

Mini Review

Beyond the Cup: An Overview of the Smoking Coffee Trend among Teenagers

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Abstract

A new trend for teenagers is smoking coffee. The term “bean head” has been coined to denote people who partake in ‘smoking coffee’ and using/creating ‘coffee joints’ or ‘caffeine sticks.’ Coffee, like other household items are usually used because of its accessibility and categorization as a legal substance. There are many side effects to smoking coffee, but that seems to be secondary to the ‘high’ that is gained. Recently, smoking coffee has earned media and national attention with a Las Vegas ABC affiliate being the first to report on the topic. Many criticize the trend and doubt the validity of its existence, but it is something that must be paid attention to due to the vulnerability and susceptibility of today’s teenagers. Cognitive behavior is suggested as a therapeutic modality to discover the underlying reason for teenagers smoking coffee.

INTRODUCTION

Young people tend to create trends in regards to smoking. Whereas conventional smoking of cigarettes and marijuana are still common and rampant, teens seem to keep misusing common household products to help them ‘get high’ such as with the trends of sniffing glue, smoking Twix candy bars, infusing vodka into gummy bears, and inserting vodka-soaked tampons [1]. Plus, common household commodities are legal and cheap. Unfortunately, the new trend is smoking coffee.

Whereas coffee beans are present and accessible in most homes, teens who participate in this trend are known as “bean heads” [1,2] and even creating ‘coffee joints’ or ‘caffeine sticks’ [1,2] by using Post-It notes and cotton balls to the more advanced glass ‘crack pipes’ as previously sighted on YouTube [3]. Teenagers smoking coffee has become controversial and satirical because some people reject that this is a trend and see this more as an ‘internet scare tactic’ or hoax for parents due to the limited social media presence of the trend. Thus, some see a similarity with teens smoking coffee and the rumor that teens were smoking fermented sewage or ‘butt-hash’ in Florida [4]. Yet, many doctors and professions caution that parents need to know that this is a possible activity for teenagers to engage in due to the many websites and blogs that detail and outline how to make the caffeine sticks or insert the beans or grounds for smoking.

Side effects

Over-indulgence is bad and especially in this case, since coffee was not created to be smoked like tobacco or marijuana.

Caffeine overdose occurs when someone consumes more than the recommended amount of 200 to 300 mg a day [5]. Death is unlikely to occur, but the following side effects will present until the caffeine is excreted out of the body [5]: “trouble breathing, changes in alertness, confusion, convulsions, diarrhea, dizziness, fever, hallucinations, increased thirst, irregular and/or rapid heartbeat, muscle twitching, increased likelihood of outrageous behavior, sleeping trouble, increased urination, and vomiting [6,7].

Historical development

Smoking coffee has had a cyber-presence since 2011 as reported by a Reddit blogger. This individual admitted that he had never heard of anyone else doing it or considered it before, but that he engaged out of curiosity because he had no tobacco or marijuana and he felt that smoking oregano was ‘stupid’ [8].

Moreover, smoking coffee did not earn media, news, or national attention until late March to early 2014 with a Las Vegas ABC affiliate being the first to report on the topic. There is still speculation to the sudden urgency of teenagers smoking coffee especially when the United States is on the brink of legalizing marijuana.

Stupid habit

It is also interesting that a vast majority of the references related to teenagers smoking coffee denotes the trend as ‘stupid.’ This means that people are choosing to engage in the trend despite the common sense that coffee is meant to be drunk and

not smoked. Additionally, this also indicates that people are knowledgeable of the side effects, but neglect this in their decision making because they would rather feel a 'temporary high.' Likewise, everyone online who attested to this habit discouraged others from this undertaking despite the 'highs'. Thus, something is wrong with the logic of those who engage in smoking coffee and there must be a deeper, underlying issue present [8].

Treatment: Cognitive behavioral treatment

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is an empirically researched counseling theory that is known to treat many symptoms and diagnoses. In the case of teenagers smoking coffee, a cognitive behaviorist would examine how 'smoking coffee' successfully or unsuccessfully contributes to the teenagers' ultimate plans of survival and procreation [9]. It must be noted that CBT works regardless of what 'is being smoked.' Next, a client's core beliefs, assumptions, and automatic thoughts [10] about his or her behavior and past experiences would be detailed to define any contributing reasons why he or she engages in smoking coffee. Lastly, the cognitive behaviorist would challenge the cognitive distortions [10] that the teenager uses as excuses to engage in smoking coffee.

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