



Reasoning with Ethics

APRIL 15, 2021

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Ethics in action creates character.

Use this blog to:

1. Lead class discussions in social studies, civics, ethics, or advisory classes.
2. Teach students skills to analyze cases with core ethical values.
3. Recognize skills in support of SEE's Tri-Factor Model of ethical functioning.

[Visit the online Ethics Blog.](#)



Legalizing Marijuana

Virginia and New York are two of the most recent states to legalize some form of recreational use of marijuana. They join 27 other states that have now taken some action to decriminalize marijuana.

The debate that has taken place over legalization often includes the argument for the costs of

criminalizing the personal choices of individuals that do not harm others. There is certainly evidence that the “war against drugs” has been costly and ineffective. Other advocates note that you cannot stop the use of pot, so it might as well be legally regulated and have the state earn taxes on the sale.

The opponents to legalization of marijuana point to the remarkable harmful effects demonstrated by many studies over many years. Journalist Alex Berenson writes in a 2019 essay for Imprimis, “And I soon realized that in all my years as a journalist I had never seen a story where the gap between insider and outsider knowledge was so great...Almost everything you think you know about the health effects of cannabis, almost everything advocates and the media have told you for a generation, is wrong.” He goes on in the essay linked to the Blog website to describe the substantial correlational link between marijuana use, mental illness, and violence.

This is a very complicated topic with passionate advocates on both sides of the issue. Do the arguments for and against legalizing pot have an ethical claim? Can an ethical analysis using core values bridge the divide between those seeking decriminalization and those concerned with the harmful outcomes? Students are asked to gather more facts (See Blog website) about legalization of marijuana and determine if there is an ethical solution to this debate. Assuming there is agreement that the harmful effects merit restricted access to pot, are there legalization strategies that legitimately reduce the harmful outcomes of prolonged use?

Supplemental Links

NPR: Virginia Legalizes Recreational Pot-- <https://www.npr.org/2021/04/07/985014557/virginia-16th-state-to-legalize-recreational-pot-latest-to-emphasize-social-equi>

ABC News: Legal Marijuana movement Builds (1:02)-- https://abcnews.go.com/US/legal-marijuana-movement-builds-states-change-laws/story?id=76907902&cid=clicksource_4380645_15_hero_headlines_headlines_hed

ABC News: NY Legalizes Marijuana (1:56) - <https://abcnews.go.com/US/york-legalizes-recreational-marijuana-expunges-pot-convictions/story?id=76775175>

Imprimis: Marijuana, Mental Illness, and Violence, January 2019 • Volume 48, Number 1 • Alex

Berenson -- https://www.ethicsed.org/uploads/8/9/6/8/89681855/imprimis_2019_danger_in_legalizing_pot.pdf



