Tools for Your Child's Success.org

Mixed Messages About Cannabis

Age 11 Summary

Why Mixed Messages About Cannabis?

Children/Teens receive numerous mixed messages about cannabis consumption and its place in their lives and communities. They may see cannabis used in movies, referenced in songs, and normalized on YouTube. They may encounter adults using cannabis at events or concerts. These outside messages have an impact on your child/teen. Still, as a parent or those in a parenting role, what you model and the messages you send related to cannabis in your child's/teen's early years will be the most significant influence.



- *"What have you noticed about our family's decisions about cannabis?"*
- *"What are some things you have learned about how cannabis affects your body?"*
- *"What are some things your friends say about cannabis?"*

Trap Don't feel defensive about your practices. Keep focused on the fact that your child/teen is just at the start of understanding cannabis. It's a brand new chance to offer essential guidance. Focus on the impacts you can have today and in the future.



- Learn together! Though your child/teen has likely heard of cannabis, you may or may not have had a specific conversation about the role of cannabis.
- Examine family messages regarding the role of cannabis and think about what they're teaching your child/teen.
- Talk about your family history with alcohol, cannabis, and other drugs.
- Invite your child/teen to ask questions.
- Be clear about your expectations about alcohol and cannabis use.
- Talk about the feelings someone might have that would cause them to resort to unhealthy means of coping. Ask your child/teen if they have ever felt that way.

- Reassure your child/teen that it's normal to feel overwhelmed by your problems at times, and yet using alcohol, cannabis, and other substances does not solve the issue and can instead lead to medical problems.
- Take the learning further because your child/teen will need to find new ways to deal with the stress and social pressures they face.
- Before peer pressure ramps up, have your child/teen practice refusal skills so they know how to react if they are offered alcohol, cannabis, or other substances.
- Discuss values.
- Set goals that demonstrate your values.
- Create a family ritual of expressing gratitude in your lives.
- Set goals to demonstrate values.
- Discover together some opportunities to serve in your local community.
- Explain why you want your child/teen to abstain from alcohol and cannabis use.



- Find specific ways you and your child/teen can take small steps to work on the goals you've set.
- Tell stories of your or your child's/teen's ability to empathize and be kind to others.
- Encourage leadership. After all, in every group, a leader emerges. And they are typically the individuals who pressure others to do what they want.

Tip: When your child/teen comes to you with a peer pressure challenge, reflect on their feelings. Ask open-ended questions to prompt their thinking. Show your trust and support as they solve their problems.



- Ask key questions to support their skills: *"When do your friends or other classmates want you to do something you don't want to do?" "How would you respond if your friends asked you to try cannabis?"*
- Reflect on outcomes.
- Stay engaged. Be ready to talk when your child/teen is eager.
- Use any opportunity to talk about the mixed messages regarding cannabis in society, in the media, or at home.
- Engage in further practice. Talk about times when you don't want to go with the crowd.



- No matter how old your child/teen is, your positive reinforcement and encouragement have a significant impact.

- You can reinforce your child's/teen's efforts in many ways. It is essential to distinguish between three types of reinforcement – recognition, rewards, and bribes. These three distinct parenting behaviors impact your child's/teen's behavior differently.
    - **Recognize** even small successes to promote positive behaviors and expand confidence: *"I notice you reflected on your friend's teasing of a classmate and walked away instead of joining in. That's taking responsibility and showing empathy for others!"* 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 child/teen knows what to expect, like *"If you invite a few friends to come hang out here instead of going to the party, I will provide the pizza, and you can rent a movie."* (if you XX, then I'll XX) The goal should be to help your child/teen progress to a time when the reward will no longer be needed. Rewards can decrease a child's/teen's intrinsic motivation if used too often.
    - Unlike a reward, **bribes** aren't planned ahead of time and generally happen when a parent or those in a parenting role are in a crisis (like a child/teen arguing and refusing to leave a social gathering). To avoid disaster, a parent or those in a parenting role offers to stop for ice cream on the way home if the child/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. Children/teens constantly seek new adventures and the thrill of trying something new. Keep this in mind when considering celebrations.

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