



# TEENS & WEED: STILL A BIG DEAL

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A PARENT'S GUIDE TO TALKING WITH  
A TEENAGER ABOUT MARIJUANA



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The information in this booklet was developed from expert sources with the assistance of teenagers in treatment and counselors at Rosecrance, a leading national provider of treatment for substance abuse among adolescents.

Parents, don't be stumped for answers to the inevitable questions about marijuana, especially now, when numerous states have legalized its recreational or medicinal use. **Legal doesn't mean harmless.** There is no safe level of substance use for teenagers, and that includes pot.

**As a parent, you're the most powerful influence in your teenager's life.** You need the facts to keep your teen on a healthy path.

**Rosecrance can help.**

With 100 years of experience serving youth and their families, we know kids. Here's what we're hearing from teens and some helpful tips for parents:





TEENS MAY SAY:

*"If doctors can prescribe weed, it can't hurt me."*

A PARENT'S RESPONSE:

"Doctors prescribe it for serious medical conditions, but that doesn't make it 'good' for you. All drugs have side effects, and all drugs can be harmful if abused, even those that are prescribed by doctors.

There's a lot of research on the damage pot can cause to people physically and emotionally.

Besides, it's not legal for you. You have to break the law to get it."



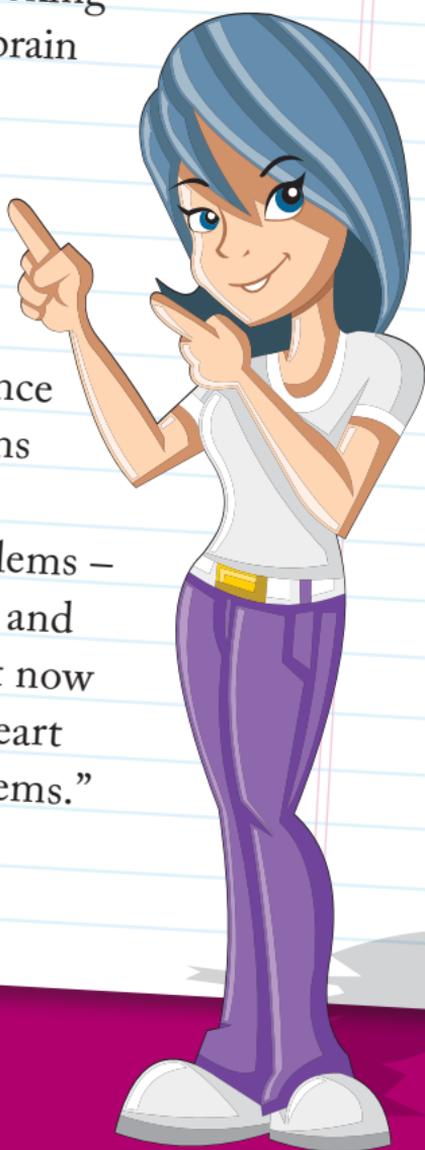


TEENS MAY SAY:

*"You're just saying it's bad for me because you don't want me to smoke pot."*

A PARENT'S RESPONSE:

"You're right. I don't want you to smoke pot or make other choices that can have such a negative impact on your future. Your brain is still developing, and smoking weed changes your brain in a bad way. These changes can lower your IQ and damage your ability to remember information. Substance use of any kind means you're more likely to have emotional problems – including depression and anxiety. Even using it now and then can cause heart and respiratory problems."





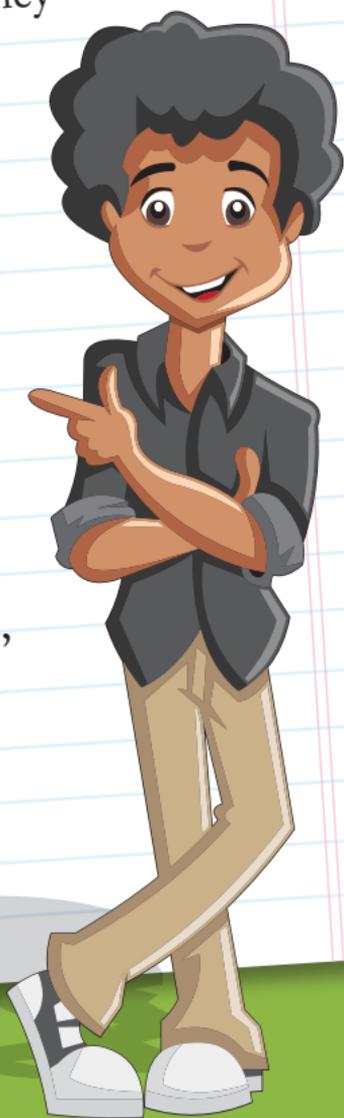
COOL\* 

TEENS MAY SAY:

*"Pot isn't even addictive."*

A PARENT'S RESPONSE:

"People who want to keep smoking always say that, but research shows marijuana IS addictive. Smoking pot changes the brain—just like other drugs. Many people who smoke weed behave like addicts. I'll bet you know kids who obsess about how and when they're going to get high again. Some of them steal money from family members or do other things they aren't proud of to get money for it. They blow off things they used to care about, including school. That's addictive behavior. When they try to quit, they have withdrawal symptoms, and they often need professional help to stop using."





