

# Parental Reference Guide

Understanding Teens and Marijuana: Part 1



*A Safe Teens America Resource for Parents*

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Understanding Teens and  
Marijuana: Part 1

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# Preface

Dear Parent,

In order to effectively keep your child safe, you must become an expert on an ever-increasing variety of topics - everything from I.T. to drug recognition - must now be part of your knowledge base. Being a busy, dedicated parent myself, I know the pressures you're facing. Through my work in drug prevention, I regularly encounter overwhelmed parents desperately seeking help keeping up in a world that's changing faster than they ever imagined possible. There is a void when it comes to science-based drug education information for parents, and I was inspired by those same parents to help fill it by writing a series of Parental Guides. Drugs are changing every day, and there are new studies being done constantly... it's difficult to keep up, but I'm as dedicated to helping your children as you are. The Parental Guide series is my way of offering relevant, real-time information to parents (and teachers) to help them stay abreast of the issues and dangers facing our teens. My organization, Safe Teens America, is focused on providing parents, educators, law enforcement, prevention professionals, medical professionals and others who work with teens the tools to recognize and respond to those dangers. The guides are just one of the ways I do that and there's more information on [www.safeteensamerica.org](http://www.safeteensamerica.org) if you need help beyond what this publication is able to provide.

Why tackle teens and marijuana first? I believe, given current events and the movement toward more marijuana legalization, this is the most pressing and impactful discussion we can have with our teens. Parents come up to me after my classes and workshops in tears, saying this is the first time they've felt empowered enough to approach their teen about adolescent marijuana use. I encourage you to dive in and learn about the problems marijuana will cause your child, then take that information directly to them so they can make better decisions. They are being marketed to with slick and sexy propaganda by the marijuana industry. You must respond with fact and reason and this guide is your tool to do so.

You, the parent, are the most influential person in your child's life. Our society has lost the conversation on marijuana with our teens... it's time to take it back one child at a time. Thank you for starting with yours.

Sincerely,



# CHAPTER I

## *The Adolescent Brain and Marijuana*

*"I smoke marijuana every single day, all day long."  
--teen hanging out in a park outside his Colorado Springs high school.*

*"It develops brain cells. That is a complete and true fact," he said. "It kills weak brain cells. It does affect your lungs ... but it's better than smoking cigarettes."  
--16 Year Old*

When tackling the challenges of common drugs, one need only start with the most commonly abused illicit drug, marijuana. As a society, we are in the midst of a great social experiment with marijuana, and our teens are the test subjects. States, such as my home state of Colorado, decided to thrust our teens into this experiment by first legalizing medical marijuana, then legalizing the retail sale of medical marijuana through dispensaries, and finally legalizing personal use amounts of marijuana. Colorado communities, as well as most communities across the nation, experienced an enormous grassroots campaign by the marijuana subculture to define the drug as safe and natural. Marijuana advocates taught teens to call marijuana a "medication" rather than a "drug" and refer to getting high as "medicating". The marijuana subculture was flush with money and followers, and thus controlled the definitions. Subsequent to the massive campaign, communities across the nation saw a disturbing trend among their teens regarding the perception of the dangers of marijuana use for teens. Figure 1 demonstrates the trend among high school seniors of increased marijuana use, coupled with a decrease in perceived risk of marijuana use. In other words, more high school seniors are using marijuana, while fewer and fewer of them see using marijuana as posing any significant threat to their overall health. Starting

any discussion about marijuana and the teen brain here illustrates why we must do a better job as parents and educators alike. This statistic demonstrates one simple fact, we have lost the conversation. Educators and parents need to take that conversation back. While we do not have the resources of the marijuana industry, we have contact with teens everyday and we have the science on our side. That's undeniably better when educating our kids. To that end, let's dive in!

