



POISONED BY THE WEED: MARIJUANA AND PRETTY LITTLE KILLERS

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Why did Shelia Eddy and Rachel Shoaf kill Skylar Neese on July 6, 2012? Authors Daleen Berry and Geoffrey C. Fuller explored the shocking incident in *Pretty Little Killers*, a New York Times bestseller. The book came to no definite conclusions why two 16-year-old girls from West Virginia would brutally murder another friend, but marijuana is a constant theme from beginning to end. Marijuana, pot and/or weed, is mentioned 36 times in the book.

The authors had been given access to Skylar's journals and writings, looking for clues as to how and why such an event could happen. They explored the girls' backgrounds. They interviewed friends, family and law enforcement and followed leads from online social media discussions.

At the end of the book, there is a summary of 15 warning signs to parents that their kids are in trouble. Pot and alcohol use are mentioned. Although these girls occasionally got drunk, the weed was by far the bigger focus in their relationship. The girls liked to sneak out at night in Shelia's car to smoke pot, breaking curfew. And — of course — they smoked pot on the night of the murder.

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The book provides evidence that Skylar, considered a compassionate and amiable person, became a more difficult personality after she started smoking pot.

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Bad Feelings, Numb Feelings

Nearly every notorious murder trial or murderer in the news this year was a marijuana user: **Eddie Routh** who suffered from PTSD and marijuana-induced psychosis when he killed; **Robert Durst** who has left a trail of murder mysteries throughout the country; former **NFL player Aaron Hernandez** turned on his pot-smoking buddy and murdered him; the Aurora theatre shooter, **James Holmes**, and — of course — the Boston bomber, **Johar Tsarnaev**. In one study from a New York prison, 70% of prisoners had used marijuana within 24 hours of committing the crime.

In some situations, weed can flatten emotions to such an extent that it kills the conscience and empathy for others. **In other cases, it makes people outright delusional and psychotic.** People who compare pot

to alcohol say booze makes users angry and violent while pot makes users mellow. They fail to mention that marijuana can cause depression and poor impulse control.

One study by Yale and University of Pennsylvania professors tracked the feelings of marijuana users' before and after effects in 43 young adult subjects. Published in March, 2015, it showed marijuana use is associated with changes in impulse control and hostility in daily life — lasting even the day after pot use. The study did not observe similar hostility and poor impulse control after alcohol use. It concludes that further study would be a way to understand how “deleterious effects of marijuana are observed for mental health and psychosocial functioning.” ■

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