

ACTIVITY: Messages in a Bottle — Snippets for Conversation
Virtual Youth Cannabis Prevention Conference, Sept. 23, 2021

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Brain Facts: Every brain & body are different. Teen brains are more sensitive to the impact of stress, since the frontal lobe is still being wired for complex thinking and decisions. Here's what we know so far about how marijuana affects the brain.

- **Development:** Marijuana affects the parts of the brain that control emotions, memory, and judgement.
- **Coordination:** THC in any form will likely impair the ability to drive, play sports, and do other activities.
- **Learning and Memory:** Heavy marijuana use by young adults can cause problems with thinking, memory & learning. (NIDA)
- **Dependence:** Repeated marijuana use can lead to addiction — which means people have trouble controlling their drug use and often cannot stop even though they want to.

Source: Prevent Coalition, Youth Now Campaign

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Who Needs Help: Stress shows up for everyone. Stress can look like:

- Acting differently than they normally do
- Overly emotional/unstable emotions
- Drama/ intensity
- Loud/controlling
- Clingy/needy
- Too quiet/shut down, very sleepy
- Frustrated
- Anxious

Source: Prevent Coalition, Youth Now Campaign

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Costs of Underage Use of Cannabis: Laws vary from state to state. Most cannabis usage and possession is still a federal crime.

- **College:** You can lose your Federal Financial Aid.
- **Job:** You can get fired or not even be hired.
- **Freedom:** You can be arrested and convicted for possessing cannabis or sharing with friends.

Source: Prevent Coalition, Youth Now Campaign

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Stay True to You Stories: Laura, 29

“My experience with marijuana when I was younger was close to home. My older sister smoked a lot of marijuana in her teen years, which really affected my home life. She didn’t make very good choices so there was a lot of conflict in my home, and that made it uncomfortable.

“I didn’t have much of a relationship with my sister. I longed for that friendship that comes from a sister — that friendship that’s always there no matter what.

“I didn’t see the motivation in my sister when she was making those choices to smoke marijuana. I knew that I couldn’t make those same choices. I just had a desire in me to be a world changer, and I knew that with marijuana that wasn’t going to be possible for me.”

Source: Oregon Health Authority, Stay True to You Campaign

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Stay True to You Stories: Barry, 20

“It was late at night. I was probably 16 or 17 years old. My friend takes a bag of chips, and he stuffed it in his pocket. We got caught, of course. We got pulled into the office. ... It felt so surreal to me. I was like, ‘This isn’t me, you know. This isn’t what I do. I’ve never stolen anything before in my life.’

“I really started questioning myself. The only conclusion that I could come back to was: ‘Oh yeah, I smoked weed before I did this,’ and then instantly everything just pieced together at that point. It was like I’m doing this because I’m smoking, because I’m high, because I’m under the influence, because I’m smoking marijuana all the time. That’s why I’m making all these decisions, and they weren’t all bad decisions, but they were decisions nonetheless that could have been avoided or that could have been better had I not been under the influence.”

Source: Oregon Health Authority, Stay True to You Campaign

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School board fires Brevard teacher for medical marijuana use

The Brevard County School Board voted Tuesday to terminate a teacher for using medical marijuana. Though medical marijuana has been legalized in Florida, it remains a "schedule 1" narcotic at the federal level, placing it in the same category as heroin, LSD and methamphetamines. ... Allison Enright, a teacher at Space Coast Junior/Senior High School, disclosed her medical marijuana use when she took a drug test after an injury at work. A student shoved her on a flight of stairs after she corrected him for disobeying directional hallway rules designed to limit face to face contact to slow the spread of COVID-19. Enright said she had no idea her medication violated the district’s policy, which has not been updated since 2003, and says teachers can’t use “illegal drugs,” without specifically mentioning marijuana prescribed by a doctor.

Source: Florida Today, March 24, 2021

What happened to Sha’Carri Richardson?

Sha'Carri Richardson ran a 10.86 on June 20 in the women's 100-meter dash: fastest among U.S. qualifiers, seemingly guaranteeing her a roster spot for the Tokyo Olympics. On July 1, Richardson published a cryptic tweet that read, "I am human." The following day, the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency — which operates under the World Anti-Doping Agency and its legislation — announced that she tested positive for marijuana. Though it is legal in the state of Oregon, it is classified as a "substance of abuse" by WADA, therefore invalidating her run.

For a substance to be added to the WADA's prohibited list, it must meet two of three criteria:

- It poses a health risk to athletes;
- It has the potential to enhance performance;
- It violates the spirit of sport.

WADA continues to classify marijuana under these guidelines. Moreover, it views THC as a "substance of abuse" because of its frequent use in society outside of sports, alongside cocaine, heroin and MDMA/ecstasy.

Source: Sporting News, July 30, 2021

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What we know and don't know about pot

THE HARVARD GAZETTE: What is cannabis addiction like?

KEVIN HILL: It's less addictive than alcohol, less addictive than opioids, but just because it's less addictive doesn't mean that it's not addictive. There's a subset of people — whom I treat frequently — who are using cannabis to the detriment of work, school, and relationships. It's hard for the majority of people — who may use once a month or once every six months, or they tried it in Vegas because it's legal there — to recognize the reality that there are many people who are using and losing in key areas of their lives. I've had patients who have lost multimillion-dollar careers. It's hard for people to understand that that can happen. I often compare cannabis to alcohol. They're very similar in that most people who use never need to see somebody like me. But the difference is that we all recognize the dangers of alcohol. If you go into a room of 200 high school kids, they know it's dangerous and binge drinking among high schoolers is way down. But if you ask that same group about cannabis, you're going to get all different answers. Data that suggests that although cannabis use among young people is flat — that's another misrepresentation, that it's going up — the perception of risk among those young people is going down. So, while everyone's talking about it, and stores are opening in Brookline (MA), in Leicester (MA), and all over the state, adults and young people are not clear about the risks.

Source: Kevin Hill, associate professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and director of the Division of Addiction Psychiatry at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, has conducted marijuana-related research and is the author of the 2015 book "Marijuana: The Unbiased Truth about the World's Most Popular Weed." He is also co-chair of the National Football League's Pain Management Committee, which is evaluating a possible role for cannabinoids in treatment. (The Harvard Gazette, Feb. 24, 2020)