

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a blue patterned shirt, is leaning over a laptop. A young girl with long brown hair in a bun, wearing a pink shirt, is looking at the laptop screen. The background is a bright, out-of-focus window.

BE THE ONE

Be the one your teens want to connect with. Cannabis is a drug that can be hard to understand. Laws, attitudes and even ways to ingest the drug are constantly changing. It can be really hard to keep up. Connecting with the youth in your life needs to happen consistently.

- Talk with teens in your life about strategies to turn down cannabis. Planning for this situation can make you both feel more in control and less stressed.
- Not all teens feel they can talk to their parents about cannabis. Adults in their homes may not abstain from using some of the available forms of the drug. Realize you may be that child's support and their connection to not using. If they feel safe enough with you to want to have this dialogue, go for it. Congratulations, you have earned their trust!

Talking about cannabis use can be an emotional moment. It means your children are growing up and facing the world and many things that are out of your control can happen. Work to be the one they want to talk to when they're confused, need reliable information, or are in a tough spot.



BE REAL: BE HONEST



Teens usually have a way of knowing when an adult is not being honest or authentic. They're learning the ways of the world and know that sometimes the truth can be murky at best. Teens are looking for positive adult interactions, so give them one.

It can be hard to set limits, especially if you remember pushing your parents' boundaries when you were younger. Don't let that stop you from talking with your child and discussing with them why cannabis use is not acceptable. Scientists know more than ever about the impact marijuana use can have on a developing brain.

If your teen asks you a question about cannabis and you don't know the answer, don't sweat it! Make it a learning opportunity and look up answers together.

- Cannabis can interfere with decision-making and judgment, which could lead to risky behaviors your teens would not engage in otherwise.
- Riding with a driver who has been using cannabis is dangerous.
- Cannabis can cause an altered sense of time, sight and scent, slow reactions and impaired coordination.

(Source: www.nida.nih.gov, <https://choices.scholastic.com/issues/2019-20/020120/the-truth-about-cannabis.html>)





EDUCATE YOURSELF

If you think your teens know more about marijuana than you do, you might be right. Fortunately, there are resources to help you stock up on the facts. Even though the legal landscape around cannabis is changing nationwide, one thing is still constant. Cannabis use is illegal for those under 21.

Don't let changing attitudes surrounding cannabis use diminish the importance of talking about not using it. Cannabis use can cause damage to the developing brain, which is different from an adult brain under the influence. Researchers are studying how long effects can last and if some changes may be irreversible. Encourage your teen to take charge of their health.

- Get ready to talk. Do your homework and bone up on the facts to make yourself feel more comfortable giving your teen a no-use message.
- Engage your teen in the conversation. They likely know more than you think they do, but you may be able to correct myths they have heard throughout your discussion.

(Sources: <https://ilga.gov/legislation/101/HB/10100HB1438sam002.htm>, www.nida.nih.gov)





WHAT'S YOUR STYLE

Before talking with your teen about not using cannabis, determine your communication style. Are you comfortable having the harder talks that parents need to initiate from time to time? Set aside time to become more knowledgeable about cannabis use for a smoother, more natural conversation. Don't let not knowing cause you to skip this important discussion. You can do it!

- Be sure to highlight not using. It's easy to get sidetracked. Focus on how cannabis has the potential to ruin things that are important to your teen, like friendships, having the trust of their parents, sports participation, good grades and academic achievements.
- Adolescence is the prime time to educate your children about their health. Topics range from the dangers of drugs and alcohol to the birds and the bees. It's all on the agenda! Use those other talking times to segue into the importance of keeping their body healthy and not using cannabis. It's all part of the picture.

