



LAKE COUNTY NARCOTICS AGENCY

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P.L.U.S. Parent's Guide Lesson 5 Marijuana

This week's lesson focuses on the drug Marijuana. There are many harmful effects that can result from the use of this drug. I want to be clear that the information shared with your children is all based in scientific and medical research. We are not in the business of passing rumors or myths. Our job is to provide timely and accurate information to the students so they can make knowledgeable and safe choices.

MARIJUANA: With so much talk floating around regarding the medical use of marijuana, we stress in class that any use of marijuana, by any person, is illegal. Marijuana has several street names such as weed, pot, reefer, grass, and most recent "chronic" and "bud". Marijuana is classified as a *hallucinogenic drug*. During the late 60's through the 80's the delta9-THC (chemical that gets you high) levels of marijuana were 3 - 11%. At those levels the hallucinogenic effects don't usually occur. The marijuana that is on the street today has levels of 17 - 21% delta9-THC and higher. At these levels there **is** a **hallucinogenic** effect. In addition research has shown that marijuana is physically addictive as well as psychologically addictive. (*Billy Martin, M.D. Medical College of Virginia*)

Research indicates that marijuana use affects the memory by slowly inhibiting the short-term memory and the futuristic thought portions of one's memory. When short-term memory is affected the long-term memory function of the brain is impaired. This long-term effect is usually seen through a very gradual decline in academics. What can't get into short-term memory can't get into long-term memory. But here's where marijuana users attempt to discredit this research: They say, "I can remember that big fight I had with my friend and I was high". This is quite true. For some reason *emotional* experiences while using marijuana pass through short-term memory very quickly and get to long-term memory. The problem is that *academic* learning doesn't fair so well. Academics tend to fall short of the long-term memory leading to a gradual decline in grades. When futuristic thought is inhibited in a young person their dreams and goals for the future are slowly diminished there-by reducing one's motivation; this has been classified as "A-motivational syndrome". (*Schwartz RH, Pediatric Clinics of North America, 34: 305-317*) Marijuana slowly causes the young user feelings of not being in control of what is happening around them and being overwhelmed, which leads to a feeling of hopelessness. It's extremely difficult to effect change or improvement in a young person's life when one is not motivated and has feelings hopelessness. The drug marijuana used by youth destroys morale and feelings of worth, while creating a disconnect among friends, family and activities. The combination of these effects has the potential to interfere with an adolescent's desire to live. (*Bovasso, GB. Cannabis abuse as a risk factor for depressive symptoms. The American Journal of Psychiatry, 158:2033-2037, 2001.*)

By now we have all heard about the *Medical* Use of marijuana. Did you know that medical research shows that marijuana is 4 times more cancer causing than tobacco? Marijuana has 7 times more benzopyrene than tobacco and many more cancer causing chemicals than tobacco. (*Tashkin DP, Western Journal of Medicine, 158: 635-637, 1993*) Why would a doctor "prescribe" a cancer-**causing** drug to a patient trying to be cured of cancer? They wouldn't! Another issue caused by marijuana use dealing with the lungs is a condition called "Bullous Lung Disease". This condition causes air to become trapped in the lungs causing obstruction to breathing and eventual destruction of the lung tissue. The mean age of marijuana smokers with lung problems is 41 versus 65 for tobacco smoking patients. Bullae do not show up in chest x-rays; however, CT scans revealed Bullae at much younger ages in marijuana smokers

compared to tobacco smokers. (*Bullous Lung Disease due to Marijuana – Respiriology, January 2008*) There is a legal drug called **Marinol**, which has been available by prescription since 1985, and a newer drug call **Sativex** (2004). Marinol is pure THC, not delta9-THC found in marijuana, which is a man-made copy of the chemical delta9-THC, and acts much the same as marijuana by stopping the vomiting and increasing appetite. Sativex is a cannabis extract containing tetranabinex and nabidiolex (cannabidiol – CBD) as its principal component. Marinol or Sativex do not contain the active substance found in recreational cannabis and therefore do not cause patients to become intoxicated. Neither of these Rx drugs is addictive; they do not cause cancer; they contain no benzopyrene; and they are legal for a doctor to prescribe (*Sativex is not currently legal in the U.S.*). Why would we need to make marijuana a medicine?

Marijuana also affects the immune system. Did you know that people who use marijuana do not respond as well to drugs like antibiotics? We are being told that people who have AIDS should be allowed to use marijuana. Even though marijuana will increase one's appetite and stop the vomiting associated with AIDS, a doctor would not prescribe a drug that destroys the immune system to a person who has a disease of the immune system. Remember those legal drugs called Marinol and Sativex? They increase appetite and stop vomiting without the harmful side effects.

Let's look at gateway drugs. A young person who smokes cigarettes is 3 times more likely to use cocaine. Ninety percent of all marijuana users first smoke cigarettes. A young person who smokes and drinks alcohol is 19 times more likely to use cocaine. Eighty percent of all first time cocaine users were under the influence of alcohol the first time they tried cocaine. And, a young person who smokes cigarettes, drinks alcohol and uses marijuana is 266 times more likely to use cocaine. Tobacco, alcohol and marijuana can no longer be looked at as *soft drugs* or drugs that are just a *rite of passage*. They carry a highly dangerous potential as stepping stones to other drugs. (*1991 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse conducted by the National Institute on Drug Abuse*)

There are many other dangers associated with the drug marijuana. Too many to mention in this guide. But one thing is for sure; more and more young people today are using marijuana because they are getting messages that marijuana is "not that bad". (*Monitoring the Future; 2011 Data from In-School Surveys of 8th-, 10th-, and 12th-Grade Students; Johnston, L. D., O'Malley, P. M., Bachman, J. G., & Schulenberg, J. E., December 14, 2011*) The University of Mississippi looked at 10,000 research articles on marijuana and **could not find one** article that said marijuana was safe for your body. In the United States a drug must meet eight (8) criteria to become legal as a medicine. Marijuana cannot meet **any** of these eight criteria. These criteria were put in place to assure that prescription drugs and over the counter drugs are safe for us to use. There is a movement to bypass this system and legalize marijuana *as a medicine* by a vote of the people. Shouldn't the safety of a drug be left up to the medical researchers OR should it be left up to a vote by your neighbor? Please take some special time and talk with your child about your views on the use of this dangerous, illegal drug, marijuana.

Student/Parent Homework (Week 5): Marijuana

Discuss with your child what you see as the dangers of marijuana use. Your child needs to have this discussion with you so they understand what your feelings and beliefs are about the use of this and other drugs. Marijuana might have the same name as in years gone by, but it is certainly not the same drug with regard to how strong the chemicals are that affect the body. Please take time to review what your child has written and sign the homework sheet.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Parent' Night: Parent's Night is open to any adult, parent, grandparent, relative or any person wishing to gain more information regarding the P.L.U.S. Program and/or timely drug information. We certainly hope you can take the time to attend. If you need to bring your child we have arranged for babysitting during the program.

Kirtland	TBA	7:00 - 9:00pm
St. Mary - Mentor	TBA	7:00 - 9:00pm

.... Look for your local school system

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