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Do drugs without dying

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Dressed in a pinstripe suit and an unbuttoned white shirt, Eddie Einbinder wears his black hair long, strongly resembling what a young Oscar Wilde might have looked like. Somehow it's not surprising that this colorful (and diplomatic) personality is responsible for a book on dangerous and illegal substances. "How to Have Fun and Not Die," Einbinder's guide to safer drug use, was the topic of Tuesday's lecture at the weekly meeting of Students for a Responsible Drug Policy.

Einbinder looks forward to a future when he might grace Oprah's couch, but for now most of his time is spent at colleges. He heads to Chicago for '4-20', then Berkeley for the big Students for a Responsible Drug Policy national conference and will end in his tour in Tijuana, "hopefully."

The winner of the Grand Prize at the 2008 New York Book Festival, "How to Have Fun and Not Die" is what Einbacher refers to as "a Princeton review, drug wise," a notion the stodgy "Cambria" font works to substantiate. Though he admits to levels of intake above and beyond casual experimentation (heroin withstanding), Einbinder knows how to carry himself in the classroom. Einbinder graduated from Lehigh University with a major in psychology and anticipates a doctorate in psychiatry from a "good school." This is not unlikely.

Here are a couple rules from his lecture that were most relevant to Yale students:

1. "It's almost always a combination of two or more [toxic substances] in your body at the same time that results in death; and ... almost always two or more depressants." Drugs like opium, Xanax and Roofies work hard and fast to help alcohol stop the breathing process.
2. Be "conservative": take only one drug at a time, and "it's almost entirely certain that you're going to be fine." Einbinder would argue that this goes for most anything taken as intended.
3. Viagra + Ecstasy = something awful. "You should never do anything that both enables you and motivates you to use your dick for four hours." Something horrendous.
4. "You can instantly die of a Nicotine overdose." Smoking a cigarette while you are wearing a nicotine patch, chewing nicotine gum or wearing a birth control patch could make your heart explode. He said it; don't try it.
5. Ecstasy can make people drink too much water. Enough to die. "This is called water intoxication. ... I think this conveys how complicated a particular situation can get," he said, referring to the importance of also staying hydrated while on E.
6. "Pulling the trigger might be the most significant way to keep yourself alive." In other words, in case of emergency, vom.

Society wasn't ready for his findings until now, Einbinder contends. A big part of his policy is legalization: as it stands, the very illegality of drugs makes them dangerous. "I don't think this is any longer a war on drugs," he said. "The humans lost. It now resembles a genocide."

It's obvious that many of these assertions come from strong empirical research on Einbinder's part. But it's unclear whether or not all his facts check out scientifically.

The tension comes to the fore during the conversation in Branford when students push back on some matters of addiction. One attendee, Valerie Steinberg '09 put it like this: "[It's] a fantastic idea for a book, and the genre of drug educative literature will soon begin to explode, and this guy caught the updraft. I think he has a long career ahead of him, but as for now, talking to him was like talking to someone who has done a lot of drugs and goes to Yale, rather than a miracle expert."

Einbinder is candid when it comes to his own family's history of addictive personality — there is none. That Einbinder serves as both head research and chief lab rat for his own work both warrants and counteracts his claims. Whether or not this makes his book wholly efficacious, or partially bogus, is left up to the reader to decide.