

Local Teen and Young Adult Marijuana Use: News Flash

Article space is limited so I will just cut to the chase. You can read my newsletters and watch my videos at www.recoveryhappens.com. I have written 2 books on addiction, currently teach graduate school students for USF on this topic and have been in the media 80 times both in the local media to the national media on the Today show. I am the founder/clinical director of Recovery Happens Counseling Services in Roseville, Fair Oaks and Davis. We see 110 very smart clients per week and I have been a professional in this work for 20 years. I have spoken with over 1,000 local teens on campuses this year, and I have trained many local programs and thousands of clinicians on how to understand and treat teen/young adult drug use. Here is what you need to know about today's teen culture:

- (a) The average age of first intoxication is 12. (b) The time when most kids try drugs or alcohol for the first time is the summertime. (c) By the time parents find out, it usually has been 2 years of use. (d) If you used Marijuana back in the 80's it was 5% THC. Today no pot user is using under 24% THC (the bud) but most habitual users are using concentrates, oils and edibles which can be 80+% THC! [a]

- We see many kids who have mental illnesses being activated by this potent THC. In the last 2 years we have seen many users experience psychosis /panic attacks ending up in the ER. This is a national trend with Neuroscientists across the globe working to figure this new consequence out. The current thought is that the THC is activating non-methylated genes for bi-polar disorder, psychosis and even schizophrenia. Moreover, while the acute symptoms will be medicated and managed within days or weeks, full recovery from the brain injury can take 1-5 years (used to be thought just 1yr). *Again, this was not happening a few years ago.* See <http://www.othersideofcannabis.com/> Jody and I are in frequent conversation.

- In 2015 nearly 30% of 10th graders used in the last month. More for Juniors, even higher for Seniors and greater for college students [b].

- (Most importantly) Users don't "Hit Bottom" until the system around them hits bottom. Despite the harmful consequences incurred by THC on the developing teen brain, mind, emotional regulation systems, and social skills development, as well as, consequences with family, school, friendships, money, sports, health and mental health, the systems around them still say "Well, it is only weed... Kids will be kids... It is the teenage years, a rite of passage." This is harmful denial/enabling at work which allows the user to progress. The work then is trying to dislodge a pathological relationship to intoxication, which for the user, becomes their most important relationship. As the illness is allowed to progress, it can cost thousands of dollars to treat and if left untreated, it can result in legal fees and attempts to get medical hospitalization years later when the addict decides "I love intoxication, and Marijuana is my best friend, but now, I have to play the field a little bit and try Xanax, Molly, DXM, and Heroin."

- My hope in sharing this information is that it helps you to become up to date on the current statistics, that it encourages you to continue educate yourself on the subject of addiction, and always, if you have a family member who is struggling with addiction, please get help. It is work, and Recovery Happens!

[a] Source: University of Mississippi Potency Monitoring Project

[b] Johnston, L. D., O'Malley, P. M., Miech, R. A., Bachman, J. G., & Schulenberg, J. E. (2016). Monitoring the Future national survey results on drug use, 1975-2015: Overview, key findings on adolescent drug use. Ann Arbor: Institute for Social Research, The University of Michigan