

Careers in ecstasy use: do ecstasy users cease of their own accord?

Implications for intervention development.

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Abstract

BACKGROUND: Ecstasy (MDMA, 3, 4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine) use is widespread in the Netherlands, with a lifetime prevalence of 4.3%, and two-thirds of dance party visitors being ecstasy users. However, research into Dutch ecstasy use patterns is lacking. In addition, recent studies suggest that ecstasy users cease their use automatically, which implies that interventions would do better to better focus on the promotion of harm reduction strategies than on inducing cessation. The current study addresses this process of ecstasy cessation. **METHODS:** 32 participants from the Dutch dance scene were interviewed, and the results were systematically analysed using NVivo. **RESULTS:** Most ecstasy users had started to use out of curiosity. During use, users applied a host of harm reduction strategies, albeit inconsistently and sometimes incorrectly. Most users appeared to cease ecstasy use automatically because of loss of interest or changing life circumstances (e.g. a new job or relationship). **CONCLUSION:** It appears that cessation of ecstasy use is largely determined by environmental variables and not by health concerns. This supports the idea that health promotion resources are better spent in trying to promote consistent and correct application of harm reduction practices than in trying to induce cessation.

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