

## A Matter of Concern For Friends and Siblings



### What's the big deal about getting high on pot?

If marijuana were a weapon its primary target would be the human brain. Described as “cannabis” by those in research, the THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol) in marijuana usually goes on the attack after being smoked. Once inside the body it shoots toward the centers of the brain that regulates our thoughts, behavior, and cognitive functioning. The “stoned” or “peaceful” feelings that occur after smoking it are the result of the brain slowing down and losing its grip on reality.

Pot hinders the user's short-term memory and the ability to handle complex tasks. Under the influence of marijuana, students may find it hard to study, to learn and to be motivated. Athletes may find their performance is off; timing, movements, and coordination are all affected by THC.

The main point is that a healthy body comes under attack chemically. THC, the main chemical in marijuana, stays stored in body tissues for weeks after use, the brain may get crippled by repeated usage. That is a lot for your body to take on for a just a few minutes of “high.”

### My brother sneaks out of the house to party. Since his grades are OK, my parents are clueless! Should I tell on him?

It may not be an easy thing to do, but yes, your parents need to know. More importantly, your brother needs you. He may not know it now, but one day he will thank you for being concerned about him.

Getting high on alcohol or other drugs is a dangerous thing to play with, and it can get worse for someone who does it regularly or who does it alone. Right now it is posing a real threat to your brother's body, emotions, and life in general.

The reason your Mom and Dad need to know is because they are in the best position to help your brother. Go to them quietly, tell them what you think is going on, and ask that they not tell him that they heard it from you. That is okay. Remember, the bottom line is that your brother needs help – even though he may deny it.

Many of us are worried about a sister's, brother's or friend's use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs or violent behavior. Remember, a true friend helps a friend. Ask for help.

# Signs and Symptoms

## Symptoms of Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Use

All parents today need to be aware that a serious alcohol and other drug problem exists among many preteens and teenagers and that their own sons or daughters are all vulnerable.

Listed below are some common problem areas, as well as changes that you may have noticed in your children. If their behavior matches some of the warning signals listed below, alcohol and/or other drug use may be the problem. If you have a concern or think there may be a problem, seek the help of a substance abuse counselor or medical doctor.

### Academic Performance

- Drop in grades
- Work incomplete or not turned in
- Does not stay on task
- Disruptive in class
- Lacks motivation
- Absent or late frequently

### Alcohol & Other Drugs (AOD)

- Talks about AOD use
- Others report concern about AOD use
- Wears AOD clothing or jewelry
- Odors of marijuana/alcohol/ chemicals
- Smokes cigarettes

### Behavioral Changes

- Increased need for money
- Depressed or anxious
- Tests limits constantly; defies rules
- Dishonesty - lying, stealing
- Inappropriate emotional responses
- Argumentative or irritable
- Lack of energy
- Short term memory loss

### Family

- Family under stress
- Possible family AOD use
- Secretiveness, self-induced isolation from family
- Verbal/physical abuse towards parents, siblings or property
- Less caring and involved at home

### Peer Relations

- Change of friends
- Older social group
- Avoids peers; fights with peers

- Sudden status with peers
- Associates with AOD users

### Physical Appearance

- Weight loss or "bulking out"
- Loss of interest in appearance
- Pale face, circles under eyes
- Slurred or rapid speech
- Loss of appetite or constantly hungry
- Bloodshot eyes or dilated pupils
- Frequent colds, runny nose
- Complains of feeling sick frequently

### Physical Evidence

- Eye drops (Visine, Murine)
- Cigarette rolling papers
- Mouthwash, gum, breath sprays
- Burning incense in rooms
- "Stash cans" often disguised as beer/soda cans

### Violence

- Expresses feelings of rejection
- Withdrawal from peers
- Picked-on and/or persecuted
- Poor social interactions
- Uncontrolled anger
- Intimidating and bullying behaviors
- Violent and aggressive behaviors
- Discipline problems
- Expressions of intolerance and prejudice
- Affiliation with gangs
- Access to, possession of, and/or use of firearms
- Serious threats of violence
- Victim of violence

## Communication

### Communicating With Your Teenager Foster Self Respect

Preteens and adolescents often feel insecure about themselves and their social acceptability. Consequently, they are extremely vulnerable to pressure from their peers to fit in. Students who develop high self-esteem and healthy values are less likely to give in to peer pressure to drink, smoke or use other drugs. In order to build your children's self-esteem, it is important to develop a relationship with them that is based on mutual respect.

**Make time for your son or daughter.** Find an activity you enjoy doing together and pursue it.

**Listen, really listen.** Learn to draw your child out about things that are important to him or her and listen with your full attention. Don't do all the talking or give long lectures.

**Encourage critical thinking.** Eventually your child will make a decision about whether to smoke, drink, or use other drugs. Wanting to be accepted by peers is a major reason teens try these substances. Help them practice making decisions on their own. Let them know it is OK to act independently from others and to think for themselves. Part of growing up is learning to think and make decisions independently. Help your children learn to process information critically, think for themselves, make independent decisions, and accept the consequences of those decisions.

**Be generous with praise.** Be quick to notice and praise your child's efforts, not only his or her accomplishments. When young people are praised regularly, they are more likely to gain self-confidence, trust their judgment, and accept constructive criticism.

**Tolerate differences.** Encourage your adolescents to talk freely about their lives, school, and problems. Talk about topics where all people do not have the same opinion.

**Give teenagers responsibility for their own problems.** Let your children experience the consequences of their own behavior, even if these consequences might be embarrassing or uncomfortable.

