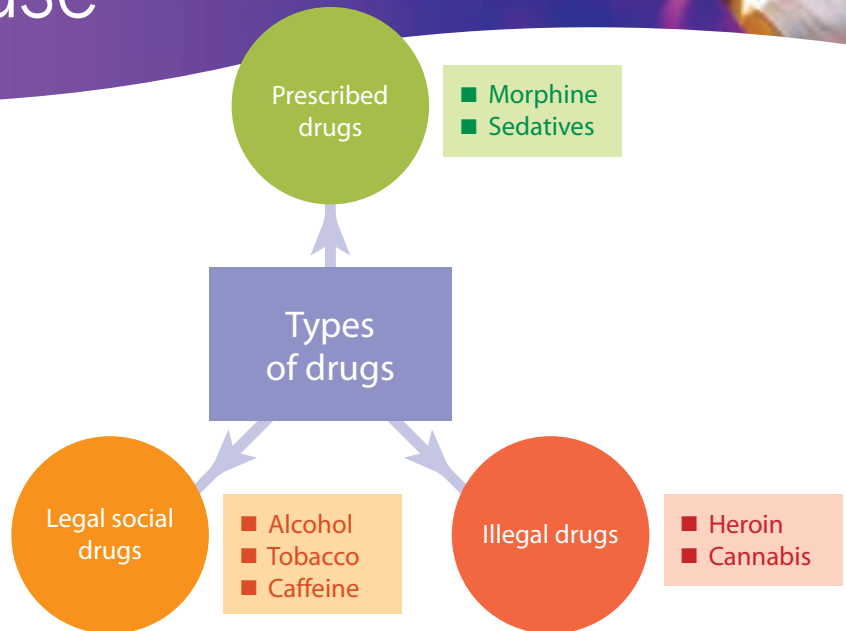


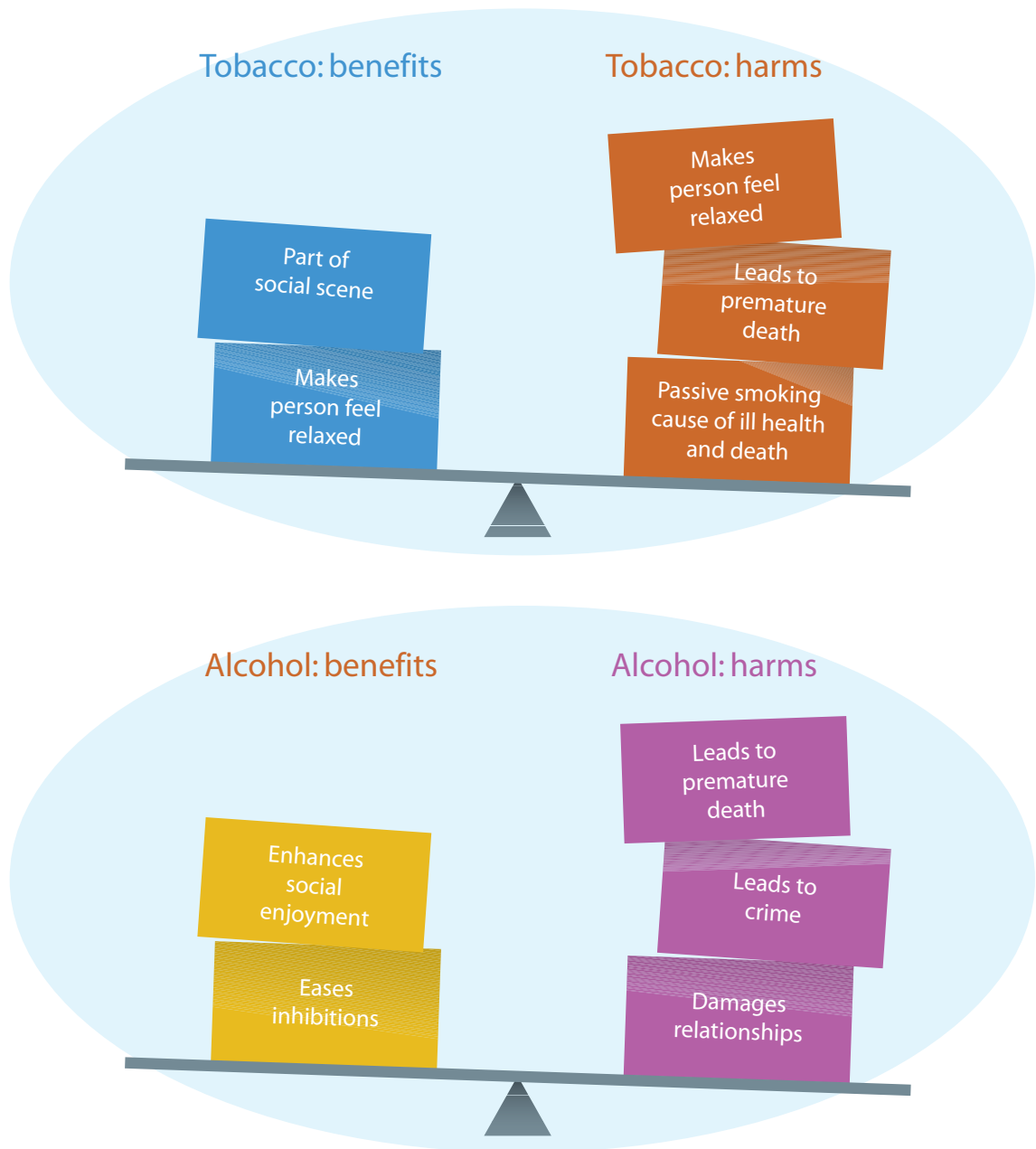
Topic 3

Religious attitudes to drug abuse

Types of drug and their effects

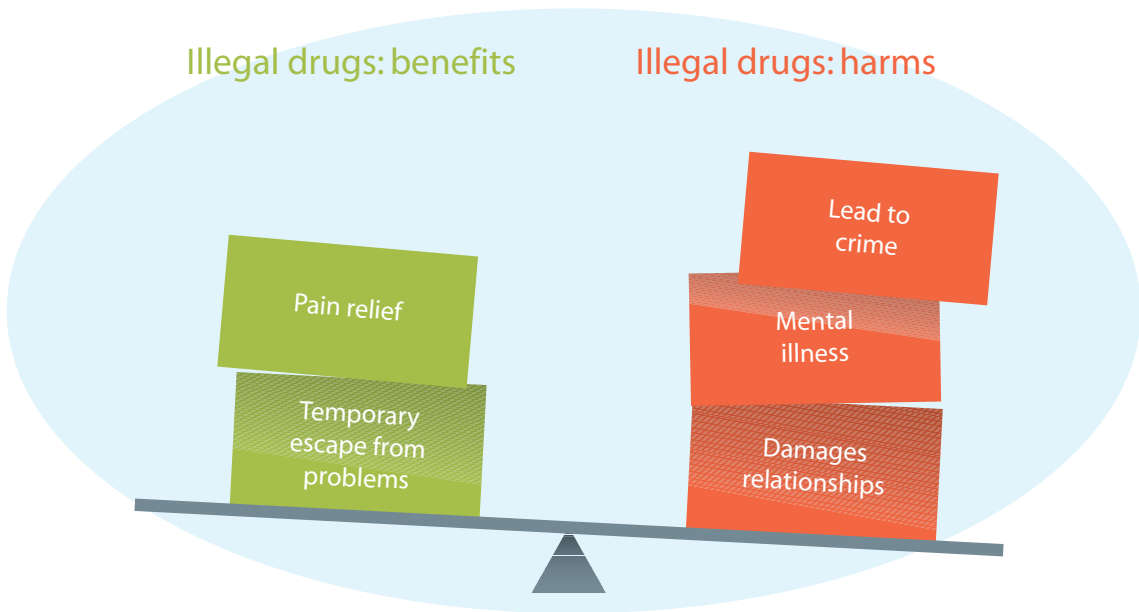
A **drug** is a natural or artificial substance that has physical and/or emotional and mental effects when taken. These effects may be beneficial or harmful. Drugs may be legal, legal when prescribed by a doctor or illegal.





Social drug-taking

Despite all the highlighting in the media of the dangers of smoking and heavy drinking, both continue to be a serious problem and they account for a significant proportion of public expenditure, particularly in the health service. Government thinking seems to be that increasing taxes on **tobacco** and **alcohol** will make people give up smoking and cut down on drinking. Many people would like to see these taxes used in education and in the National Health Service.



Classification and legal status of drugs



Illegal drug-taking in the UK

The UK has the most serious illegal drugs problem in Europe. While the general public is agreed that something needs to be done in terms of prevention and treatment, even experts do not agree on what.

