



Preventing Underage Marijuana Use Key Messages and Talking Points for Parents

Messages to Parents

- **Marijuana is not a harmless drug for teens.** The teen brain is still developing, and marijuana may cause abnormal brain development.
- **Marijuana is linked to school failure.** Because the teen brain is still developing, marijuana has a negative effect on attention, motivation, memory and learning. Students who use marijuana tend to get lower grades and are more likely to drop out of school.
- **Teens are at higher risk for addiction.** Because the teen brain is still developing, early use of marijuana is more likely to lead to addiction, compared to those who wait until they are adults. Teens that use marijuana regularly may also develop serious mental health disorders such as depression and psychosis.
- **Know the risks and teach your teens.** The good news – when teens know how drugs can harm them, their use goes down. The bad news – fewer students see marijuana use as risky. According to the 2019 Minnesota Student Survey, Sherburne County students were least likely to believe that people put themselves at risk of harm by using marijuana.
- **Most teens are making healthy choices.** Although teens think everyone is using marijuana, the fact is that most teens don't. When teens know that not using marijuana is the norm, they are more likely to "fit in" with the crowd by not using it.
- **If your child asks you directly whether you have used marijuana,** a brief, honest answer may help the child feel comfortable talking with you about drug use issues. However, it is best to not share your own histories of drug use with your children. Rather, a general discussion of drug use scenarios may be more helpful.
- **You are role models for your children, and actions speak louder than words.** So, if you use marijuana in front of your teens, they are more likely to use it themselves, regardless of whether you tell them not to.
- **You are the most powerful influence in your child's life.** Even when children reach their teen years, they still care about what parents say. If your teen knows you don't approve of drug use, they won't want to disappoint you. Talk early and often about the risks, set clear rules against drug use, and enforce reasonable consequences for breaking the rules. Get tips for talking with your teens at www.sherburnesupcoalition.org.
- **Take action if you think your teen is using marijuana.** There are numerous resources, many right in your community, where you can get information to help you talk to your children about drugs. Consult your local school, healthcare facility, or community service organization. Get contact information for local agencies at www.sherburnesupcoalition.org/community-guide.



Preventing Underage Marijuana Use Key Messages and Talking Points for Teens

Messages to Teens

- **Marijuana – It’s Not So Natural.** Marijuana has more than 400 chemicals, including the mind-altering chemical THC. The average potency or strength of THC has increased dramatically since the 1980’s.
- **Marijuana – It’s Not Popular.** Although teens think everyone is using marijuana, the fact is that most teens don’t. Four out of five Sherburne County 11th graders do NOT use marijuana regularly.*
- **Marijuana – It Impairs Driving.** Marijuana is the most common illegal drug involved in car crashes. Marijuana affects skills required for safe driving, like alertness, concentration, coordination, & reaction time.
- **Marijuana – It Limits Performance.** Marijuana impairs your attention, motivation, memory and learning. It can also increase your risk of injuries in sports and other activities.
- **Marijuana – It’s Addictive.** Because your brain is still growing, it may be hard to quit when you want to. Marijuana accounts for the largest percentage of treatment admissions among those 12 to 17 years old.
- **Life has many challenges.** Show others you’re strong enough to face them. Live above the influence.
- **Stay Original – Be True. Be You. Be Real.** You’re better without drugs and alcohol.
- **Don’t Keep It In. Talk It Out.** No problem is too big or too small. There are numerous resources, many right in your community, where you can get information and help. Talk with your school counselor, teacher, healthcare provider, or another trusted adult. Get contact information for local agencies at www.sherburnesupcoalition.org/community-guide. Treatment can help you, a friend, or someone you love get back to the person you or they once were.

Sources:

2019 Minnesota Student Survey (*Note: regularly is defined as past month use)

National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA]

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