

Teacher's Package

Cannabis, 420 – What is it?

Cannabis – Cannabis is the scientific name for the hemp plant. Its leaves and flowers—often called marijuana—contain a psychoactive (mind altering) resin that can affect how we feel, think and act. It comes in various forms, including dried leaves and flowers or 'buds' (marijuana), pressed resin from flowers and leaves (hashish or hash), and concentrated resin extracted with a solvent (hash oil).

While often smoked in a joint or through a pipe or bong (water pipe), cannabis can also be vaporized into a mist. Some people bake or make tea with it, while others turn it into a tincture, a concentrated liquid absorbed by placing a drop under the tongue.

<http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/factsheet/learn-about-cannabis>

420: '420' – In the early 1970s a small group in northern California used to meet at a designated location every day to smoke pot at 4:20 pm. "420" became a general euphemism for "time to light up." The catchphrase moved beyond California, it is now used worldwide. Today 420 is, whether expressed in the form 4:20 (as a time of day), 4/20 (as a calendar date), or just the unadorned numeral (pronounced "four-twenty"), an unofficial symbol for the use and appreciation of marijuana. On Saturday, April 20, 2019, there will be a protest, concert and farmer's market at Sunset Beach. Students are aware of '420', and some may attend.

Classroom Recommendations:

Interested in leading classroom discussions regarding cannabis? You may want to check out the following:

- [Overview: Teaching Alcohol and Other Drug Education to Adolescents](#)
- [Courageous Conversations](#)

Canadian Institute on Substance Use Research RESOURCES on DIALOGUE as an effecting drug education approach:

- [The Art of Listening](#)
- [Principles of Dialogue](#)
- [Asking Good Questions](#)
- [Understanding Dialogue](#)

Core Competencies:

The BC curriculum is centred on the 6 core competencies of:

1. Communication

2. Creative Thinking
3. Critical Thinking
4. Positive Personal and Cultural Identity
5. Personal Awareness and Responsibility
6. Social Responsibility

SACY Cannabis Messaging around 420

We are living in a society where dialoguing about Cannabis is important, and can be very valuable. SACY has come up with some key messaging around how best **to support critical thinking and build resilience** in youth, families, and communities. This messaging is **relevant for all people** to think about - it is not targeted solely towards “at risk” individuals.

The legalization and regulation of cannabis is happening and as with all changes there are pros and cons. One of the pros is it provides an opportunity for greater conversations with young people. There is a current uncertainty on the regulatory policies that will be structured by the Federal and then the Provincial government making conversations that much more important.

We know that **many people choose not to use cannabis** based on informed decisions, critical thinking, and risk assessment. Focussing on celebrating the choices not to use is one that could always use more attention from caring and supportive adults in youths’ lives.

As caring adults, we are in a great position to engage with young people on the subject of cannabis. Having youth generate ideas about the commonly held beliefs of cannabis use is a good way to encourage dialogue.

For an adult starting open and honest conversations with youth around cannabis we suggest:

- Acknowledging that all teens will need to make choices around cannabis use at some point and some are doing so every day. Most teens choose not to use cannabis or to attend cannabis based events such as 420. A question to ask would be: **why do you think some people choose not to smoke weed?**
- Discussing decision making process around substances can help demonstrate critical thinking, risk assessment, and resiliency skills.

There is a lot of information and conflicting facts around cannabis. SACY believes that critical thinking skills are essential for youth navigating decision-making in an information full world. To do so, SACY has identified **four key areas** that should be touched on when discussing cannabis in order to build critical thinking.

1) Development: Age and Impact

When we discuss the considerations of development we include brain, physical, emotional and character development. This is an area where we can identify the benefits of delayed use on development. Some factors we encourage youth to consider include:

- Impact of age of first use on physical health, proximity to other substances, increased potential for accidents.
- Most young people are not using marijuana

2) Substance; quality and frequency

When discussing cannabis use we ask youth to consider the following:

- Quality (a potential benefit of regulation is improved ability to ensure quality or purity)
- Frequency of use in assessing level of risk
- Amount used – can be impacted by methods (eg. Challenge with dosing through edibles)
- Mixing with other substances
- Harm reduction and safety
- Method of ingestion in assessing health and overdose risks
- Amount of time used in contemplating, preparing, using, and coming down
- Some substances can be both useful for one reason and harmful for another (eg. Like how radiation cures and causes cancer)

3) Context: Individual and environment

When supporting youth to consider how substance use applies to them in their own life we encourage them to consider the following:

- There is a spectrum of cannabis policy (criminalized-decriminalized-legalized-commercialized)
- The impact of normalization within friends, family, and society
- What resiliency factors are in place – accessibility to supports and alternative activities?
- Proximity to other substances – unpacking cannabis as a possible gateway substance
- Pre-existing mental health
- Family history
- Uninformed or misinformed use – exploring the limited amount of evidence around medical benefits with the exceptions of chronic pain, nausea, and sleep disturbances.

When encouraging youth to question the specific context of using cannabis we ask them to explore:

- Impact of the environment in which they choose to use
- Impact of mood on experience of using
- Impact on responsibilities in time and place of use
- Unpacking the idea of peer pressure (internal vs external)
- Accessibility to cannabis

4) Intentions: decision-making and reason

When supporting youth to think critically about the decision making process around using cannabis we encourage the following considerations:

- Impact of personal beliefs on choices around use
- Identity formation
- Decision balance of pros and cons (mental health vs physical health; treating symptoms vs cause; using for fun vs coping)
- Factors to measuring and valuing risk

Myths around 'natural' meaning 'not harmful'