I can't describe how hard it is coping with these nightmares all the time. I wake up in a sweat just thanking God, and being so thankful it's just another nightmare. I pray in time the nightmares will fade away.... No drug is worth the roll or high."

—Megan

# Consequences of using Ecstasy

Ecstasy smothers the natural alarm signals given out by the body. As a result, after taking the drug, an individual risks going beyond his physical limitations and endurance. For example, a person on Ecstasy may not realize that he has become overheated and can faint or even die of heatstroke.

A study by the University of Texas Center for Social Work Research found that the long-term effects of Ecstasy most frequently reported included depression and a reduced ability to concentrate. The researchers also found repeated use of Ecstasy to be associated with sleep, mood and anxiety disturbances; tremors or twitches; and memory problems.

## SHORT-TERM EFFECTS

- Impaired judgment
- False sense of affection
- Confusion
- Depression
- Sleep problems
- Severe anxiety
- Paranoia
- Drug cravings
- Muscle tension
- Faintness and chills or swelling
- Involuntary teeth clenching
- Blurred vision
- Nausea

## LONG-TERM EFFECTS

- Long-lasting brain damage affecting thought and memory
- Damage to portions of the brain that regulate critical functions such as learning, sleep and emotion
- It is as if the brain switchboard was torn apart, then rewired backwards
- Degenerated nerve branches and nerve endings
- Depression, anxiety, memory loss
- Kidney failure
- Hemorrhaging
- Psychosis
- Cardiovascular* collapse
- Convulsions
- Death

* cardiovascular: related to both the heart and blood vessels.

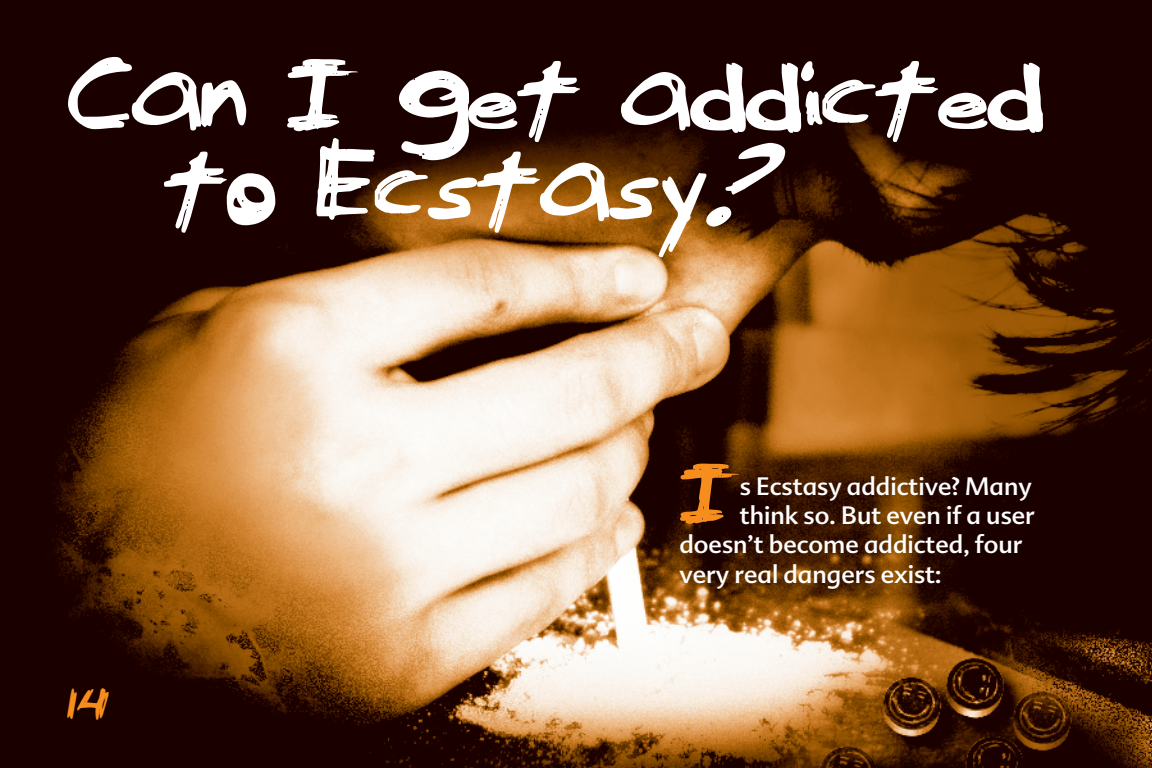
I hear a lot of people talking about Ecstasy, calling it a fun, harmless drug. All I can think is, 'If they only knew.'

"In five months, I went from living somewhat responsibly while pursuing my dream to a person who didn't care about a thing—and the higher I got, the deeper I sank into a dark, lonely place. When I did sleep, I had nightmares and the shakes. I had pasty skin, a throbbing head and the beginnings of feeling paranoid, but ignored it all, thinking it was normal. Until the night I thought I was dying.