## MARIJUANA USE AMONG 12TH GRADERS\* VERSUS PERCEIVED RISK

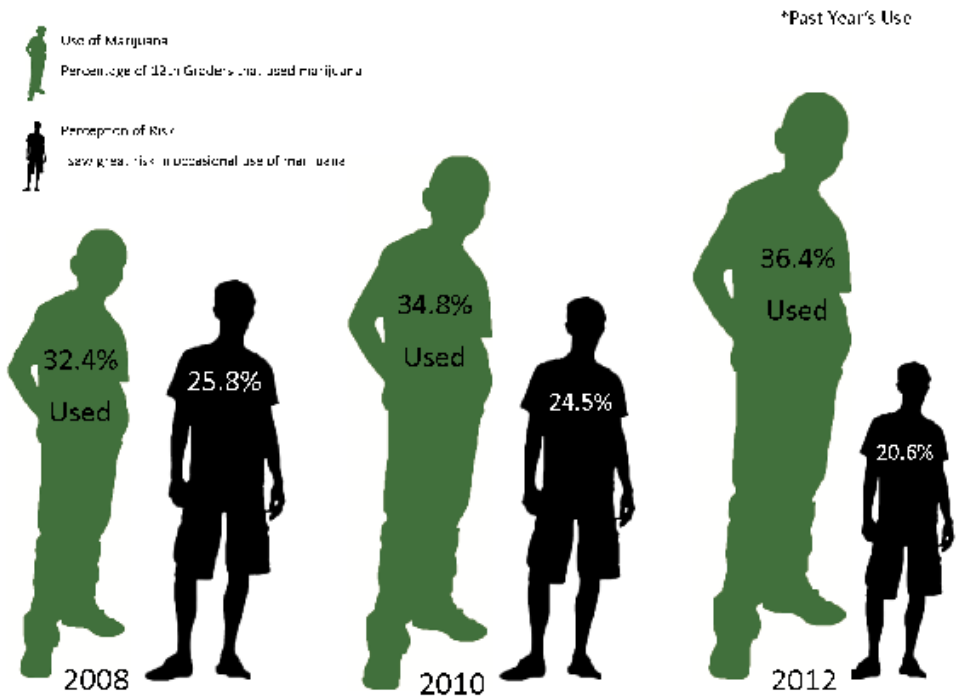


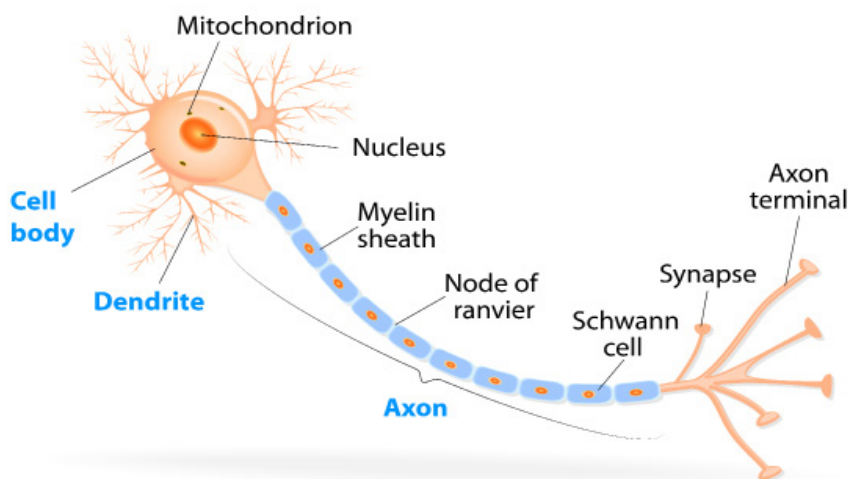
Figure 1

2012 Monitoring the Future Survey

To understand the problems marijuana presents to teens, we need to understand a little about the brain, and the teen brain in particular. To set the stage, let's take a quick refresher on how the brain works (for all you non-science lovers, hang in there... it will be worth it in the end).

The basic cell of the brain, the neuron, is made of the cell body (contains the nucleus), dendrites (which receive messages from other neurons), axons (which reach out to other neurons), and axon terminals (which speak to other neurons). Neurons do not actually touch one another, rather they communicate with each other, via chemicals called neurotransmitters, that pass back and forth from the synapse of one neuron to the dendrite of another neuron in a space called the synaptic cleft (see Figure 3). The three main neurotransmitters to be aware of are dopamine, serotonin, and norepinephrine.

Figure 2

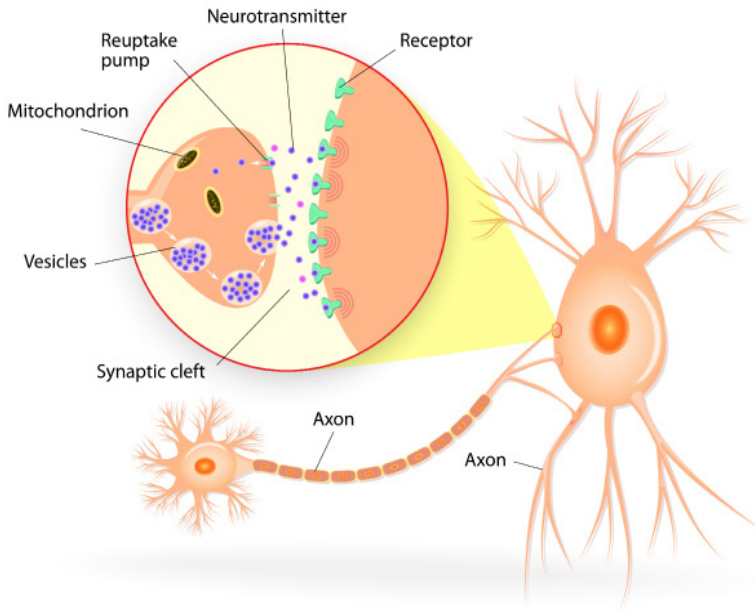


Science discovered, not long ago, the teen brain is going through a second developmental period. We once thought the primary neuronal developmental period during the first few years of life was the only such period and all we accomplished after that was putting mileage on our brains. Not so! Thanks to the advent of the Functional MRI (fMRI), scientists discovered the second developmental period. Just as we can corrupt the development of a baby's



brain during the primary developmental process (think Fetal Alcohol Syndrome), so too can we corrupt the adolescent brain's development. Science had one of those "Uh, oh!" moments when they discovered the second developmental period and how misunderstood introducing drugs during this process was.

Figure 3



## NEUROTRANSMITTERS



### Dopamine

Active in regions of the brain responsible for reward-driven learning. All addictive drugs, including marijuana, act on dopamine and dopamine pathways.



### Serotonin

Serotonin is thought to be a contributor to the feelings of happiness and well-being. Ironically, it is derived from tryptophan (may be responsible for sleepiness).



### Norepinephrin

Norepinephrin exerts influence on a large area of the brain. It is responsible for increased alertness, fight or flight, and influences the reward system.

As you can see from Figure 3, neurotransmitters are critical for neuronal communication and work in the process of activating or deactivating neurons. Without neurotransmitters, like dopamine, neurons cannot communicate with each other.

