Cannabis Conversation Guide

HOW TO TALK WITH YOUR TEEN ABOUT WEED

BE READY WITH ANSWERS FOR ALL THE HARD QUESTIONS—OR COMEBACKS THAT GET THROWN YOUR WAY

"Why can't I use weed if it's legal?"

Fast Facts: "Yes, but it's not legal for you yet because teen brains are still developing, and THC can disrupt that process."

Deep Dive: "Good question. Just because it's legal, doesn't mean it's safe for everyone. Your brain is still growing into your 20s, and if you use weed before then, THC can harm your hippocampus, cerebellum, and amygdala. That puts your memory, attention span, coordination, and mental health at risk."[1]

"Why can't I use weed if it's natural?"

Fast Facts: "Even though it comes from a plant, cannabis contains a chemical called THC that can interfere with processes in your brain."

Deep Dive: "That doesn't mean it's safe for you right now. Because your brain is growing, the effects of THC are stronger and can impact how your brain functions. THC could make it harder for you to stay focused and manage stress, and it can even cause long-term damage."[1]

"Aren't there worse things I could be doing, like tobacco or other drugs?"

Fast Facts: "Weed is a psychoactive substance that can have a big impact on your mood, motivation, and overall brain development."

Deep Dive: "Every substance is harmful in different ways, and using cannabis as a teen can come with risks. While your brain is growing, it's making new connections. Many substances, including weed, can interrupt that growth process and cause harm."[1]

"How come you use weed, but I'm not allowed to?"

Fast Facts: "I only want the best for you and using as a teen is a big health risk."

Deep Dive: "Cannabis affects adults differently. Weed interrupts your brain's development and can cause long-lasting learning and memory problems.[2,3,4,5,6,7,8] Using THC as a teen could affect your education and even lead to cannabis use disorder later."[9,10]

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HOW TO TALK WITH YOUR TEEN ABOUT WEED (cont.)

"Didn't you use weed when you were young?"

Fast Facts: "Weed is much more potent today than when I was a teen. The effects are stronger and longer-lasting too."

Deep Dive: "I did, but back then we didn't know it could harm teen brains, and weed wasn't as strong. Cannabis today contains triple the amount of THC[11] than what I used to use, and some edibles and oils can contain even more.[12,13] Any amount of THC is harmful to your brain, but the higher concentrations in today's weed come with big impacts too."[14,15]

"Isn't weed good for mental health?"

Fast Facts: "Medicinal cannabis might help, but self-medicating can be dangerous. We'd have to talk to a healthcare professional first."

Deep Dive: "Science is always evolving, and today we know a lot more about how weed affects teens. Self-medicating with cannabis comes with risks because THC can throw your body's natural chemical production out of balance, making feelings of stress and anxiety worse instead of better."[16]

"Doesn't it help you be more creative?"

Fast Facts: "When your brain is still growing, weed can actually interrupt the creative thought process[17] and hinder your overall creativity."

Deep Dive: "Everyone is different, and what you see on social media isn't always the full picture. Science shows that some forms of cannabis are so potent that it can actually impair creative problem-solving.[17] Avoiding cannabis use is the best way to let your brain grow to its full potential."[1]

"What if my friends offer me weed? How do I say no?"

Fast Facts: "That can be tricky. Sometimes it's cool to be different, and if they're really your friends they'll respect your choice."

Deep Dive: "Sometimes a 'no thanks' can be enough. If it feels like they're pressuring you, you could say you're not ready to try it or give them the facts we've talked about. They may be impressed that you're standing up for yourself."

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TIPS TO KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

NO MATTER HOW AWKWARD THE TALK MAY BE, TEENS REALLY ARE LISTENING

Use these tips to start the conversation:

Start early

Normalize talking about cannabis as children grow. Even if they haven't started asking questions yet, the sooner you explain the risks, the less likely they are to consider experimenting.

Keep it two-way

Instead of talking *at* teens, talk *with* them. Actively listening to their thoughts without judgment and encouraging questions helps show that you care.

Stick to the facts

Exaggerations may result in eye rolls. Base your conversation on science, like how teen cannabis use can impact brain growth and mental health.

Keep it casual

Family meetings and lectures can be intimidating for teens. Find casual moments, like in the car or on the way to school, to chat about cannabis.

DON'T SAY:

"Sit down. We need to talk."

"Because I said so."

"Everyone gets stressed, just deal with it."

DO SAY:

"Got a minute? I want to know what you think."

"Because I want the best for you, and science is starting to show risks for teens that use."

"I care about your mental health, and weed may actually make stress harder to handle."

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