

## Drug Rehabs

Contributed by Craig Ferguson  
Wednesday, 13 September 2006

Drug rehabs provide a critically important function for our society. As Americans, we live in a world that all but worships medication, and almost encourage the use of chemicals to solve everyday problems. Though I am not against the use of medication when appropriate, the work focused, high stress environment that America encourages doesn't mix well with the heavy use of drugs. The combination sets the stage for rampant drug abuse and addiction. Is it any wonder that as a nation America consumes 70% of the world's drugs, both legal and illegal, even though we only represent around 5% of the world's total population?

It is clear that America is the biggest market for drugs in the world, and is no small wonder that so many drug companies and illicit drug lords do everything in their power to get their product into our country. Although it's extremely hard to accurately gauge the depth of the issue, most estimates suggest that at least 20% of the population of the United States will be addicted to some form of drug in their life. Yet drug rehabs are still few in number, and are often packed with waiting lists that extend outward for weeks and even months.

So why are drug rehabs so scarce? Are we as a nation in some kind of denial about our drug abuse issues? When it is clear that we have declared "war" on drugs, why is it that the treatment approach seems to be so utterly lacking? Most of the rest of the world will put a person caught using a controlled substance into a drug rehab, while in America we are more likely to put such a person in prison. Are we trying to send the message that jail is a more appropriate treatment for drug addiction than a drug rehab?

Unfortunately, there is still a strong stigma associated with drug use that makes drug addiction a moral issue, when it is really a medical one. On one hand we applaud medication and practically shove it down people's throats with wall-to-wall television and radio commercials, magazine ads, and more. Then on the other hand we view illicit drug abusers as weak willed, immoral people that should be punished. All the while, it is the two legal drugs alcohol and nicotine that are causing the most actual mayhem and quality drug rehabs are reserved for only a select few.

The statistics are clearly showing that our war on drugs is a losing battle, and needs to be approached differently. We can't pump billions of dollars into law enforcement and spend next to nothing on education and treatment. Most drug addicts only get worse in prison, not better. A drug addict needs a drug rehab, not a jail cell.