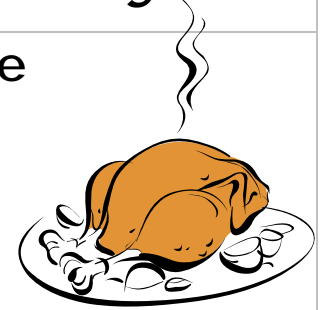


# Talking Over Turkey

*Fill Those Awkward Silences with a Debate on the Drug War...*

## The Drug Policy Alliance Guide to talking to your family about drugs and drug policy



### Getting Started

#### Guide to the Guide

L.A. Times article	2
Discussion questions	5
Who we are	5
Parents talking to teens	6
Teens talking to parents	7
Tell us your story	8
Join the DPA!	8
Share DPA with a friend	9

What would happen if there was open and honest debate about drug use and drug policy in this country? Leaving aside personal opinions for a moment, what would happen if people just *talked*... candidly, truthfully and without fear of judgment or recrimination?

The Drug Policy Alliance wants you to help us find out. And we think the best place to start is right where you live – literally.

“You want me to talk to my *family*? You don’t know my family!”

That’s true, but if you can’t talk to your own family about drugs and drug policy issues, who can you talk to?

Change starts at home. And family holiday gatherings are the perfect place to bring up the issues you care about.

It’s time to tell your family why you are a member of

the Drug Policy Alliance and get them involved in the movement.

So when Aunt Ida asks what you’ve been reading lately, just begin, “Actually, there’s this one article...”

*See page 2 for more!*

### Drugs and Your Family

You can probably already think of some ways drugs have affected your family, whether it be an older member who needs prescribed medicine to stay healthy, a young child first learning about alcohol and other drugs in school, or perhaps even a family member who struggled with drug abuse.

Consider these facts and discuss how they relate to your family or others in the community:

**FACT:** “A majority of parents in both State and Federal prison were held more than 100 miles from their last place of residence.”

**FACT:** “The number of offenders under age 18 admitted to prison increased twelve fold between 1985 and 1997.”

**FACT:** “In 1999, 25 percent of 8<sup>th</sup> graders reported having been drunk at least once.”

**FACT:** “Despite comparable levels of illicit drug use during pregnancy, women of color are 10 times more likely than white women to be reported to child welfare agencies.”

**FACT:** “Researchers in 2003 found that school drug testing has no impact on student drug use.”

All sources for this information can be referenced at

[www.drugwarfacts.org](http://www.drugwarfacts.org)



# Los Angeles Times

## BEHIND BARS

Let those dopers be

A former police chief wants to end a losing war by legalizing pot, coke, meth and other drugs

SOMETIMES PEOPLE in law enforcement will hear it whispered that I'm a former cop who favors decriminalization of marijuana laws, and they'll approach me the way they might a traitor or snitch. So let me set the record straight.

Yes, I was a cop for 34 years, the last six of which I spent as chief of Seattle's police department.

But no, I don't favor decriminalization. I favor legalization, and not just of pot but of all drugs, including heroin, cocaine, meth, psychotropics, mushrooms and LSD.

Decriminalization, as my colleagues in the drug reform movement hasten to inform me, takes the crime out of using drugs but continues to classify possession and use as a public offense, punishable by fines.

I've never understood why adults shouldn't enjoy the same right to use "verboten" drugs as they have to suck on a Marlboro or knock back a scotch and water.

Prohibition of alcohol fell flat on its face. The prohibition of other drugs rests on an equally wobbly foundation. Not until we choose to frame responsible drug

use -- not an oxymoron in my dictionary -- as a civil liberty will we be able to recognize the abuse of drugs, including alcohol, for what it is: a medical, not a criminal, matter.

As a cop, I bore witness to the multiple lunacies of the "war on drugs." Lasting far longer than any other of our national conflicts, the drug war has been prosecuted with equal vigor by Republican and Democratic administrations, with one president after another -- Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush, Clinton, Bush -- delivering sanctimonious sermons, squandering vast sums of taxpayer money and cheerleading law enforcers from the safety of the sidelines.

