

Establishing Rules About Cannabis

Age 15 Summary

Why Establishing Rules About Cannabis?

Teens and emerging young adults, ages 15-19, will be introduced to more significant risk-taking opportunities, whether that involves alcohol, drugs, or risky sexual behaviors. Cannabis use by youth has been linked to adverse mental health effects, including depression. Establishing clear rules about cannabis can help your family prepare for dealing with challenges cooperatively while building essential skills in your teen.



Get Your Teen Thinking by Getting Their Input

- *“What are your hopes for your friendships?”*
- *“What are you and your friends most interested in trying that’s new and different?”*
- *“Where do you like to hang out with your friends?”*
- *“Does cannabis show up at gatherings with friends, and how do you feel about it?”*

Tip Pick a time when you are enjoying spending time together. Riding in the car is ideal (when you don't have time pressure) since your teen will feel less “on the spot” because you are not looking directly at them.

Trap Avoid lecturing your teen when they are honest with you. Lecturing may result in your teen not sharing truthfully in the future for fear of your response.



Teach New Skills

- Learn together. Knowing what the laws are can help provide a starting point for discussion.
- Learn together: Cannabis impacts a teen's growing body and brain differently than it does in adults.
- Discuss values for family health and healthy development.
- Engage your teen in a discussion about setting up rules about cannabis.

- Change the conversation when your young adult turns 21.

**STEP
3**



PRACTICE

Practice to Grow Skills and Develop Habits

- Try out the new rules before your teen experiences peer pressure and is in a high-stakes setting.
- Discuss the role of a safety buddy with your teen and help them identify which friends they could count on to be a safety buddy.
- Initiate the no-risk pick up. Assure your teen you'll pick them up with no lectures if they are uncomfortable or there's been cannabis or alcohol.

Tip After a tough day, your teen may internally beat themselves up for what they did and said earlier. So, end the day with love. They need to hear that you love them NO MATTER WHAT on those days.

Tip Over pizza and chat about what kind of plan they could establish if they want to leave a party or an uncomfortable situation.

**STEP
4**



SUPPORT

Support Your Teen's Development and Success

- Ask key questions to support their skills: *“How are the rules we’ve established? Are they reasonable to you? Are you struggling at all? Are the plans we set up, like your safety buddy, working out so far?”*
- Monitor their activities.
- Recognize effort using “I notice...” statements like, *“I notice how you called me when you were uncomfortable. That’s taking responsibility!”*
- Stay engaged. Be ready to talk when your teen is eager.
- Engage in further practice.
- Apply logical consequences when needed.

Trap Don’t create a situation where your rules are so tight, strict, and inflexible that you invite your teen’s rebellion. Show that you value their opinions and are reasonable. Learn together about the risks so that you are revisiting rules as a team. Teens must understand (and sometimes review) the importance of rules and why they are reasonable.

**STEP
5**

Recognize Efforts

- No matter how old your teen is, your positive reinforcement and encouragement have a significant impact.
- There are many ways you can reinforce your teen's efforts. It is essential to distinguish between three types of reinforcement – recognition, rewards, and bribes. These three distinct parenting behaviors have different impacts on your teen's behavior.
 - **Recognize** even small successes to promote positive behaviors and expand confidence: *"I noticed you decided to leave the party when others showed up who had been using cannabis. That's taking responsibility!* Recognition can include nonverbal acknowledgment such as a smile, high five, or hug.
 - **Rewards** can be helpful in certain situations by providing a concrete, timely, and positive incentive for doing a good job. A reward is determined ahead of time so that the teen knows what to expect, like *"If you follow our plan and come home on time, you will get to stay up 30 minutes later than usual"*. (if you XX, then I'll XX) The goal should be to help your teen progress to a time when the reward will no longer be needed. If used too often, rewards can decrease a teen's internal motivation.
 - Unlike a reward, **bribes** aren't planned ahead of time and generally happen when a parent or those in a parenting role is in the middle of a crisis (like a teen arguing and refusing to leave a social gathering. To avoid disaster, a parent or those in a parenting role offers to stop for a snack on the way home if the teen will stop arguing and leave the event). While bribes can be helpful in the short term to manage stressful situations, they will not grow lasting motivation, or behavior change and should be avoided.
- Build celebrations into your routine. For example, after your teen has a safe outing with friends and follows your family plan, invite their friends over for a game night at your house. Or, after your teen shares important information about how things have been going with friends, enjoy some hot chocolate together while you talk.

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