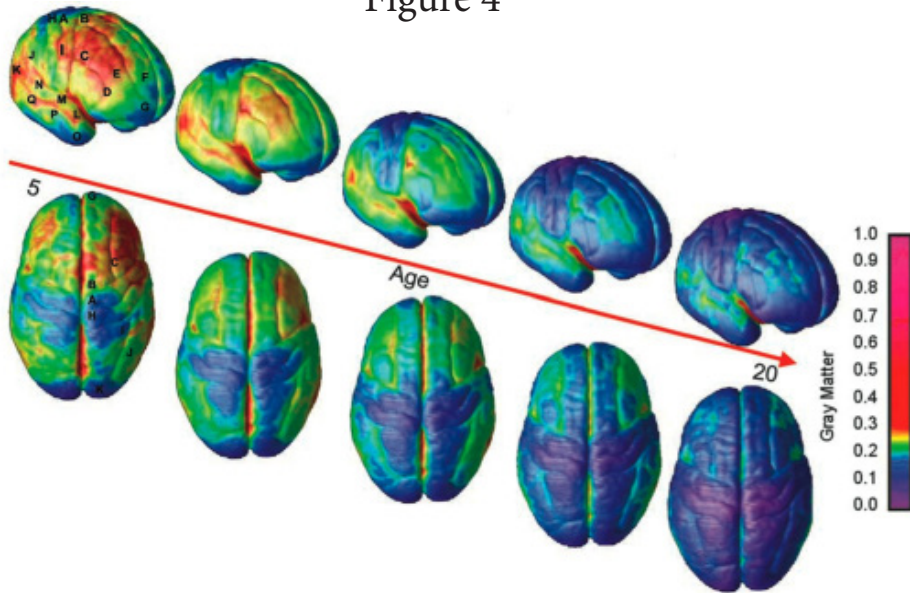
So, to summarize, the neuron is the basic cell of the brain (there are others of course). Neurons communicate with each other by sending chemical messages via neurotransmitters. Our thoughts, memories, moods, feelings, personalities are all controlled by actions of neurotransmitters. Neurotransmitters and their pathways are very important to brain functioning regardless of how old you may be.

Now, let's take a look at how the adolescent brain differs from the adult brain. From the age of 12-25, the adolescent brain changes dramatically. It is in the process of organizing itself into the adult brain that the teen will have for the rest of their lives. Adolescent brain development is a newly-understood phenomenon. We now know that around age 10 our children develop many more neurons than they will ever use. The following years, up to about age 25, are devoted to a remodeling of sorts, through a process called synaptic pruning. The brain decides which neuronal connections are used and which are not, then prunes away the unused neuronal connection, just like pruning a bush. It gives a whole new meaning to "use it or lose it".

The maturation process starts in the rear brain and works its way forward (see Figure 4, the blue areas are more mature areas). This is important because it sheds light on why teens act the way they do. The last part of the brain to mature is the forebrain. That region of the brain controls executive functioning (complicated problem solving) and mitigates risk taking, among other things. This explains why teens are risk-takers. Adults and teens process information in different parts of the brain and are hard-wired to react to challenges very differently. Not to worry, your child will mature into a fully-functioning adult, as long as that developmental process is not corrupted.

I want to introduce one more part of the brain that grows and develops through adolescence, the hippocampus. To keep things simple, the hippocampus is part of the limbic system and controls short-term memories (and is responsible for those short-term memories becoming long-term memo-

Figure 4



ries) and mood regulation, as well as several other processes. Understanding that memory and mood are directly related to the hippocampus will be important a little later on, and in Part 3 of this guide series, when we look into what science has discovered about teens using marijuana during this developmental stage.

Again, during adolescent brain development, neuronal connections are being pruned away if not used, while the connections that are being used are insulated and maintained. Several structures within the adolescent brain that are critical for memory and mood regulation are still growing and developing through the mid-twenties.

We now have a basic understanding of the brain, so let's gain an understanding of marijuana. Marijuana is a preparation of the *Cannabis Sativa* or *Cannabis Indica* plant intended for use as a psychoactive drug. The principle psychoactive constituent of marijuana is tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). Most of the THC is stored in hair-like structures called "Trichomes" (see page 12- the top image is of a marijuana "bud" with the white trichomes and the bottom image is a close-up of the trichomes).

# MARIJUANA



Cannabis



Trichomes

# MARIJUANA

The two main strains of marijuana, Cannabis Sativa and Cannabis Indica, are shown below. Sativa plant leaves are longer and narrower than Indica leaves. Both strains are used and sold regularly. Combining the two strains creates hybrid strains sold under varying names like Super Lemon Haze, White Widow, Berry Bomb, Strawberry Dream, etc.



Cannabis Sativa Leaf



Cannabis Indica Leaf

# MARIJUANA

While both male and female plants contain THC, the female plant is the only one that flowers to produce the marijuana bud. The pictures below show the female marijuana plant with buds and a close-up of the bud. Marijuana buds contain the majority of the plant's THC.



A closer look at the Marijuana bud.

The following pages offer a glossary of terms and photos you should be aware of before you talk to your teens about marijuana abuse.

## Joint



Slang term for a cigarette rolled using marijuana. Joints range between .5 grams and 1.0 grams per cigarette. Rolling papers are most common, but any paper (ATM receipts, etc.) may be used.



## Bong

A filtration device used to smoke marijuana (can be used to smoke other things as well). Uses water to filter the marijuana smoke. The term “bowl” refers to the end of the stem apparatus where marijuana is placed and lit to be smoked.