It's not a stretch to conclude that our draconian approach to drug use is the most injurious domestic policy since slavery. Want to cut back on prison overcrowding and save a bundle on the construction of new facilities? Open the doors, let the nonviolent drug offenders go. The huge increases in federal and state prison populations during the 1980s and '90s (from 139 per 100,000 residents in 1980 to 482 per 100,000 in 2003) were mainly for drug convictions. In 1980, 580,900 Americans were arrested on drug charges. By 2003, that figure had ballooned to 1,678,200. We're making more arrests for drug offenses than for murder, manslaughter, forcible rape and aggravated assault combined. Feel safer?

I've witnessed the devastating effects of open-air drug markets in residential neighborhoods: children

# Los Angeles Times

recruited as runners, mules and lookouts; drug dealers and innocent citizens shot dead in firefights between rival traffickers bent on protecting or expanding their markets; dedicated narcotics officers tortured and killed in the line of duty; prisons filled with nonviolent drug offenders; and drug-related foreign policies that foster political instability, wreak health and environmental disasters, and make life even tougher for indigenous subsistence farmers in places such as Latin America and Afghanistan. All because we like our drugs -- and can't have them without breaking the law.

As an illicit commodity, drugs cost and generate extravagant sums of (laundered, untaxed) money, a powerful magnet for character-challenged police officers.

Although small in numbers of offenders, there isn't a major police force -- the Los Angeles Police Department included -- that has escaped the problem: cops, sworn to uphold the law, seizing and converting drugs to their own use, planting dope on suspects, robbing and extorting pushers, taking up dealing themselves, intimidating or murdering witnesses.

In declaring a war on drugs, we've declared war on our fellow citizens. War requires "hostiles" -- enemies we can demonize, fear and loathe. This unfortunate categorization of millions of our citizens justifies treating them as dope fiends, evil-doers, less than human. That grants political license to ban the exchange or purchase of clean needles or to withhold methadone from heroin addicts motivated to

kick the addiction.

President Bush has even said no to medical marijuana. Why would he want to "coddle" the enemy? Even if the enemy is a suffering AIDS or cancer patient for whom marijuana promises palliative, if not therapeutic, powers.

As a nation, we're long overdue for a soul-searching, coldly analytical look at both the "drug scene" and the drug war. Such candor would reveal the futility of our current policies, exposing the embarrassingly meager return on our massive enforcement investment (about \$69 billion a year, according to Jack Cole, founder and executive director of Law Enforcement Against Prohibition).

How would "regulated legalization" work? It would: 1) Permit private companies to compete for licenses to cultivate, harvest, manufacture, package and peddle drugs.

2) Create a new federal regulatory agency (with no apologies to libertarians or paleo-conservatives).

3) Set and enforce standards of sanitation, potency and purity.

4) Ban advertising.

5) Impose (with congressional approval) taxes, fees and fines to be used for drug-abuse prevention and treatment and to cover the costs of administering the new regulatory agency.

6) Police the industry much as alcoholic beverage control agencies keep a watch on bars and liquor stores at the state level. Such

# Los Angeles Times

reforms would in no way excuse drug users who commit crimes: driving while impaired, providing drugs to minors, stealing an iPod or a Lexus, assaulting one's spouse, abusing one's child. The message is simple. Get loaded, commit a crime, do the time.

These reforms would yield major reductions in a host of predatory street crimes, a disproportionate number of which are committed by users who resort to stealing in order to support their habit or addiction.

Regulated legalization would soon dry up most stockpiles of currently illicit drugs -- substances of uneven, often questionable quality (including "bunk," i.e., fakes such as oregano, gypsum, baking powder or even poisons passed off as the genuine article). It would extract from today's drug dealing the obscene profits that attract the needy and the greedy and fuel armed violence. And it would put most of those certifiably frightening crystal meth labs out of business once and for all.

Combined with treatment, education and other public health programs for drug abusers, regulated legalization would make your city or town an infinitely healthier place to live and raise a family.

It would make being a cop a much safer occupation, and it would lead to greater police accountability and improved morale and job

satisfaction.