- In many other countries, the policy is treatment rather than punishment for taking drugs, so the UK should adopt that policy
- Drugs should be legalised as this would stop all the practices associated with drug-dealing, and reduce crime
- Legalising soft drugs would only intensify the problem — cannabis is often referred to as a gateway drug
- More effective education in schools
- More effective education and treatment programmes in prisons
- Better access to treatment centres and more effective follow-up after treatment

Religious views on mind and body in relation to drugs



Buddhism

- Human life is the perfect/very precious rebirth (Tibetan Buddhism)
- Living according to **magga** (Middle Way) and using meditation includes taking care of bodies to enhance spiritual life
- First Precept about not harming anyone — social and illegal drugs may cause harm to self, others and environment
- **Fifth Precept** (not to take intoxicants that cloud the mind) cuts out social and illegal drugs
- Kammic consequences
- Only medicinal drugs are acceptable
- Practice of right livelihood cuts out any involvement in production of non-medicinal drugs
- Right action cuts out use of performance-enhancing drugs in sport
- Involvement in drug treatment centres as expression of metta and karuna



Christianity

- Human body and mind are priceless gifts from God (Psalm 8:4–5; Psalm 139:13; Luke 12:6–7)
- Body to be respected as temple of Holy Spirit
- Most Christians discourage smoking because of harm it does and because not good **stewardship** of money
- Attitudes vary about alcohol

Majority view	Salvation Army and many Methodists
Acceptable in moderation — heavy drinking causes many problems and makes people loud and foolish (Proverbs 20:1)	Teetotal — sets bad example to others
Given by God to give joy to humans (Psalm 104)	Breaks up families
Jesus drank and he used wine at institution of Holy Communion	Leads to crime and causes accidents etc.
Christian treatment centres, soup kitchens etc. for alcoholics	Salvation Army hostels

- All mainstream denominations are against the use of illegal drugs — cause of immense harm to self, family and society
- Shows disrespect to body and mind
- The new slavery (Pope John Paul II)
- Use of performance-enhancing drugs is dishonest
- Duty to obey law of land (Romans 13)
- **Rastafarians** justify use of **marijuana** (ganja weed) — God gave herbs and plants to be used (Genesis 1:12, 29)
- Compassion for drug addicts following Jesus' example (Mark 2:17) and shown practically and through prayer

Yeldall Bridges

- A Christian centre providing residential rehabilitation for men aged 18–50 with serious drug or alcohol problems
- The initial programme lasts 3–6 months and includes:
 - individual and group therapy
 - learning about life skills, attitudes etc.
 - recreation, e.g. sport
 - daily work in the house or grounds
 - further skills training, e.g. literacy and numeracy, food hygiene
- The second stage lasts 3–4 months
- Residents live in flats and prepare for independent living
- After completing the programme there is aftercare for up to a year



Yeldall Bridges has been helping men to overcome serious drug or alcohol addictions

Hinduism

- Idea of balance in bodily systems leads to use of **ayurvedic treatments** along with modern medicine to serve the atman
- Harming body creates negative karma
- Principle of ahimsa and goal of moksha — many Hindus oppose smoking, drinking and illegal drugs
- In India smoking is banned in many public places and alcohol is not served at government functions
- Not to become dependent on drugs (**laws of Manu**)
- Many Hindus smoke and drink in moderation but reject illegal drugs because of potential dangers
- **Sadhus** (holy men) use alcohol and cannabis in meditation

Islam

- Role as **khalifahs** (stewards) entails treating body as a temple and keeping mind alert for prayer
- Acceptance of medicinal drugs if necessary, including those that contain alcohol if no alternative
- To avoid anything that would lead to destruction (Qur'an)
- To avoid hurting self or neighbour (Hadith)
- Smoking **makruh** (disapproved of) but not **haram** (forbidden)
- Smoking not allowed during **Ramadan** or near other people
- Alcohol haram (**surah 5:93–94**) — flogging is Shari'ah punishment
- Seen as the mother of all vices and one of **Iblis'** most effective temptations
- Muhammad stated that those who drank were not believers
- Alcohol also **khamr** — makes mind unfit to concentrate on Allah's will
- May not pray in mosque for 40 days after drinking and can only pray anywhere if mind is totally clear
- Not to sell alcohol, own or work in place that sells it or give it as present
- Any involvement with illegal drugs is haram because of harm caused and it breaks the law
- Illegal drugs khamr — same restrictions on prayer and same Shari'ah penalty
- Muslims are expected to help addicts

A Muslim cautionary tale

A man was asked to choose between ripping the Qur'an, killing a child, worshipping an idol, drinking a cup of wine or having sex with a woman (not his wife). He decided that drinking the wine would be the least evil, so he drank it and then went on to do all the other things!