## Pipe

Marijuana pipes come in all shapes and sizes. From glass to metal to wooden/metal, etc. Most glass pipes are ornate and carry a bowl on the end. As a side note, meth pipes look significantly different (see the Reference Guide on Common Drugs for information on meth pipes).



## Blunt

Blunts are hollowed-out cigars repacked with marijuana. It’s the same principle as a joint, only bigger.



## Marijuana Bud

The bud is the flowering part of the female plant that carries most of the plant's THC (as opposed to the leaves). Many people smoke the leaves, stems, and seeds as well.

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## Hashish

A preparation of the cannabis plant composed of compressed or purified stalk resin glands (the trichomes introduced earlier). Hash is much more potent (higher concentration of THC) than unsifted buds or leaves.

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## Sensimilla

Sensimilla is the marijuana bud (female flowering part of the Cannabis plant) that is unfertilized and without seeds. Sensimilla is very potent, as none of the flower has seeded and lost THC.

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## Butane Hash Oil (BHO)

AKA Butane Honey Oil. This is one name for marijuana concentrates. Hash oil has been around a long time and is derived from extracting the THC from the stems and leaves of the Cannabis plant (mainly the leftovers). Things are much different now! See Part 2 of this guide series for details.





## Kief

Kief is a collection of the resin glands (aka Trichomes) that accumulate in grinders, or are sifted and collected with screens. Kief contains a high amount of THC and is usually pressed into Hashish cakes, but can also be vaporized.



## Grinder

Also called “Herb Grinder”, the grinder is used to prepare marijuana for smoking. It grinds the marijuana plant material into finer product that can be more easily rolled into a joint.



## Cannabutter

Cannabutter, or Magic Butter, is butter infused with cannabinoids (such as THC). Cannabis is heated with butter and the cannabinoids are extracted by the butter fat. Cannabutter is used to bake edible marijuana products, such as brownies and cookies, among other things. Cannabis cooking oils are also becoming more popular. See Part 2 of this guide for details.



## Hookah

Hookahs are multi-stemmed pipes used for smoking or vaporizing flavored tobacco called “Shisha”. Many people use a mixture of cannabis and shisha in hookahs. Cannabis may also be prepared in other ways to smoke in hookahs.



## Marijuana Tincture

Marijuana tinctures are liquid forms of THC that has been extracted into alcohol or glycerin. The THC tincture is dropped under the tongue with an eye dropper. Tinctures are popular because they are a discreet way of consuming marijuana.



## Ear Wax (Concentrate)

Marijuana ear wax is a Butane Hash Oil preparation that is whipped during the final stage of processing, introducing air into the oil. THC concentrations range from 50% - 90%, or more. See Part 2 of this guide for details.



## Shatter (Concentrate)

Shatter is a Butane Hash Oil preparation that results in a brittle product. Shatter is extremely potent, with THC concentrations above 90% at times. Shatter is considered the most pure form of marijuana concentrate. See Part 2 of this guide series for details.



## Dabs (Concentrates)

Dabs is a slang term, and the most common term, used to refer to different preparations of Butane Hash Oil (marijuana concentrates). The three main forms of dabs are shatters, waxes, and budders (not to be confused with cannabutter). Marijuana concentrates are covered in the Parental Reference Guide to Marijuana and Teens Part 2.

## BACK TO THE ADOLESCENT BRAIN

We covered the basics about marijuana and some of the terminologies you will need to know, so let's get back to the teen brain. Recall that the teen brain is going through a critical period of reorganization and development. Introducing drugs into that developmental process can have detrimental effects, both short-term and long-term. The picture below shows the effects of a drug, ethyl alcohol in this case, on the developing brain during the primary development stage. Primary development is the time from when a baby is in the womb, through the first few years of life.



Marijuana has a different affect on the primary development. It appears THC corrupts the development of the hippocampus (as well as other areas of the brain), leading to learning deficits and hyperactivity in childhood. In drug prevention classes, I ask teens if it's a good idea for a pregnant mother to smoke marijuana. The answer is a resounding "NO!" of course. That is any easy one. Ask them if it is a good idea for teens to smoke marijuana and you get a mixed response, until you connect the two developmental stages.

Fast-forward to the adolescent development stage. Many of the primary brain structures are fully grown, but some of the most critical structures are not (hippocampus being one). The body of scientific evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates altered and diminished hippocampal functioning when teens abuse marijuana. This is not even debated by rational marijuana advocates any longer. There is a direct relationship between diminished function and age when abuse begins, dosage, and continued abuse through adolescence. In short, the earlier the teen (or pre-teen in many cases) starts smoking marijuana, the worse it is for them--particularly if they become heavy smokers and continue through their mid-twenties. After making the connection, many teens start to understand how derailing brain development, in a child or in a teen, can have significant long-term consequences.

There is that age again...mid-twenties...it keeps popping up. Recall that the hippocampus grows through adolescence, to about age 25, then stops. At that point, you have what you have and that is what you have to work with for the remainder of your life. If a teen derails that development, they may not have time to catch up before that mid-twenties finish line. The earlier they start smoking marijuana, the earlier they corrupt their brain's development. If we cannot get through to them to abstain from marijuana abuse, they may not regain that development in time. In effect, their ability to put down new memories and control their moods and emotions may be stuck in their teen years. As a cop, I encounter plenty of adults that appear to not be able to control their emotions and mood. I sometimes wonder if they fall in the "teen onset of drug use" category and simply act as rationally as an adolescent.