**Remove the stigma of failure from your home.** Young people need to understand that the only failure is in not trying. Mistakes are not failures. Mistakes simply provide us with new information that can help us to succeed. We all need the freedom to be imperfect.

**Encourage outside interests.** Children who are involved in after school activities and sports develop friendships and interests that will help to keep them away from alcohol and other drugs. Preteens and teens who learn to have fun, as well as cope with stress in healthy ways, will be less likely to turn to artificial substances to relax.

# Parties and the Social Scene

## Parties

Parties or “get togethers” are a major part of the high school social scene. They can be an enjoyable way for teens to meet and socialize; however, without proper planning and careful supervision, parties can be a disaster waiting to happen. The following guidelines will help you keep parties both more fun and safe.

### When the party is at your house

#### **Before the party:**

- Set the ground rules. Your son or daughter needs to know what you expect.
- Limit party attendance. Curb the “open party” situation.
- Designate the “off-limits” rooms in your house.
- Know your legal responsibilities. Include your child in this feeling of responsibility.
- Set a time for the party to end.
- Remove any family liquor from areas accessible to party guests.
- Invite other couples to help chaperone.

#### **At the party:**

- Be present and visible. Don't be pressured into staying out of sight. Greet guests as they arrive.
- Occasionally check on food and soda and monitor your yard.
- No drugs, no alcohol, no smoking.
- No leaving the party and then returning.
- Backpacks and coats must be left at the door.
- Consider checking contents of backpacks.
- Open cans or containers cannot be brought into the party.
- Don't hesitate to call police if unwanted guests refuse to leave.
- Never allow anyone you suspect is under the influence of drugs or alcohol to drive. Call their parents, a cab, or ask a sober adult to drive them home.

### When the party is elsewhere

- Call the host parent to be sure that a parent will be present and get assurance that alcohol, smoking, and other drugs will not be permitted.
- Know how your child will get to and from the party.
- Discuss in advance the possible situations your preteen or teen might encounter and how to handle them. Make sure he or she has a phone number where you can be reached should they want to leave the party early.
- Be awake for your child's return or have him or her awaken you. This gives you an opportunity to assess whether or not your child has been using drugs or alcohol.
- Verify any plans to stay overnight with the host parents. Be wary of impromptu sleepovers.
- Establish firm, clear rules against driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol or riding with someone who has been drinking or using drugs.

### If both parents are out of town

- Tell a neighbor about your scheduled absence and leave instructions to protect yourself against “surprise parties.” Leave a number where you can be reached.
- Inform your preteen or teenager of your preparations.

# Legal Consequences\*

## Civil Damages, Enforcement Policy and Criminal Penalties

### Civil Damages

A person who supplies alcohol or drugs to a minor, or who allows alcohol or drugs to be used by a minor when he or she is in a position to prevent that use, may be liable for damages resulting from the minor's impairment and also may be arrested. For example, a person who supplies alcohol to minors or hosts a party where drinking is allowed could be assessed for significant damages if the minor, driving while impaired, should have a crash causing injury to himself or others or to property.

### Enforcement Policy

With the heightened awareness of the problems created by underage individuals' use of alcohol and other drugs, authorities are not inclined to look the other way at offenses. For example, in some counties, zero tolerance is the procedure. Where underage individuals are consuming alcohol at a party, all those in attendance, whether drinking or not, will be subject to civil citations.

### Criminal Penalties - Tobacco

Retailers who sell tobacco products to people under 18 are subject to fines; as are persons who distribute to or buy tobacco products for minors. More than 44 states also have laws that penalize minors for buying, possessing or using tobacco products with fines, community service, or loss of driving licenses.

### Criminal Penalties - Alcohol and Other Drugs

Below is a "snapshot" of the varying degrees of penalties that a person (1st, 2nd or 3rd time offender) may encounter in the United States Judicial System. The legal laws are complex and ever changing. To read your State's most current laws contact your District Attorney's Office.

State	Purchase or Possession Of Alcohol By a Minor	Purchase or Furnishing Alcohol For a Minor	Possession of Other Drugs** (Penalties vary by drug and quantity)
<b>AK</b>	Jail up to 1 yr. or fine up to \$5,000, Possession, control, or consumption, fine up to \$100	Jail up to 1 yr. and/or fine up to \$5,000	Jail up to 90 days-5 yrs. and/or fine up to \$5,000. M: Jail up to 90 days and/or fine up to \$1,000
<b>AL</b>	Jail up to 3 months, fine up to \$500, LS	Jail up to 6 months, fine up to \$1,000	Jail 1 yr. - 10 yrs. and/or fine up to \$5,000. M: Jail up to 1 yr. and/or fine \$2,000, LS: 6 months
<b>AR</b>	Fine \$100-\$500, and/or probation	Jail up to 5 yrs. and/or fine up to \$1,000	Jail 3 yrs.-life, and/or fine up to \$25,000
<b>AZ</b>	Jail up to 30 days and/or fine up to \$500	Jail up to 6 months and/or fine up to \$2500	Jail up to 2.5 yrs, minimum fine of \$2000 or 3 times value of drug; if probation 360 hrs of CS
<b>CA</b>	DUI: Jail 48 hrs - 6 months and/or fine up to \$1000, LS, SAP, Car may be impounded	Mandatory fine \$1000 and CS 24 hours	Jail 2-5 yrs and a fine up to \$5000
<b>CO</b>	Jail 3-12 months, fine between \$250-\$1000, LS, CS, SAP, AA	Jail 3 months - 6 years and fine of \$250 - \$500,000	Jail 6 months - 12 yrs and/or fine \$500 - \$750,000. M: County jail up to 15 days and/or fine up to \$100