

Jeremy Clorfene Q&A

What Happens Next – 02.06.2022

Larry Bernstein:

Jeremy, thank you. Let's start with weed. There is a world view that marijuana use in moderation is not harmful. A few times a week, or just Saturday night to get high and have some fun, "What's the big deal dad?"

How bad is weed? Does it cause depression? Does it make kids stronger or weaker? What should I be telling my kids?

Jeremy Clorfene:

It's a great question. It's an appropriate question given what I'm seeing right now. The active ingredient in weed is 10%, 15, 20, 25, 30, 50% THC levels in the basic flower or even in gummies. And what we grew up on, weed was about 4 to 5% THC. It would be equivalent to us growing up on beer versus our kids today drinking the equivalent amount in bourbon. And then someone says, "Oh, weed isn't so bad." This stuff is powerful. It makes them dumb slow, lethargic.

And teenager brains are still developing. It is seriously potent stuff. And I am seeing it in my practice, I'm going to call him Josh. Josh is 23 years old, parents got divorced, tried going to college, didn't work out, didn't have the internal muscle to stick through it. He just didn't have that fortitude. He smoked weed a lot.

Josh struggled, and the first thing I said is, less is better, zero is best. He's smoking less, he's like, "God, I'm sleeping better, I feel better, I'm not as anxious." He came in for anxiety because he was completely underachieving in every facet.

I'm telling the parents out there; weed is the problem.

Larry Bernstein:

You mentioned that a lot of kids are living at home and that adolescence is creeping into adulthood. Is this a mixed blessing.

Jeremy Clorfene:

What is the main reason to living at home, they're trying to save up for money. I think the big five which is, housing, automobiles, technology, education and healthcare has been steadily increasing. If you want to live on your own it's really hard if you have a job that pays you \$30,000.

They living at home because, "I'm not comfortable working harder and kind of grinding it out." And kids today are having sex later, they're getting their driver's license later. And Larry, the

truth is when we grew up, if you wanted to have fun, it was not in the house, there was nothing in the house that was fun. These kids are basically saying, it's uncomfortable to be an adult."

Larry Bernstein:

Why are young adults making this decision to live at home and stay away from the fun?

Do they prefer to hang out with mom and dad? Or are they just happening to be in the same house?

Jeremy Clorfene:

They're in the same house, online, okay? So we didn't have online.

If we wanted to have fun, we were outside the house. That's where we were socializing. It's also work. I couldn't wait, I came home from college, found a place and never came back, because there was nothing back home that, that I found pleasurable. I just want you to understand, it's the reverse.

Larry Bernstein:

Jim Miller spoke 2 weeks ago on What Happens Next about the history of HBO. And specifically, about The Sopranos, which is a story about a gangster's relationship with his therapist. Tony was scared that his peers would discover that he was getting help. Have social norms changed about having a therapist?

Jeremy Clorfene:

The answer is yes, all levels of whether it's seeing a psychiatrist, seeing a psychologist, seeing a life coach, seeing an executive coach, seeing a sports psychologist.

Larry Bernstein:

Good or bad?

Jeremy Clorfene:

It's complicated. Am I glad the stigma has come down? Yes. The way we're parenting our kids, we are doing, working our butt off to do the best for them, but we're inadvertently don't know how to separate, giving them opportunities, helping them, and then letting them be independent, okay?

I grew up in Evanston. I was 11, I was in seventh grade, and me and my buddies took the red line to Wrigley Field, pay \$9 for bleacher seats. Who in this audience will let their 11-year-old take a train to go to Cubs?

It's not as safe today. That's not true, it's plenty safe. How are we basically developing some resiliency and being able to] strengthen this young generation to continue to build some internal muscle to fight that anxiety?

Larry Bernstein:

In the first few weeks of COVID Jonathan Haidt spoke on my podcast. And he said that COVID was a mixed blessing for us. The downside is obvious people die and kids can't attend school, but life slows down, we get a chance to rethink our goals and objectives. A lot of people got depressed and lonely. But others said, "I've really had a chance to reevaluate my life, and I am more in control, happier and relaxed." There's good and bad in all things in life. How do we think about the mixed blessing?

Jeremy Clorfene:

The positive side of it, I see gratitude, appreciating your relationships, your health, the support that you need. And then being isolated, and there was this kind of hunkering down, nesting for those families that could do it. And then such a ridiculous appreciation, to be able to reconnect with friends. I'm not taking anything for granted.