Inevitably, some teens will want to take drugs and try to use rhetoric or propaganda to validate their drug use. Let's take a look at some of the most common arguments you may here from a teen in an attempt to rationalize smoking marijuana.

# COMMON TEEN ARGUMENTS FOR MARIJUANA

1. *Marijuana is not addictive*: Categorically untrue. Science has proven marijuana can be addictive. Addiction is complicated and not everyone who smokes marijuana will become addicted. However, many will. There are thousands of marijuana addiction treatment centers in the US. What are they treating if marijuana is not addictive? Science has not only demonstrated the addictive nature of marijuana, it has gone a long way to showing the mechanisms for marijuana addiction. Marijuana addiction is not debated any longer. It can be addictive, period.

2. *I think more clearly on marijuana*: Highly unlikely, considering THC suppresses the processes of the brain that are involved with cognition. Teens have problems with executive functioning without the added suppressive effects of marijuana. Science overwhelmingly supports the fact that marijuana abuse is directly related to decreased cognitive functioning. This is also not debated any longer. What remains to be seen is if abstinence from marijuana abuse over a period of time restores that cognitive functioning. There are studies that are promising for adults, but teens may not be so fortunate (developing brains and all).

3. *I drive better on marijuana*: Not possible. Marijuana impairs one's ability to multi-task (think divided attention testing on roadside tests for DUIs), just like alcohol. My department's "smokey" DUI (marijuana-based DUIs) rate is about 10% of all DUIs and growing. A cop only observes poor driving, they have no way of knowing what the driver may be intoxicated with until testing occurs. If marijuana made people better drivers, cops would not observe the commonly poor driving of those high on marijuana. Lab testing on those high on marijuana (meaning putting them on a simulator) many times shows they drive slower than those intoxicated on alcohol. First of all, those behaviors test the intoxicated person's capabilities, not what we actually see each night in the real world. Secondly, being run over slowly by a 4,000 pound SUV will still be a bad day.

4. *It's legal, it must be safe*: Absurd. Not to mention, it is NOT legal for a teen.

5. *Marijuana is not a gateway drug*: This is actually heavily debated. I stop short of calling it a gateway drug because science has yet to prove it to be so. It *can* be a gateway drug, but what does that really mean? Some teens move from marijuana to other drugs, but other teens that smoke marijuana never go on to other drugs. However, the same can be said about alcohol. A better term for marijuana may be a "doorway" drug, or a "step" drug.

# COMMON TEEN ARGUMENTS FOR MARIJUANA

6. *Marijuana never killed anyone*: This is one of the most ridiculous marijuana myths. In my classes and workshops, I present competing pro-marijuana marketing websites that actually argue this point against one another. Some pro-marijuana websites use this as the first point of argument for the legalization of marijuana (comparing marijuana to alcohol). Other pro-marijuana websites admit using this myth as propaganda is absurd and hurtful to the pro-marijuana cause. Simply displaying them arguing with one another is sufficient, but there is also a mountain of statistics related to the increased risks associated with marijuana and all sorts of activities. The “marijuana never killed anyone” myth started from the point of marijuana’s low toxicity, but has evolved into a core rhetorical attack on parents and educators who are fighting to keep teens off drugs.

7. *Marijuana is less toxic than alcohol*: True, but so are LSD and several other drugs. Simply stating broadly that marijuana is less toxic than alcohol, or any other drug for that matter, falls well short of arguing *for* the use of marijuana by teens. It’s comparable to arguing that jumping off a 100 foot bridge is worse than jumping off a 50 foot bridge. The fact remains, you still jumped off a bridge and that has consequences.

8. *Marijuana is safer than alcohol*: This is the prevailing marketing strategy for Big Marijuana (the marijuana legalization movement funded by businesses looking to profit from the sale and/or cultivation of marijuana). Be prepared for this argument around your dinner table, it is coming! This is a broad and bold statement, simply because it lacks any clarification as to what they mean by “safer than alcohol”. Okay, at what dose? Are they claiming that smoking a gram of marijuana concentrate is safer than drinking a glass of wine at dinner? Follow-up questions for your teens will result in the breakdown of this statement simply because it’s way too broad of a claim. Please understand, however, that I am not advocating for the use of alcohol. Those who have taken my Teens and Alcohol class know I believe alcohol to be the greatest single drug-related cause of family destruction I have ever seen. That’s because of its availability, not because a glass of wine causes people to short circuit. I will cover more on the marijuana versus alcohol argument in Part 3 of this guide series.

# CHAPTER II

## *Defending Against Propaganda*

*“Just because something isn’t a lie does not mean that it isn’t deceptive. A liar knows that he is a liar, but one who speaks mere portions of truth in order to deceive is a craftsman of destruction.”*

*--Criss Jami*

*“It is worthy of remark that a belief constantly inculcated during the early years of life, whilst the brain is impressible, appears to acquire almost the nature of an instinct; and the very essence of an instinct is that it is followed independently of reason.”*

*--Charles Darwin*

In Chapter 2, we’ll discuss pro-marijuana marketing rhetoric and propaganda that drives many of the excuses teens use to smoke marijuana. This is not a political fight against the legalization of marijuana. That is a decision individual communities have to make for themselves. This chapter is meant to show you how Big Marijuana markets its drug to teens. I take the propaganda directly to teens and talk with them about what they hear. I also explain how Big Marijuana needs them to be the next generation of marijuana users. Our current teen generation is intelligent and does not like being misled. Pulling back the curtain on Oz, so to speak, is an effective lesson. I believe this is a linchpin in the “be drug free” discussions with teens, particularly with marijuana. You will see the next iteration of pro-marijuana marketing targeting a parent’s use of alcohol. The idea is to teach teens how to argue for the use of marijuana as an alternative to using alcohol. If you find yourself debating the use of marijuana versus alcohol, the conversation has already been lost. Do not allow Big Marijuana to define the parameters of that conversation. The conversation should be about staying drug free versus being a drug user. It cannot devolve into, “Which drug should I be taking?” Drug use is drug use, and the conversation should stay there. That being said, you have to be prepared to explain to your teen why marijuana use is as bad as alcohol use, because Big Marijuana is spending a lot of money to promote using marijuana over alcohol.

