

Chapter Ten

Don't Worry!

When You Light Up, Lighten Up

In defiance of illustrated books, instructional videos, and new age workshops telling us that during our entire lives we've been doing it all wrong, we are born with an inherent knowledge of how to breath. Without giving it a thought, an adult female at rest inhales and exhales an average of fourteen to fifteen breaths per minute. A slower breather and maybe also a slower thinker, an adult male averages twelve to fourteen times.¹

At a gender-neutral respiration rate of fourteen breaths per minute, that's twenty thousand each day and over 7 million per year. By your thirtieth birthday, you will have breathed in and out well over 200 million times. Try *not* breathing for two minutes and, unless you are an experienced free diver or disciplined yogi, you will faint. If deprived of the breath of life for five minutes, you will flat out die.

The breath of life can also kill you. Worldwide, air pollution is responsible for 7 million human deaths each year.² And there's no telling how many animal deaths. Perpetually breathing city smog (cough!) every minute (asthma!) of every day (emphysema!) for thirty years (cancer!) will pose a greater danger than toking on cannabis even once a day. Among your daily average of twenty thousand breaths of air, do not worry about those twenty tokes of smoke. Worrying can cause you more harm than smoking.

When smoking and quietly sitting still, savor the moment and relax! Stress can cause you more harm than smoking. If you transform the simple act of smoking into a ritual similar to meditation, chanting, or

prayer, you will create a respite of peace and calm amid what might be an otherwise hectic day. While maintaining good health hinges on fresh air, clean water, nourishing food, and regular exercise, above all is peace of mind.

Good health need not mean perfect health. Perfect health is like ghosts. Lots of people talk about ghosts, but no one has ever seen them. If we were perfectly healthy for our entire lives, we would never die. More in sync with reality, we settle for near-perfect health. And when we die, we are lucky if we leave the world as healthy corpses.

SNOOZE NOT BOOZE

Short of being perfectly healthy or being just plain perfect, we smoke cannabis. Despite all of society's advisories against smoking, we still puff away. We cannabis smokers may be a minority, but minority status does not make us invisible or criminal. A society that has long condoned the use of alcohol and tobacco only recently has begun to reevaluate its historic censure of cannabis. Misled by prohibitionist politicians in their crusade to suppress the civil rights of cannabis users, much of twentieth-century Western society's official standpoint had been dead wrong.

Tobacco smoke is responsible for one out of every five deaths and the leading cause of preventable death among Americans.³ The second leading cause of preventable death is obesity thanks to the modern American diet and lifestyle.⁴ The third leading cause is alcohol.⁵ A scant 11 fluid ounces (330 cc) of pure alcohol can kill you.⁶ From a bottle of 100-proof whiskey, meaning 50-percent alcohol, you could die by drinking merely 22 fluid ounces (650 cc). That's less than a traditional "fifth of whiskey." For the individual and society, as the most popular mind-altering drug in the world,⁷ booze is also the most toxic.⁸

In comparison, no one has ever died of overdose from smoking cannabis in its herbal form. A lethal dose is virtually unattainable,⁹ no matter how hell-bent the smoker. According to one guesstimate, to down a fatal dose you would need to smoke eight hundred joints in one sitting.¹⁰ The knockout punch would be the carbon monoxide not the THC. Despite our present day's increased potencies, the zero-percent death rate from fifty years ago remains zero percent today. No day is long enough