"Ecstasy took my strength, my motivation, my dreams, my friends, my apartment, my money and most of all, my sanity. I worry about my future and my health every day. I have many mountains ahead of me, but I plan to keep climbing because I'm one of the lucky ones."

—Lynn

# Can I get addicted to Ecstasy?



Is Ecstasy addictive? Many think so. But even if a user doesn't become addicted, four very real dangers exist:

**DANGER NO. 1:** By 1995, less than 10% of Ecstasy pills on the market were pure MDMA. Today's Ecstasy user is usually taking a mix of a wide variety of drugs, and often toxic substances.

**DANGER NO. 2:** One has to continually increase the amount of the drug one takes in order to feel the same effects. Users say the effect of Ecstasy is greatly reduced after the first dose. And as a person takes more of the drug, the negative effects also increase.

Because the desired effect from using the drug diminishes, a person often then tries other drugs that are even more dangerous.

**DANGER NO. 3:** Users feel there is sometimes a need to use other drugs such as heroin or cocaine to help cope with the mental and physical pain that results after one "comes down" from Ecstasy; 92% of those who take Ecstasy also abuse other, even harder drugs.

**DANGER NO. 4:** The false idea that a person only feels good with Ecstasy leads to a desire to take it more often than just at raves and techno parties; like other stimulant drugs, people continue to take Ecstasy, despite experiencing unpleasant effects.

# Scientific information

A great many studies have been conducted on Ecstasy. They show that:

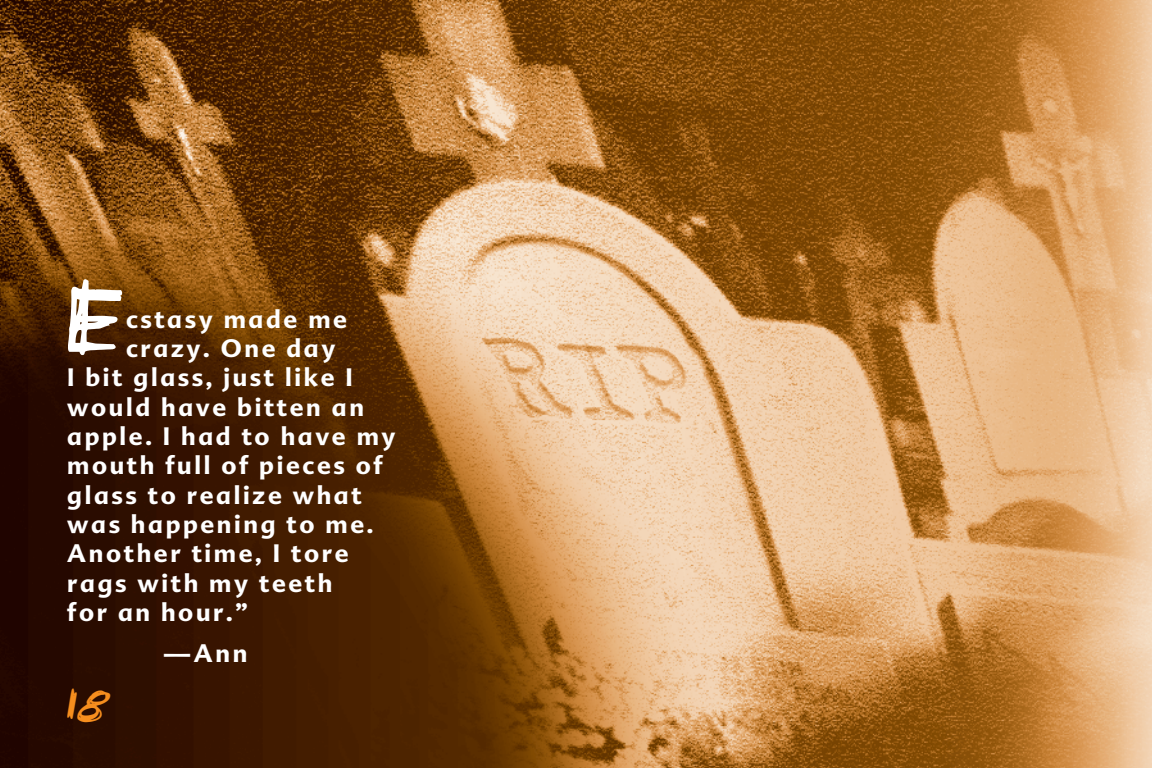
- Taking Ecstasy can cause liver failure, as in the case of a 14-year-old girl who died of this, despite an attempt by doctors to save her with a liver transplant.
- Ecstasy is sometimes mixed with substances such as rat poison.
- Young people have died from dehydration, exhaustion and heart attack as a result of taking too much Ecstasy.
- Ecstasy can cause kidney, liver and brain damage, including long-lasting lesions (injuries) on brain tissue.
- Even a small amount of Ecstasy can be toxic enough to poison the nervous system and cause irreparable damage.

# Cutting through the hype about drugs

The "positive" image of drugs comes for the most part from being glamorized in movies and music.