# UNDERSTANDING BIG MARIJUANA

I've told many people how impressive it was to watch Big Marijuana go to work in Colorado since 1998. The template for making millions of dollars in 2014 by legalizing and selling marijuana started more than a decade earlier. I am not railing against the legalization of marijuana in Colorado, I simply want teens to understand they are being targeted as the next generation of marijuana users. Big Marijuana absolutely has to have them smoke marijuana, in much greater numbers than past generations, to sustain business profitability in the face of increasing competition. You need to understand this as a parent so you can intelligently discuss the inevitable advertisements you will see very soon.

Big Marijuana is business. It is free market principles applied to a drug. Companies and investors will make a lot of money from selling a drug to young people. So, how does the current marijuana business owner make money in the future? There are a few business model problems for them, considering their decade of propaganda that convinced so many young people marijuana was a benign herb. Our twenty-somethings bought into the rhetoric that marijuana was non-addictive. We know now that was a complete lie. Big Marijuana made no apologies, it simply changed the conversation. Now the prevailing marketing is marijuana is less addictive than other drugs that society has legalized, such as alcohol and nicotine. Where the first claim was completely absurd, this marketing strategy is more intelligent, as it's based in truth. There aren't many drugs that are more addictive than nicotine. I'll explain how this is actually problematic for Big Marijuana shortly.

A second early claim that our twenty-somethings bought into was that marijuana does not cause cancer. Again, we now know that was an exaggeration of the truth. Again, no apologies from Big Marijuana, they simply changed the conversation to "marijuana does not cause \*insert a specific type of cancer here\*". The prevention community responded, particularly with lung cancer, that it would take science decades to see if smoking marijuana actually causes cancer because it takes time for many cancers to develop. Big Marijuana replied that the prevention community's argument is baseless because most people only smoke marijuana when they are younger, not into their later adult years. I believe they are correct to some extent, but this creates a second problem for their business plans.



# UNDERSTANDING BIG MARIJUANA

So, let's take a look at the Big Marijuana business model, given what we have been told by Big Marijuana over the past ten years. First, according to the pro-marijuana machine, marijuana is less addictive than alcohol and nicotine. Given today's understanding of addiction and the statistics I've seen, I would agree. However, I believe dose and age of first use greatly increase marijuana's potential addictiveness. Second, according to the pro-marijuana machine, its users generally stop using it as they grow up. Again, I would agree based on what I have seen in the literature. Smoking a drug that's costly, causes short-term memory problems, can cause paranoia, and is a demotivator at a time in your life when you are trying to become successful is counterproductive. Most adults recognize that. So, given just those two variables, how does Big Marijuana make money in ten years?

Big Tobacco sells a drug that's highly addictive and causes its users to smoke cigarettes throughout their lifetime, until they die. While I think smoking is one of the worst things one can do to their body, I understand the business model. Big Tobacco's customers are loyal smokers for years and years because most cannot quit. If we are to believe what Big Marijuana has told us about marijuana's addictiveness, they have a business model problem. They would have very few customers in ten or twenty years because most would quit. So, if it is truly non-addictive and age-limiting, who smokes marijuana in ten years? The truth is that Big Marijuana absolutely has to convince high school and middle school generations to smoke marijuana. Otherwise, according to their own marketing points, they would be out of business in a decade. Additionally, there are thousands of applications awaiting approval to open marijuana retail stores and cultivation centers in Colorado and Washington. Simply put, competition is about to explode.

The heavy marketing of marijuana to our teens is in full swing and will only intensify. This did not start January 1, 2014, it started years ago and has been effective. As parents and educators, we lost the conversation and allowed Big Marijuana to control the information our teens have had to make their own decisions about drug use. It is time we take the conversation back and we must do so convincingly.

# UNDERSTANDING BIG MARIJUANA

As a parent or educator, you need to understand what's happening in your community when it comes to how Big Marijuana operates. The chart below demonstrates how pro-marijuana business owners and investors fund pro-marijuana marketing arms that attempt to influence states to legalize marijuana. It starts with the assertion marijuana is a medicine, not a drug (controls the conversation by controlling the definitions), and pushes for the legalization of medical marijuana. Once Big Marijuana has medical marijuana dispensaries operating, the grassroots efforts grow for the legalization of recreational marijuana. The marketing arms are effective and well-funded by the businesses that stand to make a lot of money. Once a state, like Colorado, legalizes recreational marijuana, the pro-marijuana businesses and investors create guidelines that reward the operating medicinal dispensaries (which are doing a lot of the grassroots campaigning), by allowing them to be the first to operate as recreational marijuana stores. The pro-marijuana investors and businesses many times operate corporations that supply dispensaries and recreational pot stores (or simply operate the stores themselves). It is an effective model... and one to explain to our teens.