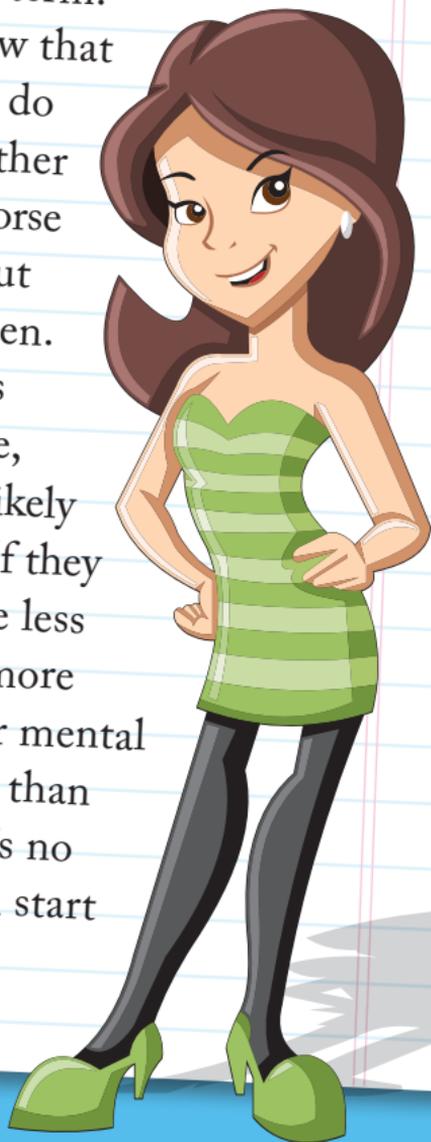
TEENS MAY SAY:

*"I'm just trying it out, like everybody else my age. It's not like I'm going to smoke weed forever."*

A PARENT'S RESPONSE:

"Not everybody's doing it. Do you know that the earlier you start smoking pot, the more likely you are to get addicted? The consequences can be deep and long-term.

Many studies show that pot smokers don't do as well in life as other people. They get worse grades and drop out of school more often. Fewer pot smokers get through college, and they are more likely to be unemployed. If they do work, they make less money. They have more problems with their mental and physical health than other people. There's no good reason to even start down that path."





TEENS MAY SAY:

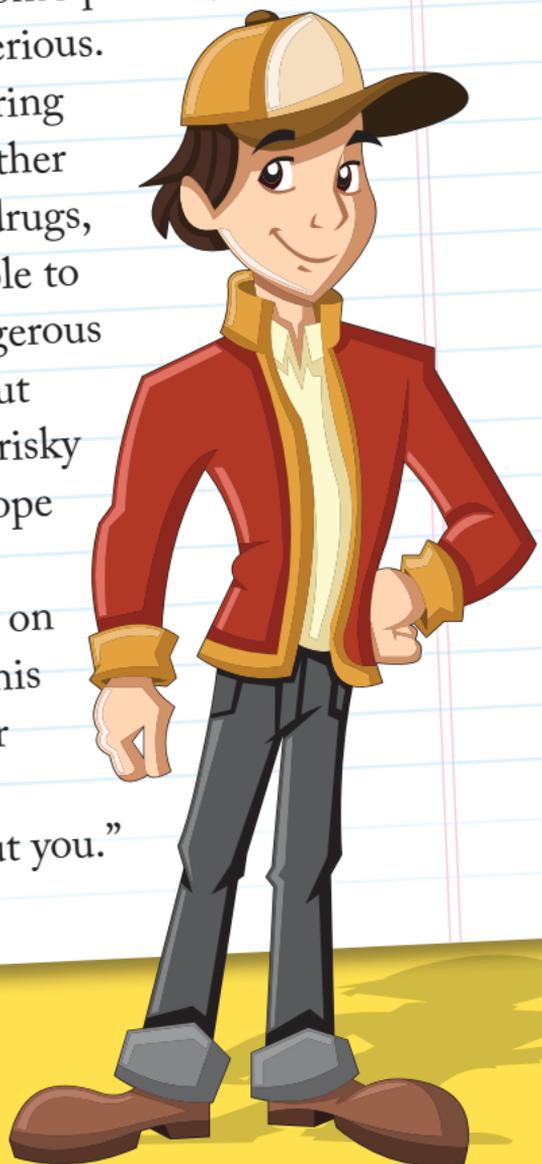
*"Would you rather  
I drank alcohol or  
smoked cigarettes?"*

A PARENT'S RESPONSE:

"You don't have to do any of it, and none of it is legal for you, anyway. If those are choices you make in the future, I want you to be mature, informed, and responsible enough to handle the consequences, which can be serious.

