

# An Ounce of Prevention

Complimentary

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## Why You Shouldn't Allow Your Children to Smoke Marijuana

Some parents who saw being widely used in their youth have wondered, "Is marijuana really so bad for my child?"

The answer is an emphatic "yes," and parents should familiarize themselves with these reasons.

- Marijuana is illegal.
- Marijuana now exists in forms that are stronger with higher levels of THC, the psychoactive ingredient than in the 1960s.
- Studies show that someone who smokes five joints a week may be taking in as many cancer-causing chemicals as someone who smokes a full pack of cigarettes every day.
- Hanging around users of marijuana often means being exposed not only to other drugs later on, but also a lifestyle that can include trouble in school, engaging in sexual activity while young, unintended pregnancy, difficulties with the law, and other problems.
- Marijuana use can slow down reaction time and distort perceptions. This can interfere with athletic performance, decrease a sense of danger, and increase risk of injury.
- Regular marijuana users can lose the ability to concentrate that is needed to master important academic skills, and they can experience short-term memory loss. Habitual marijuana users tend to do worse in school and are much more likely to drop out altogether.
- Teens who rely on marijuana as a chemical crutch and refuse to face the challenges of growing up never learn the emotional, psychological, and social lessons of adolescence.
- The research is not complete on the effects of marijuana on the developing brain and body.

### A Mother Looks Back

*Anne D. of Marietta, Georgia, mother of a son and two daughters, ages 22, 21, and 20:*

"My three kids are all in college now, so we're testing what they learned at home when they were growing up.

"I've always tried to talk with them, not at them, and to demonstrate the values our family thinks are important. For example, when we were on vacation, someone left a camera behind in our room, and I made a point of saying 'This isn't ours- let's let them know at the front desk.' I tried to show how I value honesty.

"Since they were young, we've discussed healthy lifestyles and habits, and when they were in the middle of school, we started talking about how they should call home from parties if drugs were present. I'm not sure if we picked them up every time they were at a party where there were drugs, but I'm sure we did most of the time. High school was an especially challenging time for my kids because I was getting divorced then. But they got through it fine, and I think it's because they had a good foundation of values to fall back on."

## Alcohol, Tobacco & Other Drug "Rules" Make Clear Rules

Research shows that young people are less likely to use tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs if their parents set clear rules about not doing so. If parents have not previously established rules around more basic activities of daily living, however, they will have little chance of getting their children to obey a rule about not using marijuana, tobacco, or other drugs.

### Here are some rulemaking tips:

- Set clear rules and discuss in advance the **consequences of breaking them**. Don't make empty threats or let the rule-breaker off the hook. Don't impose harsh or unexpected new punishments.
- **The rules must be consistently enforced**; every time a child breaks the rules the parent should enforce a punishment.
- **Punishments should involve mild, not severe, negative consequences**. Overly severe punishments serve to undermine the quality of the parent-child relationship.
- **Set a curfew**. And enforce it strictly. Be prepared to negotiate for special occasions.
- **Have kids check in at regular times when they're away from home or school**. Give them a phone card, change or even a pager with clear rules for using it. (When I beep you, I expect a call back within 15 minutes.)
- **Call parents whose home is to be used for a party**. On party night, don't be afraid to stop in to say hello (and make sure that adult supervision is in place).
- **Make it easy to leave a party where drugs are being used**. Discuss in advance how to signal you or another designated adult who will come to pick your child up the moment he or she feels uncomfortable. Later, **be prepared to talk about what happened**.
- **Listen to your instincts**. Don't be afraid to intervene if your gut reaction tells you that something is wrong. Review the **Action Guide for Parents** for more specific suggestions if you suspect or know your teen is using drugs.

Source: *The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign's Behavior Change Expert Panel*

## Confront Your Toxic Relationships

Are you afraid of confronting someone in your life who is critical, judgmental or just can't be happy for your success?

Your life may be full of people who are draining your energy and therefore not letting you live the life of your dreams. Life coach Cheryl Richardson helps you find out how to identify these people and take steps to heal or end these relationships.

### **Toxic Qualities in People**

Some relationships constantly drain your energy, in both obvious and subtle ways. Several types of people will exhaust you or deter you from your path to living a fulfilled life. Life coach Cheryl Richardson describes six types of toxic qualities in people.

