MARIJUANA ON MY MIND

Marijuana is on everyone’s mind. Why do so many people enjoy it? What is it doing in our brains? Is it safe for everyone to use? What should we be telling our children? What are the benefits of medical marijuana? How does CBD live up to its hype? Does marijuana have spiritual power? And with so much conflicting information out there, how do we begin to make up our own minds about cannabis? Marijuana on My Mind is for anyone who has ever experienced the mystique of cannabis or wondered exactly how cannabis works. With over 40 years of clinical experience, Dr Timmen Cermak uses science to make sense of the endless debate between advocates and opponents of cannabis and provides answers to some of the greatest mysteries surrounding marijuana.

Dr Timmen Cermak is a retired addiction psychiatrist from California, with over 40 years’ experience in clinical psychiatric practice. As Past-President of the California Society of Addiction Medicine, co-founder of the National Association for Children of Addiction and board member on California’s Cannabis Advisory Committee, he brings extensive experience from the forefront of addiction medicine. He is an experienced author of books on the science of marijuana. His previous book, From Bud to Brain: A Psychiatrist’s View of Marijuana (2020) was described by CHOICE Reviews as ‘well written and researched’ providing a ‘wealth of science-based evidence’. Tim believes cannabis can be enjoyed safely by most people, with the correct guidance and precautions, and hopes Marijuana on My Mind will provide the public with the information they need to make educated and informed decisions about their own use.
This is a fascinating account, or rather series of accounts, of cannabis – both medical and recreational – written from the perspective of a doctor with extensive clinical experience. The various effects of cannabis, both good and bad, are covered in a uniquely personal narrative that is both enjoyable and educational at the same time.

David Nutt FMedSci, author of *Cannabis (Seeing Through the Smoke): The New Science of Cannabis and Your Health*. Psychiatrist and Professor of Neuropsychopharmacology at Imperial College London.

Beautifully written and cogently argued, *Marijuana on My Mind* interweaves the science and spirituality of cannabis in a book I would recommend to patients, scientists, students, religious leaders, and anyone wanting to learn more about the science of cannabis, its impact on the human body, and its ramifications for the body politic. A fascinating read from a world expert.


We needed a good, balanced, sensible and accessible book about cannabis and the brain, and here we have it. This book will help people understand the promise of cannabis as medicine, but also be aware of the potential dangers, particularly for the developing brain and for people with a predisposition to psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia. Readers will also appreciate that the hype about cannabis is not always backed up by the science, and that there is never a panacea for maladies of the mind.

David Castle, author of *Marijuana and Madness*, Professor of Psychiatry, University of Toronto

In *Marijuana on My Mind*, the descriptor ‘the science and mystique of cannabis’ is aptly added to the title. To attempt to explain both the science of cannabinoids and touch upon
the magic of this important plant would dissuade most from trying but Dr Cermak skillfully overcomes these challenges. This book is both enjoyable to read and also filled with information and interesting anecdotes that the lay public and the mental health clinician urgently need to understand. The first six chapters brilliantly lay the necessary scientific foundation to understand the cannabinoid systems. The next three chapters then tackle the important but frequently misunderstood topic of medical cannabis. Readers will especially appreciate Dr Cermak organizing the scientific evidence into strong and preliminary categories and spending time to visit the important topic of CBD. The final chapter introduces timely topics of interest and controversy for anyone interested in the science and public health implications of the uses of cannabis.”

Steven James, Pharmaceutical Physician Executive

“Cermak has long been a student of cannabis and cannabinoids and has translated what he has learned into very readable texts. He is an excellent, clear writer – a wonderful teacher. He has also been a colleague of mine within professional societies, helping the California Society of Addiction Medicine and the American Society of Addiction Medicine develop evidence-based policy positions on cannabis. In *Marijuana on My Mind*, he uses his usual comfortable style of writing to share scientific detail as well as personal impressions from years of work as a psychiatrist, treating patients with addiction and others, and treating patients who have offered him their self-reports of their own use of cannabis and cannabinoids. His chapters on CBD are some of the most balanced and informative I have read. I have recommended Tim’s previous books and I highly recommend this one.”

Michael M. Miller, MD, DFASAM, DLFAPA, Past President, Amer Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM)
“Marijuana on My Mind" by Dr Timmen Cermak provides an honest, realistic, and personable account of cannabis. Dr Cermak skillfully and artfully combines history, society, science, and storytelling to explain how and why cannabis affects the mind, brain, and body. He provides a balanced perspective devoid of scare tactics, explaining the health effects of cannabis while also explaining the beneficial role that medical marijuana may have on some people struggling with various medical conditions. He also gives a wonderful explanation of addiction, and addresses the stigma of addiction. This book is perfect for adolescents, families, educators, healthcare clinicians, and anyone else interested in truly understand how and why cannabis affects the human body.”

Bonnie Halpern-Felsher, PhD, Professor of Pediatrics/Adolescent Medicine, Stanford University School of Medicine, and Founder and Executive Director, Cannabis Awareness and Prevention Toolkit

“Marijuana on My Mind" provides an authoritative yet entertaining and readable guide to understanding cannabis, the most controversial plant of modern times. Beginning with a history of the discovery of the psychoactive effects of cannabis, Cermak dives deep into explicating how cannabis works on the brain, both how it produces the experience of being ‘high’ and sets the stage for the consequences of over-use, including addiction. The culture and mystique surrounding cannabis use are addressed, as are its established and potential medical uses, with a constant eye on separating fact from fiction. Particular attention is paid to the problem of the misuse or overuse of cannabis, including how to spot it, the underlying brain changes that lead to addiction, and the long-term consequences of use, as well as recovery from dependence on cannabis. The story of cannabis is told in a lively and
engaging way, replete with numerous personal, clinical, and historical anecdotes, and illustrated with abundant pictures, figures, graphs, and charts. This book is now the most definitive one on cannabis available to the general population, and is highly recommended for anyone interested in an objective, scientific account of the effects of cannabis on human behavior.”