Judaism

- Humans created in God's image — treat minds and bodies with respect
- Keeping body fit and healthy is a way of serving God (**Maimonides**)
- Use of medicinal drugs allowed
- Many Jews discourage smoking (especially in public places and on **Shabbat**) because bodies are on loan from God
- Drinking makes people loud and foolish (Proverbs 20:1)
- Rabbi cannot give ruling if he/she has had a glass of wine (Talmud)
- Wine brings joy (Psalm 104) and is used on Shabbat and **Pesach**
- Encouragement to drink too much at **Purim** (Talmud)
- Totally opposed to use of illegal drugs
- **Halakhic rules** forbid breaking law of land, losing self-control, harming bodies
- Care given to addicts and alcoholics



It is customary to drink wine, share food and wear costumes during the Jewish Purim festival

Sikhism

- Bodies to be respected as temples made by God
- Strong emphasis on physical fitness
- **Kesh** is a symbol of faith and commitment and keeping body in natural state
- **Kangha** is a symbol of cleanliness
- Mind to be kept clear to focus on God
- **Kurahits** (prohibitions) in **Reht Maryada** (code of conduct) ban use of tobacco, alcohol and illegal drugs — those who break them have to undergo **Khalsa** (community of the pure) initiation again
- **Nihang Sikhs** take cannabis to help with meditation
- Many work with addicts as form of sewa



Sikhs use a comb, or kangha, to secure their hair before winding on the turban

Key words

alcohol
ayurvedic treatments
caffeine
cannabis
drug
ecstasy
Fifth Precept
gurus
halakhic rules
haram
heroin
Holy Communion
Iblis
kangha
kesh
khalifahs
Khalsa
khamr
kurahits
laws of Manu
magga
Maimonides
makruh
marijuana
Nihang Sikhs
Pesach
Purim
Ramadan
Rastafarians
Reht Maryada
sadhus
Shabbat
solvents
stewardship
surah
teetotal
tobacco



Guru Nanak:
refused opiate
drink on grounds
that he was
addicted to God

Guru Amar Das:
drinking wine
leads to insanity
and loss
of judgement

Guru Gobind Singh:
uprooted tobacco
plant, saying that
alcohol destroys
one generation
but smoking
destroys several

Gurus' verdict:
no non-medical
drugs for Sikhs

Test yourself

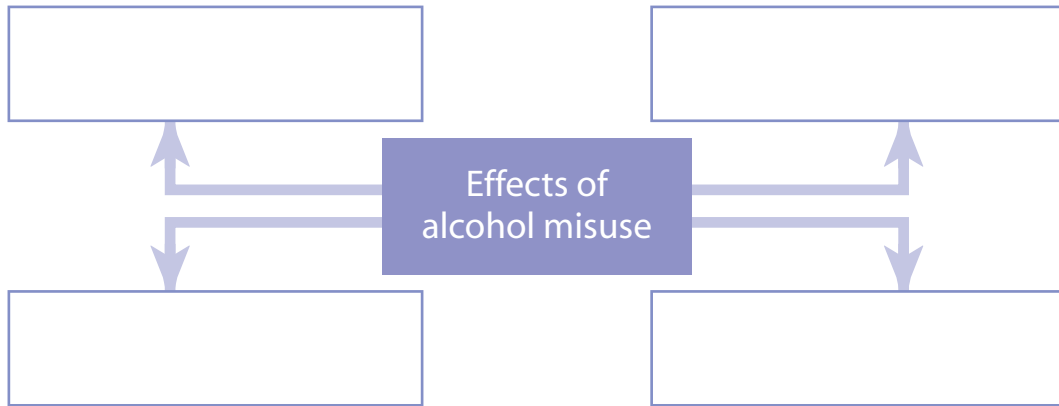


Case study

Jackie Pullinger

- She wanted to become a missionary and in 1966, aged 22, she went to Hong Kong
- She became a primary teacher in the Walled City, the most deprived and dangerous part of Kowloon
- She opened a small youth club
- Many who came were members of Triad gangs and drug addicts
- Some became Christian and overcame their addiction
- She gave up her teaching job to concentrate on working with young people
- She opened a home for those who needed help
- She won the respect of one Triad leader who promised not to hound any of the members of his gang who left through becoming Christian
- She and two missionaries have set up St Stephen's Society, a drug rehabilitation programme in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia

- 1 Explain how Jackie Pullinger's beliefs led her to work with drug addicts and Triad members in Hong Kong. Include references to Christian teachings in your answer.
- 2 Complete the four boxes in the diagram below by giving four effects of alcohol misuse.



Examination question

**Explain why religious believers hold different views on drinking alcohol.
Refer to at least one religion in your answer.**

(6 marks)

Exam tip

When you are asked to explain different views, make sure that you do include more than one set of views. If you don't, you may lose half the available marks.

