Hurricane

By Ernest Hemingway

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Dear Editor,

Last week, you told a story about your youthful friend Doug, and his problems with drugs. You concluded with a cautionary statement about the article on Rick Doblin and your inability to believe that there is a miracle psychedelic drug that can end mankind's pain. I must say I totally agree with you. Drugs are not panaceas, and are medicines only when used in the proper setting and with the proper attitude. The non-drug factors are much more important than the simple fact of ingesting a drug. We as a society place unrealistic hopes and fears on the drugs themselves, which are simply tools offering varying degrees of opportunity and danger.

Furthermore, mankind's pain can never be ended nor should it be, since pain is an integral and necessary part of life just as surely as is joy. When psychedelics are used in a therapeutic context, people are encouraged to go deeper into their pain, and come to terms with it. The pain and sadness don't ever really go away, they just assume a more balanced place in one's experience. Taking drugs to escape psychological pain is drug abuse, when medically prescribed as well as "recreational." When drugs are used with the attitude of accepting whatever the unconscious brings to mind, and a willingness to explore both the pain and the joy, they may lead to significant healing and can be called medicines.

Though sensationalized, I did recognize myself, Rick Doblin, in the article. A few clarifications seem important. The opening story about the family with a suicidal nineteen year old, and a delinquent troubled sixteen year old left the impression that the mother just gave the MDMA to her children and then, presto, she said they were better. Actually, they experienced the MDMA under supervision in a therapeutic context, were monitored for several days afterwards, and are doing better only because every day they choose to act in a responsible manner. The MDMA experience was both catharsis and inspiration, but difficult daily work is required for any change for the better to truly take hold. The MDMA experience is valuable only to the extent that the normal state of consciousness grows more healthy.

Also, a small point, but I have not been a student for 14 years. That boggles even my imagination. This is my fourth year. During the years of my construction career, I was not a student.

Another more important concern of mine is the use of the word Ecstasy. I do not ever use that word, and think that it is both irresponsible and dangerous to create such unrealistic expectations from a drug. Ecstasy is both a marketing and a media created word, one which I have constantly but unsuccessfully attempted to eliminate. I am concerned that people will unwittingly expect ecstasy, and be taken off guard when the painful emotions surface, as they most certainly can and often do. This could lead to situations of panic, exaggerated self-criticism and needless suffering.

MDMA, like aspirin, penicillin, cocaine, heroin, and marijuana, is just a drug. No more and no less.

Sincerely,

Rick Doblin