But wouldn't regulated legalization lead to more users and, more to the point, drug abusers? Probably, though no one knows for sure -- our leaders are too timid even to broach the subject in polite circles, much less to experiment with new policy models. My own prediction? We'd see modest increases in use, negligible increases in abuse.

The demand for illicit drugs is as strong as the nation's thirst for bootleg booze during Prohibition. It's a demand that simply will not dwindle or dry up. Whether to find God, heighten sexual arousal, relieve physical pain, drown one's sorrows or simply feel good, people throughout the millenniums have turned to mood- and mind-altering substances.

They're not about to stop, no matter what their government says or does. It's time to accept drug use as a right of adult Americans, treat drug abuse as a public health problem and end the madness of an unwinnable war.

*Norm Stamper is the former chief of the Seattle Police Department. He is the author of Breaking Rank: A Top Cop's Expose of the Dark Side of American Policing (Nation Books, 2005).*



## L.A. Times Article Discussion Questions

Now that you've all read the article, don't let your family get away with just one comment! Drug policy is a hot-button issue that *everyone* has an opinion about. Tease out the nuances. We've provided some leading questions if you need a starting point...

- Ex-Police Chief Norm Stamper claims that every adult American has a *right* to use drugs, absent harm to others. Do you agree? Why or why not?
- Do you agree with him that Americans will continue to use drugs regardless of any laws that are passed?
- Do you think ending the drug war would make our streets safer or less safe?
- Do you think drugs should be used only when medically necessary? If so, do you think alcohol and tobacco should be made illegal?
- Do you think nonviolent drug use is a criminal problem or a public health problem?
- Should nonviolent drug offenders be let out of prisons? Sent to treatment programs? Can you come up with another strategy?
- If drugs were legalized, would you personally use any drugs you had never used or even tried before?
- What age would you set as the minimum to use drugs? Should there be different ages for different drugs?
- What is the biggest challenge you see developing as a result of changing drug policy? How would you deal with it?
- Stamper's plan to legalize drugs doesn't address the very real fact of teenage experimentation with substances. Do you think that if teens were required to take a reality-based drug education class they would end up choosing safer behaviors?

## Who We Are

The Drug Policy Alliance is the nation's leading organization working to end the war on drugs. Our members envision new drug policies based on science, compassion, health and human rights and a just society in which the fears, prejudices and punitive prohibitions of today are no more.

We do not believe that there is an ultimate solution to our drug problems, but we do believe that there are steps that can and should be taken soon to reduce the harms associated with both drug use and our failed policies. Some of these include:

- Making marijuana legally available for medical purposes;
- Curtailing drug testing not related to detecting impairment;
- Restoring constitutional protections against unreasonable searches and seizures;
- Redirecting most government drug control resources from criminal justice to public health and education;
- Supporting public health measures to reduce HIV/AIDS, hepatitis and other infectious diseases;
- Supporting effective, science-based drug education;
- Repealing mandatory minimum sentences for non-violent drug offenses and ending incarceration for simple drug possession;
- Ending criminal penalties for marijuana, except those involving distribution of drugs to children;
- Ending racially discriminatory drug policies and enforcement measures.

DPA, headquartered in New York, has eight offices in four states and Washington, D.C.

We have 25,000 members and over 100,000 online activists. Not all of our members see eye-to-eye on every issue, but we all agree that the war on drugs is doing more harm than good.

Join us!

*“Do you believe that Americans will continue to use drugs regardless of any laws that are passed?”*

*In order to  
build trust,  
you may  
want to  
share  
honestly  
about your  
own  
alcohol or  
drug use –  
past or  
current.*

## Talking Points for Family Discussion

Straightforward, nonjudgmental communication between family members about alcohol and other drug use is a crucial step towards building strong relationships, and yet often hardest to accomplish.

During the holidays, choose a moment when you can pull your family member away from the hustle and bustle, and try to open up to them.

The best thing you can do is try, and you may be surprised at what you find out.



