

Drug effects

Not simply a chemical issue...

Many of the misconceptions that people have in relation to drugs and drug-use relate to a fundamental misunderstanding of how drugs actually work. Such misconceptions are frequently founded on a model which sees the user as a largely passive subject on which the drug or drugs in question act in a simple and uniform manner. To briefly illustrate this, let us look at a few examples discussed elsewhere:

- "using cannabis will lead to using hard drugs"
- "drugs make people violent"
- "drugs cause crime"

Each of these examples of commonly held beliefs reduce human behaviour to an outcome of some believed property of illicit drugs.

In fact, the outcome of people using drugs is far more complicated than the model at the root of such beliefs allows for. A far more insightful conceptualisation of drug effects may be gained by using a model that takes into account three factors:

- **Drug** (the properties of the substance in question),
- **Set** (the psychology of the individual user in question),
- **Setting** (the social setting in which the drugs are used).

Only when all three factors are taken into account can we suggest how a drug will be experienced by, and effect the behaviour of, an individual.

To accurately report on drugs, a broader lens is needed. Attempts should be made not to over generalise on the nature of drugs themselves and pay more attention to the circumstances of those who take them.

Please note: The Media Guide is currently being reviewed. For further information about drugs, drug use and drug related harms, you can visit [DrugSearch](#) (our online encyclopaedia of drugs). If you are a member of the press, you can contact the DrugScope Press Office at 020 7520 7563 or press@drugscope.org.uk. If you are a student, drug worker or a member of the public with questions about drugs, please contact the DrugScope Information Service on 020 7520 7550 at info@drugscope.org.uk

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[DrugSearch - Setting](#) Where people are and what they are doing when taking drugs

For more information please contact [Ruth Goldsmith](#)