

OPINION: one mother's experience with a child on "bath salts" and "spice"

Lately there has been a lot of attention on Synthetic Marijuana (also known as spice or K2) and bath salts. The difference between the two are the effects of the drug. "Spice" gets you high in a way similar to smoking pot whereas bath salts get you high like you have done Methamphetamine. Both give you hallucinations with bath salts being the worst. Those are the most violent hallucinations. The results are similar in how it changes your personality after the fact. If you ask the ones that smoke either drug, if there is a problem in New Bedford, they will tell you "No." I am here to disagree.

It seems to be the "new thing to do." I have seen people choose homelessness because they are so busy getting high on spice. Entire paychecks that go to buying their spice. Here is my story on what can happen with bath salts/spice:

My daughter Caitlin was in the Army National Guard in the AIT division, intelligence training, which is not an easy division to get into. We were living in Colorado where spice and bath salts were sold at 7-Eleven stores. They had already banned it in Colorado Springs by this point, but the people that made spice/bath salts always found a way around that by adding new chemicals so it found its way back onto the counter at head shops.

During one of Caitlin's trainings back in 2011, another guardsman told her that she did bath salts and asked my daughter if she wanted to try it. Up to this point Caitlin had not smoked spice or bath salts as the dangers were all over the news/papers/etc. She smoked "once" and that was the

beginning of the end.

Training ended and she got back home and proceeded to spend the next 3 weeks getting high on bath salts every single day. Thousands of dollars gone in a matter of weeks. I finally got a phone call from her when she was high and through the confusion I was able to figure out what was going on. She ultimately was asking for help, she just didn't know it because she was high.

I was living in North Carolina at that point. She flew in to me where she couldn't get high (they weren't selling in this state) but the 3 weeks she was with me it was obvious that the chemistry in her brain had changed. She wasn't making sense when she spoke, she would ramble about miscellaneous things and sounded like a "crazy person." I finally got a rehabilitation center to take her, but she refused. She chose to fly to her dad in New Bedford where she was going to live with him until "she got better." She was 22, I couldn't forbid her.

She was on the plane to Massachusetts when she decided she was going to open the plane door in flight. Thankfully she was tackled by other passengers and restrained until she got to Providence where the F.B.I. was waiting for her. She was not arrested because her dad convinced the police he would take her immediately to a crisis center in New Bedford where she was evaluated and released. The drug was so new in New Bedford that no one could help her or knew the problem.

Fast forward a few months (2012) where she found she could buy spice in New Bedford and started smoking again. She lost a good job to get high as she looked and acted mentally ill and would "blow off" work to get high. She ended up in the Rogers Unit and in a mental hospital where, although they couldn't diagnose her with any one issue, they gave her drug after drug for psychosis. They were trying to prove a mental illness. I fought to get her out of the hospital(s) and get her home with

me. I had moved back to New Bedford at that point to give her a safe place to live. I had her off all the drugs and only on an anti-depressant which worked wonderfully!

She almost seemed back to normal. Caitlin found spice again, locked her self in the bathroom for days at a time and after one night of getting high, the police found her on top of the Zeiterion Garage wanting to jump.

Caitlin was back in the Rogers Unit and then transferred to another mental hospital. After over a year, she was released and back home with me still on the meds. At this point it was 2014 and it had been three years of hell. I thought this was when she was going to get better. The medications were at a very high dosage so we kept her on them until we could ween her off. Caitlin was barely functioning. She couldn't/wouldn't leave the house or do anything but sit on the couch. She didn't understand or want to believe she had any issues so she refused to see the doctors any more. We got her off the prescribed drugs, but there was no going back at this point. She had obvious mental issues that could not be reversed. But the drugs didn't help.

Caitlin finally succeeded in committing suicide by a very violent method last February. She couldn't accept that her mind didn't work right and she only saw herself as that normal woman who attended Arizona State, spent a few years in the Army, lived on her own with her own car, a good job, etc. She refused to believe she had any problems.

Those that smoke spice and bath salts don't **see** that they have any problem with the drug. Those that I know are addicted to it say it isn't a problem. Those are the same people that now live on the streets panhandling so they can go to the store to smoke.

It's a HUGE problem in New Bedford. I can easily think of a dozen people that live for the next "fake high." They can't

function when they are high, they are mean and combative and downright stupid. I walk down the streets of downtown and I can smell it all over the place. It's not illegal so you can't get arrested for it nor can they take it away from you. If you chose to smoke spice/bath salts, please know it will change your life forever and you are **not** immune to the effects. Don't think you're special and it won't change who you are, because it will.

I've seen it first hand. If only I could help one person...