Any mind-altering substance, whether it's alcohol or drugs, can cause people to engage in dangerous behaviors or put themselves in risky situations. I hope you will make better choices on matters like this that affect our whole family.

We care about you."



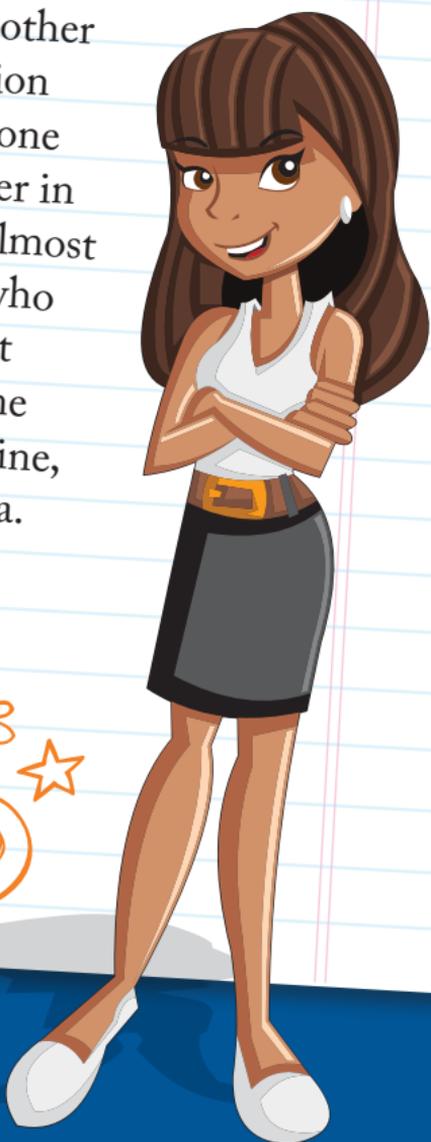


TEENS MAY SAY:

*"Smoking a little pot  
doesn't mean I'll end  
up using heroin!"*

A PARENT'S RESPONSE:

"I hope not! But smoking pot, especially as a teenager, means you are many times more likely to use other drugs. It's just a fact. The more a person gets into smoking pot, the more likely it is they're hanging out with people who also do other drugs. Their reputation becomes yours, and one thing leads to another in that environment. Almost all of the teenagers who go through treatment started out using some combination of nicotine, alcohol and marijuana. I don't want this to happen to you."





TEENS MAY SAY:

*"I'll bet you smoked pot when you were my age! What's the difference?"*

A PARENT'S RESPONSE:

"There IS a difference. Marijuana has changed. It's much stronger than it used to be and way more addictive. My job is to protect and teach you. I can tell you that my life is no better because I smoked pot. I admit to making some poor decisions when I was your age, but I made some good decisions, too. One of them was moving beyond that risky behavior. I hope you will let me help you make good decisions for your health and safety and your future."

OR: "I didn't smoke marijuana because I was afraid of where it could lead, and I didn't want to risk getting in trouble with police, school, or my parents. And, I didn't want to risk getting addicted. I do know that today's marijuana is far more potent than it was back then, and many other drugs are more available to kids today. As your parent, I want to help you make good decisions, and I will hold you accountable because I care about you."





