



Post-workshop information for parents and carers

Stimulants, also known as uppers, boost body functions such as heart rate, and make people feel more alert and energetic, eg. nicotine, MDMA/ecstasy, steroids, cocaine.

Depressants, also known as downers, slow down vital functions such as heart rate, but also interfere with brain signalling making people feel relaxed or sleepy, eg. alcohol, cannabis, Xanax.

Psychedelics distort sensory perception, so something sounds or looks different to normal (hallucinations), eg. LSD, magic mushrooms.

Dissociatives give a brief sense of euphoria, then what feels like an out of body experience, or a sense of detachment from reality, eg. nitrous oxide, ketamine.

Three dimensions of risk: drug, person, place

The drug: What has been taken? Is it mixed with other drugs, including alcohol or medication? How pure or strong is it (how can you know)? Has the drug been swallowed, smoked, injected?

Watch VICE High Society: the truth about ecstasy (the key part is 5:28 to 8:41)

The person: Genetic makeup, family history, gender, metabolism, body mass, allergies, current physical and mental health, mood, expectations, tolerance...

The place: Who is the person with, or are they alone? What is the place they are in like - hot, cold, crowded, scary? What are the people around them like? What are they doing? Are they at risk of having an accident, or at risk of other potential harms, or of causing harm themselves?

The law: Possession versus supply – penalties harsher for supply, even if money hasn't changed hands ('social supply'). Allowing drug use in the home is a criminal offence for parents/caregivers.

Watch BBC3 One Night of Ecstasy (there are eight episodes, each 5-8 minutes in length)

Is it nicotine?



<https://teen.smokefree.gov>

How to spot an illegal vape:

- Disposable
- Capacity
- Strength
- Incorrect warnings
- Include words like energy
- Price too low

Supporting young people to make safe choices about drugs

Most common drugs (other than nicotine) in vapes are THC and Spice.

Spice is a highly potent drug so it is easy to use too much – effects can include mood and perception changes, drowsiness, loss of concentration and coordination, hallucinations, amnesia, fearfulness, seizures, chest pains, suicidal thoughts...

Other potential issues include kidney injury, serotonin syndrome, mental health problems including psychosis...

Spice is also highly addictive.

Nicotine



Nicotine is a psychoactive substance that affects the brain in various ways and changes it over the long term.

It is highly addictive because of the way it acts on the brain and the speed of its effects.

Addiction to nicotine can develop especially quickly during adolescence, making the brain more likely to become addicted to other drugs.

Withdrawal symptoms can include restlessness, anxiety, mood changes, sleep problems...

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Other considerations:

- Product strength
- Packaging
- Exploitative marketing
- Environmental impact

Conversations about alcohol



What does **one unit** of alcohol look like?



- Know your units
- Know your limits
- Eat carbs before
- Drink water during
- Pace yourself
- Know it's OK to stop or not drink at all

It takes an hour for the liver to process every unit of alcohol (*the first hour doesn't count*)

Remember parents are role models...

Children under 15 years of age shouldn't drink alcohol at all, due to clear evidence of harm to the developing brain, bones and hormones (UK Chief Medical Officers, Jan 2016)

39% of 18-24 year olds now don't drink alcohol (Portman Group, 2024)

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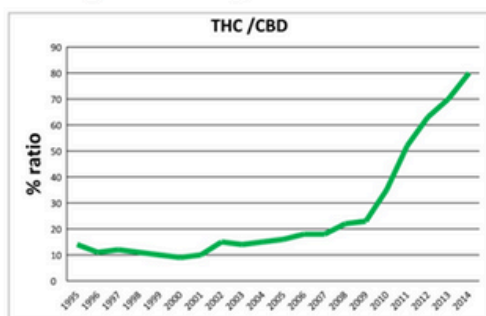
Conversations about cannabis



#1 Under-achievement Cannabinoids in cannabis mimic the effects of natural endocannabinoids on the brain, responsible for learning and memory, mood and motivation

Cannabis has two main chemicals –

- CBD – available legally because it isn't intoxicating
- THC – causes 'high' and can cause anxiety, paranoia etc



THC levels in 'street' cannabis have risen by 14-24% since 1970 (University of Bath 2020)



#2 Overdose

- Chemicals in edibles are unpredictable and takes 2-4hrs for effects to kick in
- THC vapes are mostly 'Spice' which is very much more potent and more addictive

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Conversations about cannabis



#3 Addiction 87% of young people in specialist services are there because of cannabis (OHID 2024)

How to help someone spot the signs:

1. Do they use it daily?
2. How do they feel about running out?
3. Do they get moody, irritable and have trouble sleeping if they go a day without it?
4. How important has it become in their life?

