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BOOK REVIEW

## Widespread Zombification in the 21st Century and the Wars of the Zombie Masters:

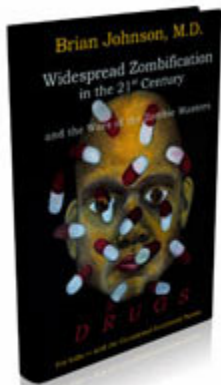
### *Drugs: For Kids and the Occasional Interested Parent*

Reviewed by Lisa R. Fortuna, MD, MPH | August 12, 2010

by Brian Johnson, MD; New York: Gegensatz Press, 2009 " \$8.98 (available only as an eBook)

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With this creative and engaging eBook, Dr Brian Johnson challenges young people to resist “zombification by the zombie masters”—or, becoming addicted (“zombified”) by the individuals and systems (“zombie masters”) that sell and deal drugs and benefit from the misfortune of others. Dr Johnson starts *Widespread Zombification in the 21st Century and the Wars of the Zombie Masters* with a question and a warning: “How do you know what a zombie is? The zombie masters will be hunting your brain over the next few years. You should know how to protect yourself.”



The author is an expert and experienced physician and researcher in the field of addiction. He is director of addiction psychiatry and associate professor of psychiatry at SUNY Upstate Medical University, Syracuse, NY; he taught at Harvard Medical School for 30 years and is extensively published in the fields of psychiatry and addiction. This book is evidence of his expertise in and passion for educating young people about the real facts of addiction. He succeeds in engaging the reader with both fantasy and frankness.

When I first started to read the book, I wondered how far the author would be able to carry the story line of “zombification”—the loss of self (body and mind) inherent in addiction. Would he keep the interest of a young person with this “funky” approach? I think he succeeds in presenting an interesting yet highly informative narrative about the social, medical, and psychological aspects of drug abuse. The book is a candid story about the biological mechanisms and neuroscience of drug addiction.

This appealing narrative challenges young people to critically examine the issue of drug addiction. The book is a framework of information without delivering what an adolescent might perceive as another lecture by an adult. This is more than a frank and candid guide. It reads like a wise teacher in a science fic-tion or action movie. I think it works and will introduce an abundance of important facts to young readers (adolescent to emerging adult).

The first part of the 9-chapter book describes how drugs of abuse became widespread in the 21st century in the United States. A chapter on the “upper zombie” drug groups (eg, cocaine, methamphetamine, ecstasy) includes data on cigarettes/nicotine. In the section on cigarettes, the author introduces the concept of “beautification and denial”—marketing strategies by the cigarette industry (and others) to lure the young and the beautiful. He describes in detail the process of nicotine addiction with graphic stories of individuals whose denial slowly results in illness. Other chapters in the book are “Zombification Techniques” (zombie masters’ use of gateway drugs), the “Downer Zombie Drug Group,” “Treating Zombies,” and “Relating to Zombies.”

The second part of the book, “The Wars of the Zombie Masters,” is a series of chapters on US and international history (American Civil War to the 20th century) and social impact of the drug trade industry. This section includes everything from the early American tobacco industry (and its related slave trade) to narratives of gang wars today.

The author ends by asking: What should you do about the dangers of zombie masters? Here he gives practical advice to young people on how to detect addiction, how to stay safe, how to think critically, and how to talk about the problem of drugs.

This book can benefit young people by exposing them to some intense but valuable material. It would be wise for parents to become “occasionally interested,” as described in the title. Moreover, the book encourages adults—parents and therapists—to start a dialogue on addiction with their children/patients. Information can be found at <http://www.gegensatzpress.com/zombies>.