Kim T. Mueser, PhD, Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation, Professor of Occupational Therapy and Psychological and Brain Sciences, Boston University
Marijuana on My Mind

The Science and Mystique of Cannabis

TIMMEN L. CERMAK, MD
With deepest appreciation to my wife, Mary, who encourages, tolerates, and helps edit my writing habit.
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Science: The study of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment

Mystique: The aura of mystery, awe, and power surrounding someone or something
I first met Tim in the early 1990s through our mutual professional involvement with the California Society of Addiction Medicine (CSAM) where we have both served as past presidents. I helped found the CSAM organization at a time when addiction was a crime and physicians were subject to arrest for treating addicts at the community level.

Not only a well-regarded practicing psychiatrist, Tim had also become CSAM’s cannabis expert, following the basic science and clinical literature and sharing his insights with the medical community through his many lectures on cannabis. I was aware of his reputation as a compassionate caregiver and knowledgeable addiction psychiatrist, as we personally connected when he came to the aid of a family member of mine who needed help navigating the rocky road to recovery.

As a still-practicing addiction medicine physician, my own interest in Cannabis Culture, drug use, and its effects on individuals and society at large has always been a part of my medical career, and led me to open the Haight Ashbury Free Clinic during the Summer of Love in 1967. Our mission at the clinic was to treat the flocks of people who poured into San Francisco and desperately needed access to affordable and non-judgmental healthcare. We quickly became ground zero for treating a myriad of drug use issues, including addiction, and even established a safe space in the clinic called the “Calm Center,” to help people come down from bad acid trips.
During the Summer of Love, the Haight was flooded with many drugs: speed, hallucinogens such as LSD and psilocybin mushrooms, and, of course, marijuana (also referred to as cannabis today). Marijuana quickly became a symbol of this hippie revolution as many embraced a new philosophy of “better living through chemistry.” We saw many chronic pot users in the clinic who suffered from anxiety, paranoia, and impaired motivation, but these symptoms were masked by other more powerful drugs being used. In this way, the presence of marijuana was downplayed and its long-term effects were not really understood at the time.

People openly smoked pot everywhere, but it was risky. If caught smoking or holding, you could be fined and/or face up to 10 years in jail, as possession and marijuana use were illegal and considered a felony offense. Back then, the police were very hostile to the throngs of drug users (which included anti-war protesters) and conducted many raids, once arresting over 200 hippies at one time.

Marijuana’s place in society has undergone a seismic shift since the 1960s, as this taboo, counterculture drug has now spread into the mainstream through legalization and medical use, not only in California but across the USA. However, its cultural acceptance for recreational and social use, similar to smoking a cigarette or drinking a beer in public, brings a host of issues, especially as today’s cannabis strains are so much more potent than what was smoked in the past. In the medical field, we are now seeing cannabis addiction issues and rampant use among teens, with potentially deleterious, long-term consequences on the developing adolescent brain.

There is still so much to understand about the effects of cannabis on the mind and body, as well as its potential medical uses, and there is no better person to bridge the gap between scientific knowledge and public understanding than the author of the pivotal book you are holding in your hands. *Marijuana on My Mind: The Science and Mystique of*
Cannabis has been written for the general public, synthesizing decades of research, personal observations, clinical cases, and current trends into an accessible and profound resource on the facts and continued allure of cannabis.

Tim is no stranger to writing about cannabis. In addition to his studies and lectures, his previous book on the subject, From Bud to Brain: A Psychiatrist’s View of Marijuana, summarized the science of cannabis for health professionals. And now with Marijuana on My Mind, everyone can benefit from his dedicated, balanced perspective and expert insights. From the very first chapter (“The Science and Mystique of Cannabis”), this book guides readers through the complex issues surrounding Cannabis Culture, including its history, links to spirituality, medical use, addiction, and public health and political concerns. By highlighting a thematic case example for each chapter, Tim makes the science personal and understandable, breaking down the issues vividly. Of particular value is the information he shares on the new advances in understanding cannabis chemistry, as well as the future of cannabis.

My two favorite chapters were Chapter 11 ("When Addiction Hijacks the Brain’s Reward System") and Chapter 12 ("Adolescents and Cannabis") as they reflect and illuminate both my own research and my efforts as a physician treating teens addicted to cannabis. I believe that all readers will connect to this groundbreaking work as Marijuana on My Mind speaks to everyone – whether you are a light to moderate cannabis user, heavy smoker, curious layperson, concerned parent, addiction specialist, or medical professional. I will definitely be recommending this book to my patients and their families.

Tim combines science and his medical background with a description of his personal experience with marijuana as a young man to make him the perfect conduit to put the cannabis world in perspective. Knowing Tim well and admiring his many accomplishments, I recommend all
who are interested in the complexities of cannabis chemistry and culture to read his informative and entertaining book.

David E. Smith, MD, DFASAM, FAACT
Founder, Haight Ashbury Free Medical Clinics
Past President, California Society of Addiction Medicine (CSAM)
Past President and Diplomate, American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM)
Current Chair of Addiction Medicine and Medical Quality Assurance Committee, Muir Woods
Medical Director, Avery Lane Treatment Center for Women
Co-author of *Unchain Your Brain: 10 Steps to Breaking the Addictions that Steal Your Life*. 

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