MARIJUANA BUSINESS (BIG MARIJUANA)  
FUNDS MARKETING



MARKETING ARMS LOBBY FOR  
PRO-MARIJUANA LEGISLATION



BIG MARIJUANA OPENS FOR BUSINESS



MARKETING ARMS MOVE TO THE NEXT  
COMMUNITY

# UNDERSTANDING BIG MARIJUANA

So how does all of this influence our teens? After all, we occasionally hear from Big Marijuana that children should not use drugs. The propaganda and rhetoric for the legalization and use of marijuana cannot directly market to 12 or 13 year old teens and pre-teens. However, recall that Big Marijuana is depending on these young generations to eventually smoke their drug, so they have to convince our teens and pre-teens their drug is the best drug. From the pro-marijuana commercials that have either aired or almost aired, it's clear Big Marijuana is painting marijuana as the cool, safe alternative to alcohol and tobacco. The commercials direct our teens to pro-marijuana marketing websites, where they find ways to defend using marijuana to their parents. Obviously, the commercials do not directly target teens and pre-teens...some actually show twenty-somethings typing emails to their parents defending why they chose to use marijuana. However, why would a twenty or thirty-something adult need to defend drug use to their parents? Are they seeking permission to smoke weed at the kitchen table after Thanksgiving dinner? Probably not. This is a perfect example of indirect marketing. Remember how Big Tobacco used Joe Camel to market cigarettes to the young? That was indirect advertising, too.

An additional point to prepare yourself for is the use of your personal alcohol consumption being used against you in this conversation. It goes something like this: 'Look Dad, you like to enjoy a beer to relax when you get home...I prefer marijuana.' Are you ready to respond to that challenge? Are we really comparing apples to apples here? One smokes marijuana recreationally to get high every time. Are you drinking alcohol to get drunk every night? Is your one beer or glass of wine at dinner the same as getting stoned every night? Obviously, if you struggle with alcoholism, this conversation is going to be difficult. But, that should be a deterrent for your teen to take drugs in its own right. Be prepared for this conversation... however it may go.

One last point, and an important one, is that not all marijuana advocates fall under this Big Marijuana marketing umbrella. I have worked with many pro-marijuana advocates and business people that are committed to keeping teens off of drugs. They walk a difficult line between promoting healthy teen lifestyles (Drug Free Lifestyles) and alienating their base of support. The bottom line is we have to work collaboratively to keep teens drug free. It should be your community's goal to model that collaboration.

# CHAPTER III

## *Recognizing Marijuana Use*

*“There’s a phrase, “the elephant in the living room”, which purports to describe what it’s like to live with a drug addict, an alcoholic, an abuser. People outside such relationships will sometimes ask, “How could you let such a business go on for so many years? Didn’t you see the elephant in the living room?” And it’s so hard for anyone living in a more normal situation to understand the answer that comes closest to the truth; “I’m sorry, but it was there when I moved in. I didn’t know it was an elephant; I thought it was part of the furniture.” There comes an aha-moment for some folks - the lucky ones - when they suddenly recognize the difference.”*

*--Steven King*

**I**n Chapter 3, we’ll cover signs of marijuana use among teens. This is not only physical symptoms of drug use, but recognizing language, clothing, paraphernalia, texts, etc. related to the marijuana subculture. Finding any marijuana jargon or paraphernalia is a catalyst for a conversation with your teen. The stakes are simply too high to ignore marijuana use, dismiss it as not a big deal, or simply be ignorant to the signs around you. Adolescent use of marijuana is a red flag that cannot be missed or ignored. Understanding that teen marijuana use is many times a precursor to other drug use should make a parent’s skin crawl. I have participated in or watched many drug prevention programs where a mother told the story of her teen’s death from prescription drug overdose or heroin overdose. One of the common themes is that they either knew their teen smoked marijuana early on and did not think it was a big deal, or was oblivious to the fact their teen smoked marijuana before moving on to opioids. Every heroin addict I have ever met, recovering or current user, smoked marijuana prior to moving on to harder drugs. It is always the high they chase and in my experience, it always starts with marijuana and/or alcohol. This chapter helps you recognize the signs of marijuana use. Do not dismiss it. Reach out to your local drug addiction centers for help if needed.

# MORE TERMS TO KNOW



## 4:20

This is the code-term used to refer to smoking marijuana, and by extension, to the marijuana sub-culture. There are several ideas as to its origins, but April 20 is generally used for marijuana festivals and one is supposed to smoke marijuana every day at 4:20. Today, it's simply used as a way to identify with the pro-marijuana movement.

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## Kush

Kush refers to a subset of the Indica strain and takes its name from the Hindu Kush mountain range where it originated. It is a very popular strain you should be aware of.

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## Dank

Dank is a slang term that refers to any very potent strain of marijuana. The opposite (or weak marijuana) is called Schwag.

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## Shake

Shake is a slang term for any loose marijuana seeds, leaves, or stems at the bottom of a bag of marijuana. It also refers to the clippings, hairs, or crystals that may fall off of a marijuana plant.

## MORE TERMS TO KNOW



### Spliff

A spliff is a joint rolled with a mixture of marijuana and tobacco. A spliff may also refer to a finely-rolled joint or a joint rolled with high-quality marijuana.

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### Hemp

Hemp refers to a variety of high-growing Cannabis plant that usually has a very low THC concentration. Hemp fibers are used in many different products, including cording, mulch, and animal bedding. Hemp is not a variety of Cannabis that is generally used as a drug. The word Hemp is sometimes used to discretely refer to marijuana.

