

# Masked Masses

*Anonymity allows people to release inhibitions*

I recently discovered an interesting paradox of human nature. It seems that when hiding behind masks, many of us find the freedom to be ourselves, but when uncovered and in our regular guise, many of us go into hiding.

We look forward with scary expectation to Halloween because we have the opportunity to find the most grotesque costumes to disguise our faces.

Think about Halloween when, garbed in our ghoulish apparel, we go out for a night on the town. All of our inhibitions suddenly disappear, and we feel free to be whatever we want to be — whether that be good or bad.

People who couldn't keep time to save their lives are suddenly spinning and grooving on the dance floor as if they were possessed by John Travolta's spirit.

People who before believed that it was their duty to operate as wall supports now become the life of the party.

People say things they were afraid to say and do the daring deeds they always wanted to do.

It's a great mystery.

Halloween becomes a time when people dress up as others but end up acting like themselves more than any other holiday.

Alcohol and drugs also operate as a mask.

They serve to numb our senses and create a stupefied mentality in which we feel free to act on the desires that are truly on our minds and in our hearts.

People say that they use drugs to mask pain — perhaps the pain of failure or perhaps the pain of reality itself — but often they serve the exact opposite purpose.

They make our pain more acute and bring our emotions and true feelings closer to the surface than many of us would normally allow.

And some use darkness as a mask. We do things in the dark that we would never allow to come out



**Chaka Johnson**

*"Halloween becomes a time when people dress up as others but end up acting more like themselves than any other holiday."*

in the daylight.

In some cases, a movie theater is sufficient. In the darkness we'll let our guard down — we'll allow ourselves to be carried away on the emotional wave of the movie. We'll laugh like buffoons, and we'll weep like babies.

And at night we water our pillows with tears — in the darkness where no one can see or know our deepest sorrows or our most profound reflections.

We like masks, because many of us quiver at the idea of actually being ourselves without them.

We want others to believe that it was actually the mask out on the dance floor ... or the mask making our mouths say the things that they said ... or the mask controlling our actions ... or the mask making us cry.

A paradox indeed. It is in the daylight hours, when we're out among the public — walking down the street, sitting in our classes, working on our jobs, and even hanging out with friends — that we are least like ourselves.

Think about it. Too often we say things to each other like, "How are you doing?" and receive the mechanical response of "great," "fine," or "good" without stopping to really think about it.

Most of us can wake up late in the morning, miss our first class (the one in which the professor actually counts attendance toward the grade), get in a fight with our roommate over leaving the cap off of the toothpaste, forget to bring the right book to the next class, miss the last bus we need to get to work on time, slip on the ice in front of the guy we're trying to impress, and when someone asks us how we're doing we'd still respond with, "I'm fine."

It seems to happen mostly when we're walking through our own lives without the aid of a mask that we can't be ourselves.

We don't want to own up to our disappointments, our failures, our shortcomings or even our emotions.

I think that we're afraid of being vulnerable, afraid not to look like mighty men and mighty women in each other's eyes — afraid of being exposed as who we really are on the inside when we don't have the mask to excuse our actions.

And so we create a monumental paradox. An atmosphere in which it is socially unacceptable to be yourself without wearing a mask.

Just to see what will happen, I think I'll laugh in the daylight, cry in the presence of people, tell my roommate that I left the cap off of the toothpaste and ask the next person to whom I say "How are you?" what exactly is so good about their day.

I think that sounds appealing. A world in which we live unmasked in the daylight, intoxicated by our own experiences.

I would be delighted to catch you laughing out loud in the daylight.

Johnson is a senior criminal justice major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

# Mr. Nice Guy

*Lamenting the loss of old-fashioned manners*

I am by no means a trendsetter. I find something that works, and I stick with it.

But I'm finding that one of my favorite trends is on the way out.

It was all the rage back in the day of our parents, and it was even hipper during grandma and grandpa's time. Back when men took off their hats while entering a building and tipped them as a woman walked by. When every kid in America knew the meaning of a good "yes sir," "no ma'am," and "thank you very much."

Back when people were really nice to each other.

No, I never thought it would happen. I thought it would be cool for years on end. But I was wrong.

Unfortunately, it has become increasingly obvious to me that the fine art of being nice, polite and courteous is slowly — no, make that quickly — taking a back seat in society today.

How's that for stirring a little controversy?!

And as much as I hate to say it, there isn't a damn thing I can do about it.

Example: The next time you go through the McDonald's drive-thru, give the person handing over your Big Mac an honest, well-rounded, "Thanks a lot!"

Chances are that person will look at you funny and inaudibly utter "smartass."

I am noticing that times are changing because it seems people are forgetting how to react to a simple, genuine act of kindness or politeness.

Like actually returning a lost wallet or something.

And what about respect? What planet was I visiting when calling your mom and dad by their first names became commonplace?

OK, fine, back in my rebellious



**Ted Taylor**

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high school days I went around using my parents' first names. But John and Pat would have none of it. And that little phase lasted only a week or two.

I toyed with them for a while. But the first time I heard mom say, "If you call me Pat one more time, I'll wear you out," the first-name-basis thing skidded to a halt.

It's still mom and dad, and Mr. and Mrs. for other "elders" I come into contact with.

