

Anna Pike: ‘Get out of the smoky fog and get living’

TheProvince.com | April 17, 2016

My name is Anna.

I smoked marijuana solidly for 22 years. When I smoked my first joint at 18 years of age, I thought I had found the path to endless happiness. In my 20s, using the drug was wonderful and manageable. But in my 30s, it became a problem, as any addiction does as you age.

I have not smoked marijuana for the past three months.

As the smoke has cleared, I am the happiest I have been in my life. I am about to turn 40 and am excited for this turning point, particularly because I don't have my old friend/enemy living with me and controlling so many of my choices.

The impetus to quit was not a conscious one.

In November, I started a new job that was particularly mentally challenging for me. I found myself forgetting critical things, having erratic energy and living in a paranoid fog.

While I considered that pot might be the problem, I wasn't ready to give it up.

In February, I went on a two-week trip to Mexico with my family and my partner. I knew I would not be smoking pot and was OK with that. What I didn't expect was how great I would feel.

Prior to that, I had never gone a day without smoking marijuana for more than 20 years. As the first week was done and my irritability waned, I was filled with an incredible joy.

The sky was brighter, the birds were more beautiful, the ocean was an absolute marvel.

My love for my family and partner was boundless. I even contemplated adopting a child to share this wonderful joy.

When I returned home, I happened to have no pot in the house, which was a good thing, as instinct and habit would have made me smoke.

As the days went on, and I remained pot-free, I became fearful of the prospect of smoking. The paranoia, the addiction, the uselessness of that drug became apparent to me.

That moment was when it became a conscious decision for me to remain pot-free — one day at a time.

I write this because I am concerned about the attitude to marijuana in our culture.

The new policies and laws being lobbied and passed to promote pot are, to me, equal to the big business of cigarettes.

I respect the use of cannabis for those in chronic pain or in palliative care with incurable ailments. It can be a light in a very dark place, and I acknowledge that.

My fear is the belief that it is a healthy recreational drug.

I fear for my nieces, both under 13, being able to purchase pot at the local store. I fear for people getting into a car and driving high. I fear for pregnant moms hurting their babies' brains, not to mention their own.

I would encourage pot smokers to get out of the smoky fog and get living, start dreaming when you sleep (my dreams have never been so vivid since I quit pot).

Stop worrying about the smell, getting arrested, how you are harming yourself and being unable to remember what you ate 10 minutes ago.

I would ask people to speak up against new legislation that promotes pot as healthy.

It doesn't make you more creative or interesting, it just dulls whatever issues you don't want to deal with.

Being smoke-free has forced me to live in the present and to be thankful for the wonders and beauty this world has to offer.