

MARIJUANA: TALKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT MARIJUANA

Adults can help young people navigate the decision to use or not use marijuana.



START THE CONVERSATION

Talking with young people about marijuana can be intimidating, especially if they already use marijuana.

When starting a conversation, try to keep an open mind and speak from a place of love and support.

Ask open-ended questions about their use and life. *Why are they considering or choosing to use marijuana? Does it help them cope with emotions and stress? Are they bored with their weekly routine?*

The conversation may not lead to a young person avoiding marijuana. Youth may still choose to use marijuana. The conversation was still useful.

If abstinence is not a realistic goal, support the young person in establishing boundaries around their use (i.e. use should not interfere with hobbies and relationships).

ADDRESS THE QUESTIONS, EVEN WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS

If feeling stuck, adults can make it clear that they are not experts but they want to try their best to help young people make informed decisions about using or not using marijuana.

WHAT IF AN ADULT PREVIOUSLY USED OR CURRENTLY USES MARIJUANA?

Choosing to use marijuana as an adult has fewer health risks than it does for young people.

It may be helpful to explain the negative health effects marijuana can have on young people, including potential harmful impacts on brain development and increased chances of developing a use disorder.



Looking for resources or support around marijuana or other substance use? Call 311.
For more information about marijuana, visit bphc.org/marijuana



NAVIGATE THE CONVERSATION

Here are a few scenarios that may help adults have meaningful conversations with young people about marijuana use:

They say, "It's a plant, it's natural. It can't be that bad."

Tell them: *"There are a lot of things that are both natural and harmful. Tobacco is also a plant, but we know that smoking causes health problems."*

FACT Teens' perceptions around marijuana can be based on myths or inaccurate information. Talking through these myths can help teens make more informed decisions.

They say, "You're overreacting. I don't use it that often."

Ask them: *"What I hear you saying is that you don't think it's a big deal to use marijuana. What would make it a big deal to you?"*

FACT Helping teens set boundaries around their use, such as limiting use to a certain days of the week, can reduce potential risks (i.e. going to work or school high).

They say, "It's legal here. Why would they make something legal that could hurt me?"

Tell them: *"Alcohol and cigarettes are legal but this does not mean they are safe for young people. Age restrictions protect teens from harmful health effects that adults are at a lower risk to experience."*

FACT Marijuana use can impact young people's brain development and have long lasting health effects.

They say, "You're lucky I'm not using alcohol or other drugs. Marijuana is safer."

Ask them: *"Why is it that you think marijuana is safer than alcohol or other drugs?"*

FACT Alcohol and tobacco products are regulated substances that many youth recognize as being potentially harmful to their health.

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