Call me old-fashioned, call me a brown-noser, but one thing you can't call me is rude or disrespectful. And I really don't mind that.

I have let my feelings on this matter of nicety slide by without giving it much thought.

However, one day I watched an event that really made me stop and think.

It seemed harmless enough, at first. I was getting into my car, and I noticed a nice young man holding a door open for a nice young girl as they walked into a Blimpie. Sure, nice enough in itself, but maybe the guy could have held the door open a second longer for the man behind him with the woman.

Who happened to be on crutches. Hmmm.

I wish I could sit here and reprimand all of you while I sit on my high horse. But I know all of you aren't like that. And quite honestly, my horse isn't all that high.

I don't hold the door open all the time — once I even forgot to say thanks to the directory-assistance person (and felt guilty about it for days). And my dad still has to tell me to take my hat off during dinner.

I am lost in the generation gap too, you know.

But I do take pride in calling myself a genuinely nice person and associating myself with others I consider nice.

It doesn't take much to fall into that category, just a little effort and understanding of how it used to be.

I'm just saying that I feel we, as a society, need to make a comeback of sorts.

We need to listen to every word our elders have told us about respecting other people and lending an altruistic helpful hand so we can become a productive member of society.

We need to start being nice to each other again, for no other reason than making the world a much better place. Don't you agree?

p.s. Thanks a lot for reading this.

Taylor is a junior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan staff reporter.

From the

# INTERNET

## Mind altering drugs scientifically invalid

**This article was originally written for a Belgian rave zine thus it may not be the most scientific piece of writing on earth.**

**If you really want to get to the core of all this, conduct your own research and talk to a nutrition specialist.**

Better Thinking Through Chemistry. Smart drugs are everywhere. "Face" runs a story on them, "Time" puts them on the cover and CNN does the special report on latest findings.

Why "smart" and even more, why "drugs"?

For starters let's get a few things straight: Some pharmaceuticals are called "smart drugs" because of their ability to enhance brain functions, not because they're smart genetic drugs or nanorobots.

Smart drugs aren't addictive either (not in the physical sense anyway) and some of the stuff is not even medicine (see Smart Nutrients).

So, whoever thought of this wonderful term must have been on a heavy dose of "dumb drugs."

A better word for chemicals that can boost your brain performance would be nootropics (from Greek, "acting on the mind"), but as it's not nearly as catchy or marketable we're stuck with "smart drugs" for now.

Many a drug can be labelled a smart drug, and the current number of such pharmaceuticals is now more than fifty. Most of these pharmaceuticals were originally used to treat a disease such as dementia or for something completely different than brain enhancing, like controlling your bladder.

Even though studies of these drugs and their effects have been available for over a decade, their use among healthy individuals has not been widespread.

Some of the pioneers of the field, Durk Pearson and Sandy Shaw, have been promoting smart drugs since the seventies, but the movement didn't become a bandwagon until the late 80s.

Since then at least four popular books have been published on the subject, scientific research interest has escalated and mail-order firms have been popping up by the dozen. And the wagon rolls forward: the authors of "Smart Drugs II" forecast that the smart drugs will become a billion-dollar business in the 90s.

This subject requires a very short introduction to your brain.

Smart drugs can basically do three different things to your brain: either minimize the damage to the brain and the natural deterioration of one's brain functions, repair some of the damage already done or enhance brain functions above usual levels.

It is possible to enhance the brain's natural properties with smart drugs by helping the brain to build new connections. Neurons (brain cells) are connected to thousands of other neurons, which together

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form a huge neural net. The more connections you have, the easier it is for one neuron to send information to another neuron, thus the better your brain works.

It is possible to help the brain to grow more of these connections by taking smart drugs. As these connections are formed when new memories form, one can actually memorize and learn new things easier if a chemical is there to help neurons to connect.

Smart drugs can also enhance one's mental functions by feeding the brain more oxygen or increasing the levels of neurotransmitting chemicals that carry electric signals from one neuron to another.

It's all terribly mind boggling to know that one's brain is working more efficiently (while actually wearing out less) while on smart drugs, but what does it all mean in practice?

Will you be able to memorize the whole R&S discography in 20 seconds or calculate cube roots in a snap? No you will not.

Even though memory enhancement can be significant in some cases, the reality is often far less glorious. People report effects ranging from: "It changed my life" to "I got a funny sort of buzz out of them," but not all of the effects are scientifically validated.

Although the process of how neurochemicals and smart drugs work is somewhat agreed upon, scientists haven't agreed on whether smart drugs really are effective in healthy people.

Many of the tests have been done with animals and with mentally dysfunctional patients (especially those suffering from dementia or Parkinson's disease), but studies on healthy adults also exist.

For example, a double-blind study on late-middle-aged test subjects showed increase in mental functions after four weeks of taking Piracetam. Studies showing benefits from other drugs in normal test subjects also exist.

What brain-boosting substances are there?

Smart drugs are basically of three different varieties: drugs, nutrients & herbs.

It is advisable to contact a doctor before you start medicating yourself, even though open-minded and knowledgeable doctors may be hard to find.

This article and a list of "smart drugs" were discovered at <<http://www.uta.fi/~samu/SMARTS.html>>

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