

# cannabis CONVERSATIONS

→ For adults with youth ages 13-17 ←

## WHAT to SAY



Before you begin, think about whether your teen is looking for connection, facts or direction.

(Choose the ones you think will resonate with your teen.)

1

"Cannabis is becoming more common, like alcohol, but that doesn't make it harmless or O.K."

4

"If you use cannabis to cope with life, your brain doesn't get used to coping with scary or hard emotions. Our brains need to learn, and it is up to you to make the decision to face difficult situations without drugs."

6

"If you're thinking about trying it, I want you to come talk to me so we can go over things together. Every brain reacts to cannabis differently and I don't want you to take those kind of risks."

2

"Your brain matters and it's still developing in really important ways."

5

"School is pretty hard for most of us. Staying focused in school is harder when marijuana is in the mix. It doesn't mix with homework, makes it hard to pay attention in class, and can get in the way of completing assignments."

3

"If you use cannabis a lot, your brain can't develop as well. Certain 'mental muscles' get turned off – like memory, motivation, and especially the parts that deal with emotions."

7

"You matter to me and I love you. It's my job to help you stay safe and healthy. Using cannabis or marijuana in any form is not O.K."

# WHY we say it THIS WAY

## KEEP IN MIND:

Some teens use marijuana to cope with life or unwind with friends. Help your teen connect to healthier options that work for them.

- Focusing on **your youth's life** and **their goals** is more effective than generalizing.
- When you talk about cannabis (or any adult subject) in a factual and honest way, youth connect with the information better and trust easier. **They know more than we realize.**
- Voicing your concerns and being open to questions and challenges is key for your teen to connect with you. **Connection to caring adults is the best youth prevention.**
- Setting clear boundaries & expectations **without judgment or shame** is essential.
- If youth know it is ok to be honest, they'll talk about their opinions and ask questions—and knowing how they think about these issues is helpful.

## BRAIN matters

Every brain & body are different. Here's what we know so far.

Dependence  
coordination  
memory  
JUDGEMENT  
emotions

- **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.

# WHY this conversation MATTERS



→ Teens receive and process complex information differently than adults.

→ Youth want to make healthy choices but need regular guidance without judgment to do so.

→ Your teen needs to know you care about them and are willing to have hard conversations even if it gets uncomfortable.

## TIPS ★ to help adults CONNECT

WHO  
can  
HELP?



Almost everyone has a sassy aunt or cool uncle. Enlist your favorite to help out!

Close Friend • Grandparent • Chosen Family • Doctor  
School Counselor • Trusted Teacher • Faith Leader

1 Establish clear rules, set your **expectations** and stick to them.

2 You may need to **put your opinions aside** before you have a conversation with your youth. Any emotional charge you bring to the table will affect the clarity of your message for your youth.

3 Seek to **listen** and **connect**. Find common ground with your teen. When they know you're on their side, you can have an ongoing conversation to help guide good choices.

4 Keep the conversation **balanced**, listen and don't talk over or down to them.

5 Focus on **positive** messages and compliment youth when they make healthy decisions. Focusing on the negative might overwhelm them or make them act out of fear or defensiveness.

6 Talk about **friends**: know your teen's friends and how they might influence your child.

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