## TIPS FOR PARENTS:

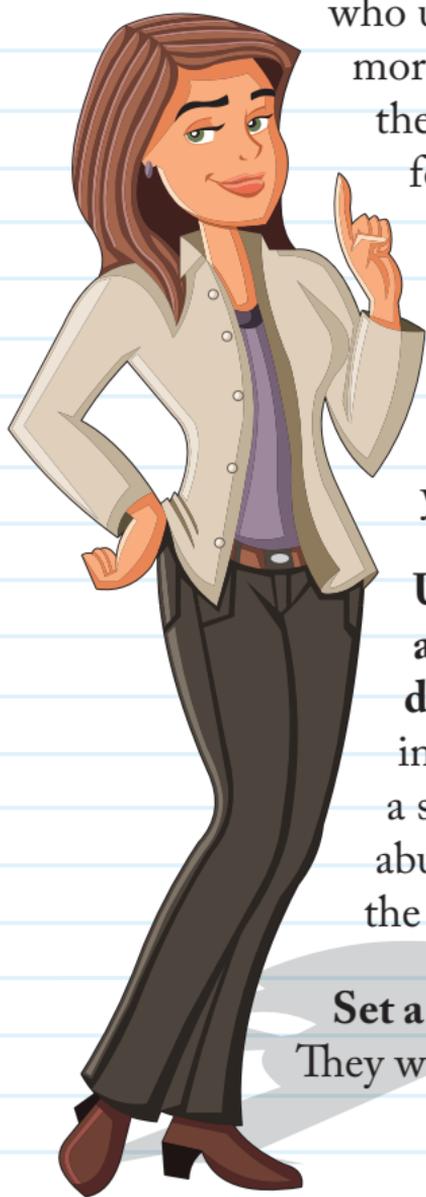
**Have the conversation.** As some children begin experimenting with alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana as young as age 10, it's important to start the conversation early and continue throughout the teen years. Communicate your values and message clearly. Share your concern for their health and safety.

**Have a clear message.** Substance use is not a rite of passage, and not all kids experiment with drugs or alcohol. Teens

who use substances have more problems with school, the law, their health, and forming healthy relationships. Let them know there are consequences to substance use—both in terms of their health and for breaking your rules.

**Use teachable moments and normalize the discussion.** Use that time in the car or when there's a story about substance abuse in the news to have the discussion.

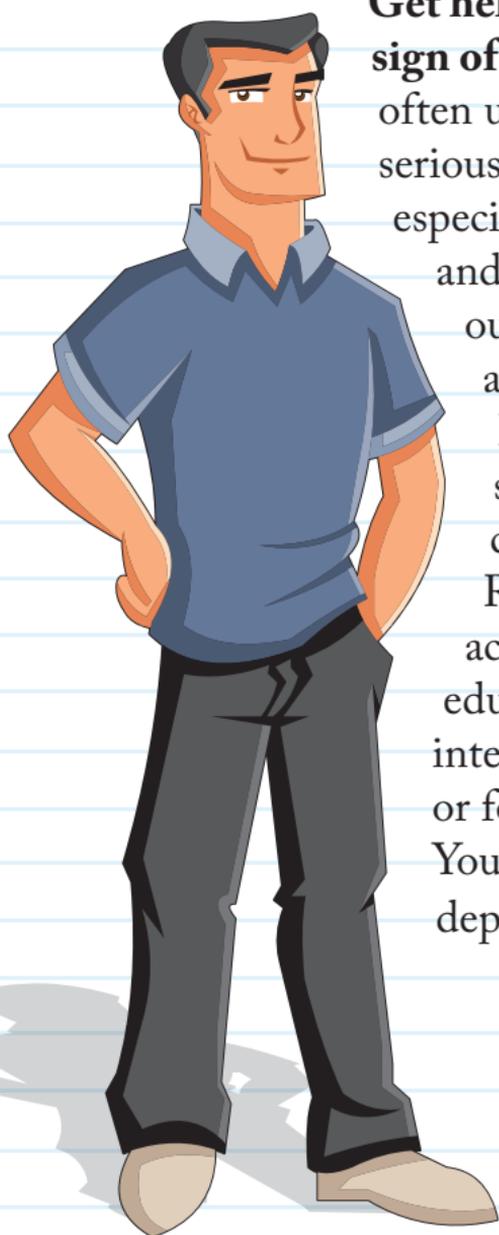
**Set a good example.**  
They watch what you do.





## MORE TIPS FOR PARENTS:

**Recognize signs of drug use.** Significant changes in a teen's personality, motivation, sleep and grooming habits, appearance, and friend group can signal a problem. Missing money or items that disappear from the home may mean something's going on. Drug paraphernalia that teens try to explain away as belonging to a friend is a red flag. Don't be afraid to confront your child.



**Get help at the first sign of trouble.** Parents often underestimate the seriousness of drug use, especially with alcohol and marijuana. Seek out a professional and ask for help. Reach out to a school guidance counselor or call Rosecrance to access prevention, education and intervention services or for an evaluation. Your child's future depends on it.



## RESOURCES FOR PARENTS:

- \* Rosecrance.org
- \* National Institute on Drug Abuse
- \* National Criminal Justice Reference Service
- \* Partnership for Drug-Free Kids
- \* Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)



NOTES:





Rosecrance is a leading provider of treatment services for individuals with substance use and mental health disorders. More than 30,000 children, teens, adults, and families receive help each year.



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