LET'S TALK CANNABIS

HOW TO RESPOND

How to Respond When Teens Have Comments About Cannabis

Once you've opened the conversation about cannabis with teens, they may have questions or comments that are hard to address. Read through these frequent teen comments so you're prepared to respond in the moment.

If a teen says, "But it's natural," you can say:

- Just because it's natural doesn't mean it's safe. The teen brain is still developing and tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the active chemical in weed, attaches to receptors in different brain areas and affects brain development.[1]

If a teen says, "But it's not as bad as tobacco or other drugs," you can say:

- As the teen brain develops, it expertly fine-tunes connections in the brain's gray and white matter. Many substances—including cannabis—can disrupt the brain's developmental process.[2,3,4] Science is starting to show that THC can affect parts of the brain like the hippocampus, the cerebellum, and the amygdala.[5,6,7,8,9]

If a teen says, "But it's legal," you can say:

- The legal age of cannabis use in Illinois is 21 and above.

If a teen says, "But vaping isn't harmful," you can say:

- Heating up THC vaping devices can expose the teen brain to chemicals, like formaldehyde, that can cause cancer and toxic metals, like lead, that can cause brain damage.[10]

If a teen says, "But so many successful people use it," you can say:

- Everyone is different. What people post on social media doesn't show a full picture of their life. The best way to let your brain grow to its full potential is to avoid underage cannabis use.[11,12]

If a teen says, "But everyone from your generation did it" you can say:

- Cannabis is stronger than it used to be because plants contain higher amounts of THC. Higher THC concentrations can be harmful and addictive to a developing teen brain.[13]
- Now we know human brains do not fully develop until our mid-20s. Using cannabis underage puts your brain development at risk. That means your memory, attention, coordination, and mental health could be affected.[1]

Sources

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