#4 Mental health People who use cannabis are three times as likely to develop common mental health disorders, including anxiety and depression, as those who don't... (University of Birmingham 2021)

...and high-potency cannabis use between the ages of 16-18 years doubles the risk of psychotic experiences from 19-24 years (University of Bath, 2024)

YOUNGMINDS
youngminds.org.uk

PAPYRUS
PREVENTION OF YOUNG SUICIDE
papyrus-uk.org

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Watch: Under construction: cannabis and the teenage brain (4min 30sec)

FRANK: Cannabis effects (40sec)

BBC Teach: Lorne's experience of smoking cannabis (7min 48sec)

Adolescence takes place between the ages of 10 and 25 years, with different areas of the brain developing at different rates. The limbic system develops early, and is the emotional centre of the brain where risk and reward sits. The pre-frontal cortex is the last to mature and is concerned with executive functions such as planning, organising, decision-making, problem solving, self-regulation, managing social interactions and self-awareness. This mismatch happens while time spent with peers increases, meaning they are more likely to make risky decisions when with friends, if emotions are running high or they feel under pressure.


Watch: [Prof Frances Jensen: the workings of the adolescent brain \(58sec\)](#)

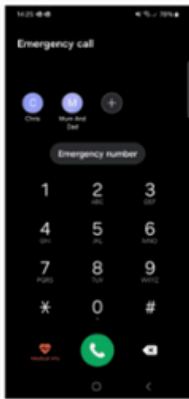
[Sarah Jayne Blakemore: the mysterious workings of the adolescent brain \(14mins 9sec\)](#)

[Laci Green: The teen brain under construction \(2min 55sec\)](#)

[How not to drink: dealing with peer pressure \(5min 3sec\)](#)

Phone-related safety strategies




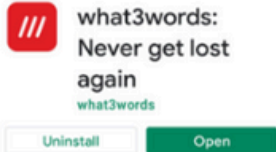



Set up In Case of Emergency details

Have an escape plan!

1. Decide the code
2. Agree the response
3. Plan the excuse
4. No questions asked!



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Watch: [The X plan](#)

Staying safe

If you are with a friend using drugs:

- Know stuff including harm reduction.
- Stay together (and check in)
- Don't mix
- Get it tested
- Start low, go slow – more isn't better
- Think about food and water
- Remember number of risk factors
- Be aware of mental state
- Don't forget the law

Remember - the only way to eliminate drug related risk is not to use drugs... and most people aren't

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FRANK
0800 77 66 00 talktofrank.com
Friendly, confidential drugs advice





<https://www.crew.scot/>
Want to chat?
Text 07860047501

[@danielspargomabbsfoundation](#)
[@dsmfoundation](#)
[@foundationdsm](#)
[@dsmfoundation](#)
[dsmfoundation.org.uk/parents/](https://www.dsmfoundation.org.uk/parents/)

The drug conversation...



Preventative/general:

- Start early (10-11yrs) – but it's never too late
- You don't have to be an expert – but try and be up to date (use us!)
- Take and make opportunities
- Think about when and where works best... little and often
- Listen! (and don't panic)
- Encourage safer social decision making
- Be prepared for tricky questions

If it all goes wrong, don't give up!



"Try to make talking about drugs a comfortable conversation in your family."



"Let me say everything I need to say, let me tell you what I'm thinking, don't jump to conclusions."



"Don't catastrophise and say the worst that'll happen but give solutions instead, so then you feel more prepared for that situation."



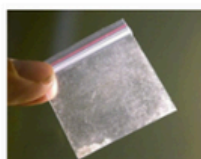
"Try to avoid negativity. It can make someone shut down and go into defensive mode."

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How can you tell if your child is using drugs?



- They tell you
- Someone else tells you
- You see the effects or after effects
- You see changes in behaviour, appearance, school performance/ attendance
- You find drugs or paraphernalia



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The drug conversation...



If you suspect or know your child is using drugs:

- Check the basis of your suspicions
- Act as a team
- Ask your child about it
- Talk harm reduction if they're continuing to use substances
- Look at online self-help resources
- Talk to others



"Listen without interrupting and then ask questions about it or empathise."



"Understand and don't judge."



"Don't force them to open up. It might be they're not ready to talk about it, so just give them a place they know they can go to."



"My mum's always said I'd rather you talk to me and tell me what's happened than be in a place where you have no-one to help you out of a situation – I'd rather you just say it."



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For more information and to stay up today, visit our website and follow us on socials:

[www.dsmfoundation.org.uk/parents/
linktr.ee/dsmfoundation](http://www.dsmfoundation.org.uk/parents/linktr.ee/dsmfoundation)