

Historical Figures in Drugs

Is intelligence related to an increased likelihood of recreational drug use? It's an interesting hypothesis, and one that's been gaining momentum in recent years.



1. Sigmund Freud — Cocaine

To Freud, cocaine was more than a personal indulgence; he regarded it as a veritable wonder drug, and for many years was a huge proponent of its use in a wide array of applications. In a letter written to his fiancée, Martha, Freud wrote: "If all goes well, I will write an essay [on cocaine] and I expect it will win its place in therapeutics by the side of morphine and superior to it ... I take very small doses of it regularly against depression and against indigestion and with the most brilliant of success."



2. Francis Crick — LSD

Francis Crick — of the DNA-structure discovering Watson, Crick and Franklin — reportedly told numerous friends and colleagues about his LSD experimentation during the time he spent working to determine the molecular structure that houses all life's information.



3. Thomas Edison — Cocaine Elixirs

In 1863, French chemist Angelo Mariani invented "Vin Mariani," a Bordeaux wine treated with coca leaves, the active ingredient of which is none other than cocaine. The ethanol content in the Bordeaux could extract cocaine from the coca leaves in concentrations exceeding 7 mg per fluid ounce of wine. Thomas Edison — the prolific American inventor and notorious insomniac (though perhaps not surprisingly) — was one of many people of the period known to regularly consume the cocaine-laced elixir.



4. Paul Erdős — Amphetamines

Paul Erdős — well known for his hyperactivity; his habit of working 19-hour days, even well into his old age; and his tendency to show up on his colleagues' doorsteps demanding they "open their minds" to mathematical dialogue — was one of the most prolific mathematicians who ever lived, publishing more peer-reviewed papers than any other mathematician in history. His secret? According to him, amphetamines.



5. Steve Jobs — LSD

LSD was a big deal for Steve Jobs. How big? Evidently, Jobs believed that experimenting with LSD in the 1960s was "one of the two or three most important things he had done in his life." What's more, he felt that there were parts of him that the people he knew and worked with could not understand, simply because they hadn't had a go at psychedelics.



6. Bill Gates — LSD

Bill Gates totally did experiment with LSD, though an excerpt from a 1994 interview with Playboy reveals he was much less open about it than Jobs:

"The young mind can deal with certain kinds of goofing around that I don't think at this age I could. I don't think you're as capable of handling lack of sleep or whatever challenges you throw at your body as you get older. However, I never missed a day of work."



7. John C. Lilly — LSD, Ketamine

Neuroscientist John C. Lilly was a pioneer in the field of electronic brain stimulation. He was the first person to map pain and pleasure pathways in the brain; founded an entire branch of science exploring interspecies communication between humans, dolphins and whales; invented the world's first sensory deprivation chamber; and conducted extensive personal experimentation with mind-altering drugs like LSD and ketamine.



8. Richard Feynman — LSD, Marijuana, Ketamine

Feynman was always careful about drug use, for fear of what it might do to his brain — giving up alcohol, for example, when he began to exhibit symptoms of addiction. In "Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman!," he writes, "You see, I get such fun out of thinking that I don't want to destroy this most pleasant notion that makes life such a big kick."



9. Kary Mullis — LSD

If you've worked in a biomedical research lab since the 1980s, there is an exceedingly good chance you've performed a PCR, the technique that can turn a single segment of DNA into millions of identical copies, or are at least familiar with it. You have Mullis to thank for that. The secret to Mullis' breakthrough? In a September 1994 issue of California Monthly, Mullis says that he "took plenty of LSD" In the '60s and '70s, going so far as to call his "mind-opening" experimentation with psychedelics "much more important than any courses [he] ever took."



10. Carl Sagan — Marijuana

Preeminent astrophysicist and cosmologist Carl Sagan not only smoked marijuana regularly, he was also a strong advocate for its use in enhancing intellectual pursuits — though not as publicly as others on this list. Having said that, Sagan did contribute an essay to the 1971 book titled "Marijuana Reconsidered" that spoke to the virtues of marijuana use.



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