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### Flowers or Trees

Slang terms for marijuana in dry leaf form. The opposite, marijuana in concentrate form, is referred to as Dabs, Oil, Sap, Budder, Wax, Shatter, or erll. Marijuana users today usually fall within one or the other camps, preferring to smoke either "flowers" or "wax".

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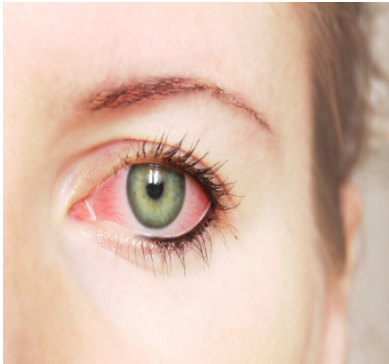


### Oil Rigs (or 7:10 Rigs)

Bongs designed to smoke marijuana concentrates. The term "Oil" used to refer to the concentrates that come from Butane Hash Oil. The term "rig" comes from the oil field industry. The 7:10 comes from the word "OIL" turned upside down and has the same connotations as 4:20, except specific to concentrates (see Part 2 of this guide series for more details).

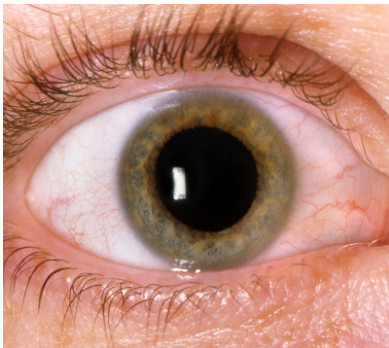
# SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF MARIJUANA USE

To respond to drug use, you need the tools to recognize drug use. Police officers are trained to recognize signs of drug use for criminal investigations of drunk and/or drugged driving. I will share some of those clues with you so you can better recognize a problem and be in the best position to respond to potential drug use early in the abuse cycle.



## Bloodshot Eyes

Using marijuana in any form causes the blood vessels in the eye to dilate. This vasodilation makes the blood vessels more visible against the sclera (white part of the eye). It is not the smoke that causes the vasodilation, rather it's the THC, so all forms of marijuana cause this clue.



## Dilated Pupils (Slightly)

This will not be experienced by all users, so it is not a single clue you can hang your hat on. However, marijuana will dilate the pupils of many users. Look for it in the totality of the circumstances.



## Eyelid and Body Tremors

Look for small tremors in the eyelids and hands. You may also see it in the legs when the teen is sitting in a chair.

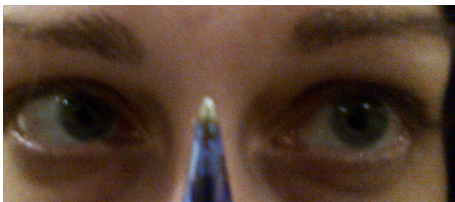
# SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF MARIJUANA USE

As a reminder, each of these signs and symptoms of marijuana use may not be present in every teen who has used marijuana. You know your teen the best. Look for these signs when accompanied by changes in other social behaviors.



## Short-Term Memory Loss

This generally refers to what is currently being experienced. It includes problems recalling recent conversations, judging time and distance, and trouble tracking a conversation. One of the first questions you may want to ask them is what time they think it is (without allowing them to look at a clock, of course). They may have trouble guessing accurately.



## Lack of Convergence

A subject lacks convergence if his eyes are unable to converge toward the bridge of his nose when a stimulus is moved inward. That is a formal way of saying your teen may be unable to cross his eyes if you told him to follow your finger with his eyes as you moved your finger toward his nose.



## Lack of Coordination

As with any other drug, if your teen is high, he or she will most likely be unsteady on their feet. Much like alcohol, marijuana affects the cerebellum (area of the brain responsible for motor control, coordination, and balance).



## OTHER CLUES

Other more basic signs of marijuana use include smelling like marijuana (although if the teen used a Vape Pen they may not smell like pot), marijuana debris in their mouth, having lighters if they are non-smokers, using e-cigarettes or Vaporizer Pens, having butane torches, etc.



### Vaporizer Pen (Vape Pen)

Vape pens are becoming more popular with teens to smoke marijuana (in liquid form) and nicotine cartridges, as well as flavored tobaccos. Be familiar with these, as they are being designed to allow the user to smoke marijuana concentrates and flowers (without detection).



### Butane Torches

These small torches are used to heat the nail in the Oil Rig bong we discussed earlier. I cannot think of many legitimate reasons a teen would have one, but I am sure there are a few. You know your teen's habits the best, would this be something they would have around? We will cover this in detail in Part 2 of this guide series.



### Faucet Screens

There are MANY indicators of marijuana use to be aware of... we cover them in bunches in our workshops. One of them is missing faucet screens. These screens control the spray pattern and flow of the water exiting the faucet. Teens use these screens to filter the marijuana in their pipes and bongs. Are yours missing?

## PARENTAL GUIDE SERIES

These Parental Guides are meant to inform parents and educators so they may recognize and respond to the potential dangers our teens face. The Guides are a series that include all drugs, as well as Internet/Smartphone safety education. The guides will be available at [www.safeteensamerica.org](http://www.safeteensamerica.org) with release dates throughout 2014.



Teens and Marijuana: Part 2  
(Concentrates and Edibles)



Teens and Marijuana: Part 3  
(What Science has to Say)



Teen Prescription Drug  
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Teen Prescription Drug  
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