When a new substance first appears on the market, it is seldom considered dangerous until long after the harm becomes evident. By then the damage has already been done, and the false idea that the drug is "harmless" has already been widely accepted.

Ecstasy has been the subject of similar hype. As one media observer noted, "It is almost as though some clever marketing wizard came up with a campaign for it."




Ecstasy made me crazy. One day I bit glass, just like I would have bitten an apple. I had to have my mouth full of pieces of glass to realize what was happening to me. Another time, I tore rags with my teeth for an hour."

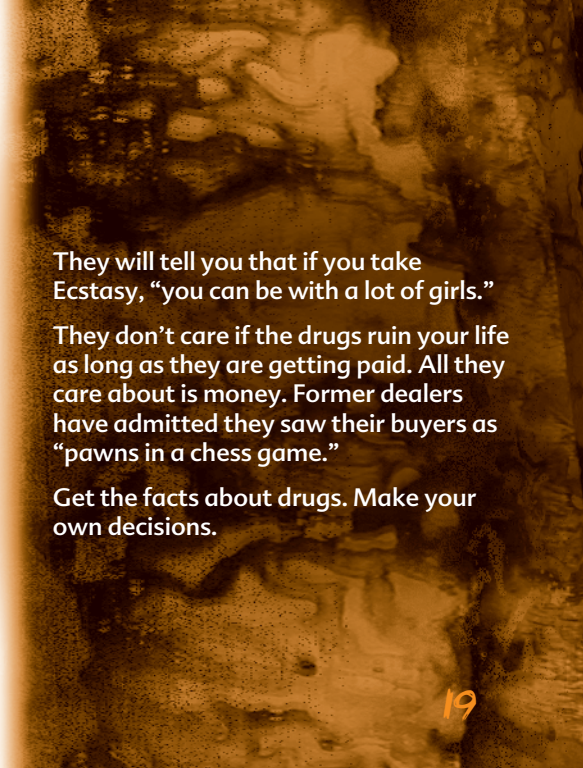
—Ann

# what dealers will tell you

When teens were surveyed to find out why they started using drugs in the first place, 55% replied that it was due to pressure from their friends. They wanted to be cool and popular. Dealers know this.

They will approach you as a friend and offer to "help you out" with "something to bring you up." The drug will "help you fit in" or "make you cool."

Drug dealers, motivated by the profits they make, will say anything to get you to buy their drugs.



**They will tell you that if you take Ecstasy, "you can be with a lot of girls."**

**They don't care if the drugs ruin your life as long as they are getting paid. All they care about is money. Former dealers have admitted they saw their buyers as "pawns in a chess game."**

**Get the facts about drugs. Make your own decisions.**

# The Truth About Drugs

Drugs are essentially poisons. The amount taken determines the effect.

A small amount acts as a stimulant (speeds you up). A greater amount acts as a sedative (slows you down). An even larger amount poisons and can kill.

This is true of any drug. Only the amount needed to achieve the effect differs.

But many drugs have another liability: they directly affect the mind. They can distort the user's perception of what is happening around him or her. As a result, the person's actions may be odd, irrational, inappropriate and even destructive.

Drugs block off all sensations, the desirable ones with the unwanted. So, while providing short-term help in the relief of pain, they also wipe out ability and alertness and muddy one's thinking.

Medicines are drugs that are intended to speed up or slow down or change something about the way your body is working, to try to make it work better. Sometimes they are necessary. But they are still drugs: they act as stimulants or sedatives, and too much can kill you. So if you do not use medicines as they are supposed to be used, they can be as dangerous as illegal drugs.

The real answer is to get
the facts and not to take
drugs in the first place.

# WHY DO PEOPLE TAKE DRUGS?

People take drugs because they want to change something in their lives.

Here are some of the reasons young people have given for taking drugs:

- To fit in
- To escape or relax
- To relieve boredom
- To seem grown up
- To rebel
- To experiment

They think drugs are a solution. But eventually, the drugs become the problem.

Difficult as it may be to face one's problems, the consequences of drug use are always worse than the problem one is trying to solve with them. The real answer is to get the facts and not to take drugs in the first place.

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Millions of copies of booklets such as this have been distributed to people around the world in 22 languages. As new drugs appear on the streets and more information about their effects becomes known, existing booklets are updated and new ones created.

The booklets are published by the Foundation for a Drug-Free World, a nonprofit public benefit organization headquartered in Los Angeles, California.

The Foundation provides educational materials, advice and coordination for its international drug prevention network. It works with youth, parents, educators, volunteer organizations and government agencies—anyone with an interest in helping people lead lives free from drug abuse.

# FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW

This booklet is one in a series of publications that cover the facts about marijuana, alcohol, Ecstasy, cocaine, crack cocaine, crystal meth and methamphetamine, inhalants, heroin, LSD and prescription drug abuse. Armed with this information, the reader can make the decision to live a drug-free life.

**For more information or to obtain more copies of this or other booklets in this series, contact:**

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