Larry Bernstein:

Technology: I see pros and cons. Zoom allows work from home and flexible work hours, but Zoom means that you're working all the time. Technology makes this podcast happen. These tech apps are so inexpensive, and they are so good and easy to use. And at the same time, I totally sympathize with your observations, that it's crushing our kids. I'm a secular Jew, and I cannot imagine turning off my phone on Friday night and turning it back on after sunset on Saturday, the thought by the way of pulling that off, seems incomprehensible yet I see my religious friends pull it off every weekend, I can't even believe they can do it.

Jeremy Clorfene:

But your brain is a little bit different. You are a much more of a finished product. Technology is for you, the more kick ass tool.

Really cool tool. I mean like eighth number one most viewed website on the planet is Pornhub.

Larry Bernstein:

It's not first?

Jeremy Clorfene:

It's not first, I checked.

China if you go online, China's trying to control this.

So, that's not our style, but man, it's something to think about.

Larry Bernstein:

Well, we tried parental controls. I don't know anyone that successfully uses parental controls. Should we reconsider that?

Jeremy Clorfene:

I think what will happen if it's done smartly. And a little discipline rule in the house.

Larry Bernstein:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeremy Clorfene:

Literally put the phones away when you're having dinner. Like put them, don't just put them in your pocket, put 'em away.

Larry Bernstein:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeremy Clorfene:

Okay. How many people can now take a crap with or without their phone?

Larry Bernstein:

I get it.

Jeremy Clorfene:

People can't right, right, it's not possible. So, there are times in the day, like I actually put my phone in, in, in a different room and I'm just walking around and it, and it, what's interesting is the first like five minutes, it's a little, little uncomfortable-

Larry Bernstein:

And then it's liberating.

I got a phone call from my son, "Dad, the metaverse the metaverse. Where are you on this?" I don't know what it is. "What are you talking about?"

Jeremy Clorfene:

What are you talking about?

Larry Bernstein:

Dad, you're going to sit down with this avatar." And the first thing I thought to myself was, "Oh no, this is just going to be a more interactive porn session. No question about it.

Jeremy Clorfene:

Right.

Larry Bernstein:

... that's the first use. The 24th best use is a business meeting.

Jeremy Clorfene:

Right.

Larry Bernstein:

... I just can't even imagine.

Jeremy Clorfene:

Nature is a natural Xanax, so if we're talking about anxiety and depression, if you want to bring down anxiety, we have to spend time offline.

Larry Bernstein:

You mentioned that the 60- to 70-year-old cohort is happier, less depressed, more grounded, grittier than our 18- to 29-year-olds. Why? Why aren't they coming to your therapist's office depressed and lonely?

Jeremy Clorfene:

They are coming in as well, but for different reasons. Their marriage may have ended, or they lose someone. The older generation tolerance for discomfort, their understanding of what it takes to be successful. The sheer muscles, psychological, physical will to have pushed through the difficulties of life. They are more time tested. Their ability to tolerate downtime, silence. Ask a kid today to sit in a room and do nothing. You would think it's torture. I mean, who reads? (laughs) like how many people read?

Because the new comfort is when you ask parents today, what do you want for your kids? Okay. I know it's a cliché, they say, "I just want them to be happy."

Larry Bernstein:

Yeah. That's all I want.

Jeremy Clorfene:

But we also want them to be resilient, successful, and things like that. What you really are saying is we don't want them uncomfortable; we don't want them suffering. And I don't recommend trauma, but I recommend that there's a way they find some grit, which is developing resilience a type of callousing. They have to skin their knee, they got to be able to get up on their own. They got to weather difficult challenges.

Larry Bernstein:

Let's talk about meds. We're so quick to medicate everything and anything. I remember when I first met you, Jeremy at a bar mitzvah, eight years ago. And you told me that we have made enormous strides in the use of medication. And, now you are saying that we over medicate.

What are we supposed to do?

Jeremy Clorfene:

Oh, man. Really great question. Um, oh, Larry man, uh, this is loaded. I mean that's your show? So I can't, I'm not going to punt. I think the idea of comfort crisis and medication is in conflict because we don't want our kids to suffer. And when they are suffering, they are not in a good place. There's no way a parent is going to deny that person, the tools to help them feel better and be better. I think the part that's challenging is the other aspects of their lives that it takes them to get better. The work ethic, the discipline, eating better, exercising. I mean, those are all just kind of superficial, then we overmedicate.

I would never tell a parent, don't give your kid medication when they are suffering. But as a whole, if you give kids 16 hours straight of gaming, and then they say, "Okay, now you need to study." And they're like, "I can't focus. I need some ADD meds." That's not ADD, that's training them to not focus and then we're going to give them meds. There are kids with who are just hotwired, but technology is basically putting, we're trying to put water on the front to take the fire out then we put the gasoline on the back door. So that's where I think the challenge is. Take away technology 50%, they may not need the Adderall. So, great question, very loaded answer.