### For Parents...

- Above all, young people want to know that they can trust you, and that they will be able to come to you if they have questions or problems.
- If someone in your family has been through DARE or another drug education program, ask them what they thought about it. Did they learn anything new? Did they think it was accurate?
- If there is drug-testing or random drug searches at your teenager's school, ask if he or she has been through either one yet. Ask what they thought about the process, or if they know anyone who got caught. Ask them if they know what the punishment is, if they think it's fair, and why or why not.
- Ask your teens if they think drug use is a problem at their school. Are alcohol and other drugs fairly easy to get? Which ones are most popular?
- If the conversation is going well, ask up front if he or she has ever tried alcohol or other drugs. In order to build trust, you may want to share honestly about your own drug use – past or current. Explain your motivation for using alcohol or other drugs, and don't downplay either the good or the bad. Be straight with the young people in your family and they will be straight with you.
- If the young people in your family have tried alcohol or any other drugs, ask them what steps they are taking to ensure their own safety. Make sure they are informed about whatever drug they may be using (including legal penalties), and that they got their information from a reliable source.
- Understand that even if the young people in your family aren't experimenting with alcohol or other drugs, they most likely have peers and classmates who are. Ask them what they think about their friends' behaviors, or what they think about how their friends' parents handle the issue.
- Always remind them they can – and should – talk to you at any time!



*Ask  
whether  
your  
parents  
had  
reliable  
information  
when they  
were  
younger.*

Above all, your parents want to know that they can trust you, and that you are safe. Try to keep this in mind when you talk to them.

- Sometimes referring to a story you heard about on the news, in a magazine, or even just from another person is an easy, impersonal way to first raise the issue of alcohol and other drugs. There are plenty of examples – steroid use among athletes, the current medical marijuana debate, any coverage of “raves”... choose an issue that you have an opinion on and see what your parents think about it.
- Believe it or not, DARE hasn’t existed forever – or drug education, for that matter. Ask your parents how they first found out about alcohol and other drugs. Did they know someone who used them? Did they hear stories?
- Ask your parents if they felt like they had a reliable source of information about alcohol and other drugs when they were younger. Were their parents open to discussion? Did they have an older mentor to turn to?
- Ask your parents what they think are some acceptable limits of drug use. If they offer something non-descriptive, like “None!” or “Just don’t get caught,” ask them to elaborate. Use “for example” situations. Most importantly, ask them *why* they feel this way.
- If you feel comfortable, tell them about some of your own experience with alcohol or other drugs. Explain why you or someone you know chose to use drugs or to abstain.

- If your parent(s) start to get emotional, remind them that you are just trying to be honest with them and that you need their support. Make sure they are comfortable with the idea of you talking to them again about issues concerning alcohol or other drugs.



## Some Ideas for Follow-up

Not done talking yet? Here are some other sure-fire conversation starters to provoke more debate.

### **Drugs and the Environment.**

In Colombia, aerial spraying techniques are used to deploy toxic

herbicides onto illicit coca crops. It is believed this tactic, while poisoning farmers and their families, also pushes them to grow crops in protected rainforest areas in order to support themselves. How can we prevent this from

happening?

### **Drugs and the rest of the world.**

In The Netherlands, which follows a harm-reduction model of drug policy, violent crime rates are lower as well as rates of HIV/AIDS transmission. Do

you think the difference in size between The Netherlands and the U.S. would make these successes hard to replicate? Are there other challenges? How best can we address them?



## Tell Us Your Story...

We want to hear how it went! Did you manage a lively discussion filled with balanced debate or did Uncle Joe end up throwing the candied yams? What kinds of opposition did you run up against? Did you end up changing any of your opinions, or any of your family members' opinions? Did you convert your entire family into drug policy reform advocates, or was this your first attempt at talking to your family about drugs and drug policy, and you want a gold star just for even trying?

Well, we don't have any

gold stars, but we do have some cool stickers... Everyone who sends us an account of their "Talking Over Turkey" about drugs and drug policy will receive a fun holiday gift pack featuring five of our "No More Drug War" stickers...

And if your story is especially entertaining and informative (as judged by the discerning but fair Drug Policy Alliance staff), you could be one of ten lucky members to receive a "No More Drug War" t-shirt as well - and we'll even post your story on our website!

So get talking, and writing!

The stories don't have to necessarily be "successful," or even end well... If you tell us how you endured an hour and a half of turkey prep with Grandma while she lectured you on the evils of marijuana - only to reveal that she's curious about its therapeutic properties - that would be well worth sharing.