#### **The Blamer**

This person likes to hear his own voice. He constantly complains about what isn't working in his life and yet gets energy from complaining and dumping his frustrations on you.

#### **The Drainer**

This is the needy person who calls to ask for your guidance, support, information, advice or whatever she needs to feel better in the moment. Because of her neediness, the conversation often revolves around her, and you can almost feel the life being sucked out of you during the conversation.

#### **The Shamer**

This person can be hazardous to your health. The shamer may cut you off, put you down, reprimand you, or make fun of your or your ideas in front of others. He often ignores your boundaries and may try to convince you that his criticism is for your own good. The shamer is the kind of person who makes you question your own sanity before his.

#### **The Discounter**

This is the person who discounts or challenges everything you say. Often, she has a strong need to be right and can find fault with any position. It can be exhausting to have a conversation with the discounter, so eventually you end up giving in and deciding to just listen.

#### **The Gossip**

This person avoids intimacy by talking about other behind their backs. The gossip gets energy from relaying stories, opinions, and the latest "scoop." By gossiping about others, he creates a lack of safety in his relationships, whether he realizes it or not. After all, if he'll talk about someone else, he'll talk about you.

#### **Test the Quality of Your Relationships**

Since soulful connections require an investment of time and energy, you'll want to choose the people you spend time with wisely. To determine whether a relationship drains you or fuels you, ask yourself the following questions.

- Write down the name of a person in your life.
- Am I able to be myself with this person? Do I feel accepted by him/her?
- Is this person critical or judgmental of me?
- Does the relationship provide an even give-and-take exchange of energy?
- Do I feel upbeat and energized when I'm around this person, or depleted and drained?
- Does this person share my values? My level of integrity?
- Is this person committed to our relationship?
- Can this person celebrate my success?
- Do I feel good about myself when I'm with this person?

From Cheryl Richardson's book 'Take Time for Your Life'

### **Confronting Conflict with Grace**

Wondering how to confront people who drain you mentally, physically and spiritually? Once you have identified that you have a toxic relationship in your life, there are specific words that you can use to confront this family member or friend in a graceful, loving way. Your goal is not necessary to sever all relationships, it's to set boundaries with this person. If you feel the relationship can be healed, follow these steps.

#### **Step One: Set the stage.**

"In an effort to honor our relationship, I need to tell you the truth..."

#### **Step Two: Follow up with how you feel.**

"When you \_\_\_\_\_ it makes me feel \_\_\_\_\_..."

#### **Step Three: Then ask your family member or friend.**

"Are you willing to stop doing that?"

#### **Examples**

"In an effort to honor our relationship I need to tell you the truth. When you complain about your boss every week, it leaves me feeling drained of energy. If you're willing to do something about the situation, I'll support you 100%, but I can no longer listen to your complaints. Are you willing?" Then... "If you forget this conversation in the future, I promise to support you and our relationship by asking you to tell me how I can support you in taking action to fix the problem."

"In an effort to honor our relationship I need to tell you the truth. When you put me down I feel angry and hurt. In order for us to continue seeing each other, I need to ask you to stop. Are you willing?"

"In an effort to honor our relationship I need to tell you the truth. When you criticize me I feel drained and upset. I'd like to ask you to stop doing that so we can move closer instead of further apart. Are you willing?"

#### **\*\*\*Net News\*\*\***

Here are some web sites you & your family may find helpful.

Require help managing your diet? Or do you just want to live a healthier lifestyle? Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating is at [www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca)

This presents an overview of sleep disorders and provides basic tips for getting a good nights sleep [www.sleepfoundation.org/publications/letsleepwork.html](http://www.sleepfoundation.org/publications/letsleepwork.html)

For information or links to health tips, visit: [www.canadian-health-network.ca](http://www.canadian-health-network.ca)

Parents, The Anti-Drug Website: [www.theantidrug.com/advice/](http://www.theantidrug.com/advice/)

### **Self- Help Corner:**

Alcoholics Anonymous: 780-424-5900

[www.alcoholics-anonymous.org](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org)

Al-Anon/Alateen: 780-433-1818

Support Network / Referral Line: 211

Distress Line: 482-4357

Cocaine Anonymous: 780-425-2715

### **Informative Links:**

The National Women's Health Information Center: <http://4woman.gov/>

Active Living Website: <http://www.centre4activeliving.ca>