Larry Bernstein:

Gaming.

Jeremy Clorfene:

Very loaded topic.

Larry Bernstein:

Gaming. I have a son. He loves it. I noticed that as he's gotten older that he plays less. how bad is it really, if it's a temporary thing? Now, if you're 26 living at home, gaming all day long, fine?

Jeremy Clorfene:

How do you know which kid in advance is going too far? You got to limit it in the beginning.

Larry Bernstein:

You mentioned in your opening remarks that we have activities for kids that are highly tailored for maximum interest. Guilty as charged.

I tried to follow my child's interest to the max. Sometimes I thought I did some good, sometimes I thought it we went too far. High school guidance counselors encourage specialization for the college admission process to help distinguish kids. Is that social norm of encouraging specialization a mistake?

Jeremy Clorfene:

No. I think the question is, is when is there the downtime? I think if the kid can play the violin, if the kid can have that skill and they're good at it and they enjoy it do it, but then we don't stop there, man. But then the downtime becomes just sitting on their phones versus being a participant in the home.

Like, when's the last time a kid mowed the lawn? Can you imagine that?

Larry Bernstein:

Kids have frequent ups and downs.

There's a time where we need outside help because there's trouble at school, with their friends or family. There might be other problems like too much weed, gaming; mistakes are made, and they hit lows, and then, who knows why, they rebound and things are okay. And we all go onto the next adventure.

Jeremy Clorfene:

Love it. Absolutely. That's the normal process of life. That example, the way you just kind of narrated that, but what happens when they say that shouldn't happen, they shouldn't feel down, they're too anxious?

And there's a lot of great kids who are just freaking struggling, and then they need some support. I think that the way you framed it out is we sometimes just have to see and sometimes

we get it, we get it wrong, but when they are really struggling, we have to try and intervene in a way that really tackles it.

Larry Bernstein:

Sometimes you hear stuff like this, "Oh they didn't get prom, they didn't get a graduation, "They didn't have a proper freshman year at college," "It's really been so hard." I try to say to my kid, there was a generation that went to war and watched their buddy get killed. "Okay, you didn't have a prom. I get it, it's horrible. Get over it." What should we be telling these kids that miss life milestones?

Jeremy Clorfene:

I would say it one notch differently than you did. Acknowledge it. Say, "It's a bummer. Let's move on." So, you just acknowledge it, validate it, but don't give it, like, oh my god, on a scale of a zero to 10, that was a nine point seven of hell.

Larry Bernstein:

New norms. I used to get up in the morning and go to work, now I don't. And, once those norms have been established, it's challenging to reestablish historical norms. Now, some people can move back and forth between these worlds seamlessly, or maybe even grow from it, but others struggle and won't be able to adjust.

Jeremy Clorfene:

Push through the discomfort. You'll find your groove. Sometimes you may not get comfortable for a while. That's part of the comfort crisis. "What's being asked of you now? Is to get up and go to work? That's the inconvenience? It is uncomfortable, but it's doable, you adjust. Your nature will adjust to it, and then you'll find positives through that.

Larry Bernstein:

I end each episode on a note of optimism. Jeremy, what are you optimistic about?

Jeremy Clorfene:

I believe in people. People get better. There's an internal gyroscope. People can feel better because they're more empowered.

And they're doing it with COVID. "I'm so over it. Even though I'm still struggling with it." I'm like, "We'll get through it. What do you need? Let's figure it out." And people do. People feel supported, they kick ass. And that's what keeps me alive. (laughs)

Larry Bernstein:

Jeremy, thank you.

Jeremy Clorfene:

You got it, brother. You're the best, man.

Larry Bernstein:

Thanks to Ari and Jeremy for joining us today.

That ends today's session. I want to make a plug for next week's show. Casey Mulligan will join us. Casey was Trump's Chief Economic Advisor and is now a professor of Labor Economics at the University of Chicago and he will discuss his new paper on the impact that the Covid Stimulus Checks increased the number of Alcohol and Opioid deaths. This paper is extremely provocative.

Our second speaker will be Kyle Kondick who is the managing editor of Sabato's Crystal Ball at the University of Virginia's University Center of Politics. He will be discussing his new book *The Long Red Thread: How Democratic Dominance Gave Way to Republican Advantage in the US House Elections*. Our discussion will focus on gerrymandering and the likelihood of a Republican takeover of the House.

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Thanks to our audience for your continued engagement with these important issues, good-bye.