Email your stories to [membership@drugpolicy.org](mailto:membership@drugpolicy.org) or mail them to:

*Talking Over Turkey*  
c/o Drug Policy Alliance  
70 W. 36<sup>th</sup> Street, 16<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10018



## Join a Growing Movement...

If you enjoyed "Talking Over Turkey," but haven't yet signed up to become a DPA member, just fill out the form below and mail it back to us.

Members receive our twice-yearly newsletter, "The Ally," and special updates about

Drug Policy Alliance events and actions in their area.

And if you're already onboard with our organization, please send a contribution now so we can keep working for change, through the 2005 holiday season and beyond...

One more thing - don't forget to pass along the referral forms to other family members who may have finally "seen the light."

And thank you for helping spread the cause of drug policy reform to those nearest and dearest to you.



## New Membership Form

**Make it official** - I'm ready to take the next step in advocating for comprehensive drug policy reform. I want to **become a member!**

- \_\_\_\_\_ \$20
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$35 (member level!)
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$50
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$100
- \_\_\_\_\_ other amount

Please make your check out to **Drug Policy Alliance** and mail it to the address on the right. Thank you.

**Make it official - and charge my credit card.** To make your contribution easy, do it by credit card by completing this form:

- Charge my gift to my—
- \_\_\_\_\_ MasterCard
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Visa
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Discover
  - \_\_\_\_\_ American Express

Name, Card number & Exp

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Here's my information** - so you can send me mail and email updates.

**For both credit card and check pledges**, please fill out the following information:

Address  
\_\_\_\_\_

City, State & ZIP  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone number & email  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Send all new membership forms to this address:

**Drug Policy Alliance**  
70 West 36<sup>th</sup> Street  
16<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10018

Or join online at:  
[www.drugpolicy.org](http://www.drugpolicy.org)



Send all new membership forms to this address:

**Drug Policy Alliance**  
70 West 36<sup>th</sup> Street  
16<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10018

Or join online at:  
[www.drugpolicy.org](http://www.drugpolicy.org)

## Referrals

**You Won Me Over** – After Talking Over Turkey, I realize I want to do more to bring about reasonable and sensible drug policy reform in this country. **Make me a member!**

\_\_\_\_\_ \$20  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$35 (member level!)  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$50  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$100  
\_\_\_\_\_ other amount.

Please make your check out to **Drug Policy Alliance** and mail it to the address on the left. Thank you.

**Make it official – and charge my credit card.** To make your contribution easy, do it by credit card by completing this form:

Charge my gift to my—

\_\_\_\_\_ MasterCard  
\_\_\_\_\_ Visa  
\_\_\_\_\_ Discover  
\_\_\_\_\_ American Express

Name, Card number & Exp

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Here's my information** – so you can send me mail and email updates.

**For both credit card and check pledges**, please fill out the following information:

Address

\_\_\_\_\_

City, State & ZIP

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone number & email

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Referrals

**You Won Me Over** – After Talking Over Turkey, I realize I want to do more to bring about reasonable and sensible drug policy reform in this country. **Make me a member!**

\_\_\_\_\_ \$20  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$35 (member level!)  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$50  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$100  
\_\_\_\_\_ other amount.

Please make your check out to **Drug Policy Alliance** and mail it to the address on the left. Thank you.

**Make it official – and charge my credit card.** To make your contribution easy, do it by credit card by completing this form:

Charge my gift to my—

\_\_\_\_\_ MasterCard  
\_\_\_\_\_ Visa  
\_\_\_\_\_ Discover  
\_\_\_\_\_ American Express

Name, Card number & Exp

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Here's my information** – so you can send me mail and email updates.

**For both credit card and check pledges**, please fill out the following information:

Address

\_\_\_\_\_

City, State & ZIP

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone number & email

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## For the future...

We hope you've enjoyed "Talking Over Turkey" with your loved ones and family.

Just remember, a holiday is a good excuse to spark

some controversy, but issues concerning drugs and drug policy are relevant every day.

Make sure to keep yourself

well informed about the topics you care about – and share your knowledge with others. Keep talking...