

# Joint Conversation HAVE THE POT TALK

## POT | It's in the air.

Whether we like it or not, our kids are going to be exposed to pot. They'll hear about it from friends, at parties and after school activities, or from references online and across all media — pot is literally in the air.



With medicinal and recreational legalization becoming more mainstream and even culturally acceptable, it's more important than ever that your children have good information from the best resources available so they can make wise decisions about marijuana. It all starts with you.

### What's the big deal?

Yeah, we get it — it's more than likely you've tried pot, or even continue to use it. You turned out OK, right? The big deal is that we know a lot more today than ever before about the effects of marijuana, especially when it comes to the brain development of kids from adolescence through 25 years of age.

Marijuana has changed. THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol) — the chemical in pot that creates the high, is more

potent and powerful than it was years ago, and the potency continues to go up. We also know a lot more today about the negative impacts THC has on the brain. So, before you dismiss the impact pot could have on your kids' brain development, get all the facts and prepare them for what's out there.

### When to have the talk.

There's no time like the present. According to a recent Enfield Student Survey Study, 1 in 4 teens said they began using marijuana before the age of 15.

The fact is, our kids have already started talking about or have been exposed to drugs.

You could introduce the topic as early as 8 years old and you definitely don't

want to wait until they're 16. Once you've started the conversation, keep talking. Every time you talk you have an opportunity to gauge what they know. Plus you can make sure all the information they have is accurate and that they take it seriously.

**Think of it this way — you're going to talk with your kids about responsible use and health risks of alcohol or other substances. So go ahead, sit down and start the conversation with them about pot.**

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## Brain changer.

**“Persistent cannabis users show neuropsychological decline from childhood to midlife.”**

— Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences



## We know a lot more today about the impact of marijuana on brain development than ever before.

A Duke University study found that children who smoke marijuana at least weekly before age 18 displayed lasting **harm to their intelligence, attention, and memory** compared with those who began using marijuana after age 18.

The study also found that quitting marijuana use later did not reverse the cognitive damage caused by regular marijuana use before age 18.

Short-term effects include problems with memory and learning, distorted perception (sight, sounds, time, touch), trouble with problem solving, a loss of motor coordination, increased heart rate and anxiety.

Pot affects the brain's reward system in the same way as all other drugs of addiction do — the more you use, the more you need to produce the usual desired affect.

We also know that the likelihood of addiction increases considerably for those who start young, which is why **it is so important to have the pot talk** with your kids as early as you think appropriate.

<sup>1</sup>Partnership Attitude Tracking Study 2013

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## What you say and do matters.

Your kids may not tell you, but you're the most important influence in their lives.



Your kids may not tell you, but you're the most important influence in their lives. In fact, when adolescents have supportive parents, teachers, coaches and other adults in their lives they are less likely to use marijuana before age 21 — an important milestone when it comes to keeping their developing brains healthy. The truth is that the best information your kids will get about anything will come from you. What you say and do matters to them — believe it or not!

### So now that you know you matter, ask questions and then LISTEN.

Ask your kids what they know about pot. Find out what they think about people who use pot. When you get their opinion, you'll learn more about what they know and don't know, and also understand the

pressures they're under. Hear your kids out and together you can come up with positive solutions to their challenges and have an opportunity to give them the information they'll need to make good, healthy choices.

### Talk the talk.

Ask your kids about their friends and get to know them.

You need to know the kind of people your kid is hanging out with and the kind of influence they have on your child.

### Boost their self-confidence.

No one wants to be perceived as "uncool," and no one wants to be labeled a "pothead!" Encourage your kids to build their identity and reputation around things that are positive. A strong self-

image will serve them well when they have to navigate the struggles of middle school and high school!

### Keep Talking.

Above all, when you talk with your kids in a straightforward, nonjudgmental way you are leaving the door open for other "talk" opportunities and building a strong relationship. You want your kids to come to you and know you're always on their side. If you are clear about your goals, stay positive, listen and offer compassion, you'll have many chances to build on the first talk.

There are some great talking points and more information at [enfieldtogether.org](http://enfieldtogether.org).

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## Get your facts straight.

There is a lot of misinformation surrounding marijuana.



**There is a lot of misinformation surrounding marijuana. Understanding the realities of the immediate as well as long term effects of pot, especially on brain development, will help you inform your kids so they can make wise choices in the future.**

### Pot is NOT safer than alcohol

No one substance is safer than the other. Each affects you in different ways and everyone's body chemistry will react differently to various substances. Marijuana and alcohol can both have a negative impact to health and brain development, especially in preteens. Both can be addictive. Both can leave people feeling intoxicated, affect alertness, concentration, coordination and reaction time — and therefore leave the user unfit to manage activities that could result in injury, like athletics, and driving.

Regular pot use has been shown to have a negative effect on attention, motivation, coordination, memory, and learning, not to mention judgment skills. Just think

of all the learning and growing our kids will do between the ages of 10 and 25. They need access to as much healthy brainpower as possible.

### Yeah, marijuana is a plant. And natural substances can be harmful.

How can something that grows from our beautiful green earth be harmful? There are a lot of things in nature that can harm us. After all poison ivy is natural! Tobacco is a plant, and cocaine and heroin are derived from natural plants.

It's also important to keep in mind that marijuana smoke has the same cancer-causing chemicals as cigarette smoke. The short and long-term impact of edible marijuana on our bodies and brains is still being investigated.

### Just because pot is legal in some states, does not make it safe or healthy.

Sure, medicinal marijuana is legal in several states, and recreational use is gaining a foothold as well. Just because something is legal, doesn't make it completely safe — especially for young people under 25 years old. With every accessible, legal substance — including pharmaceuticals, there are positive and negative impacts, and very specific guidelines for safe use.

Consider alcohol; it's legal, but causes liver disease, DUIs, and car accidents. Cigarettes are also legal, and are proven to be addictive, cause birth defects and cancer.

When it comes to medicinal marijuana, while it is legal in many states — the jury, and science, are still out. How to set dosing standards along with the impact and the real benefits and the effects THC can have on various conditions has yet to be determined.

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