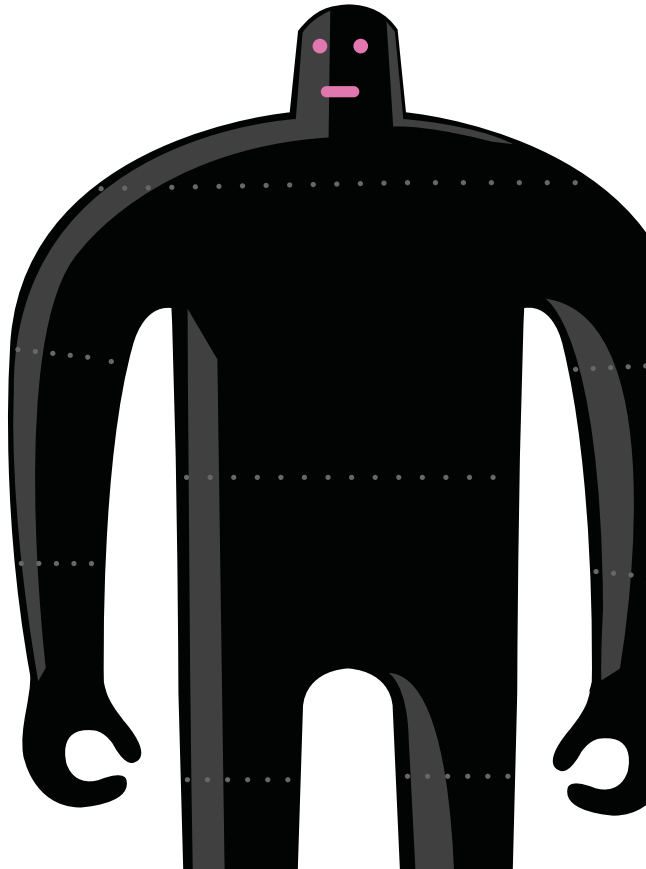




R.O.A.C.H.

Helping the youth of today



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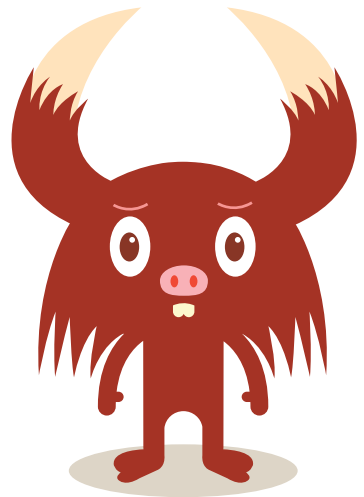
Introduction



Just a few lines to introduce myself and to explain what I do and why I am here. About nine years ago my eldest son Fred started smoking cannabis and at that time I was working on a psychiatric unit with adolescent children. It was very interesting to read all their notes and try to work out why all these teenagers were experiencing all these problems, to the extent that they had ended up on a psychiatric unit at such a young age. At this point I decided to do my own research to look into why it was happening. I myself spent days trying to get some help with my son on trying to get him to realise the dangers of smoking cannabis with no avail. I tried lots of different ways e.g. Talking, grounding him, not letting his friends round and an awful lot of shouting which us mums are good at! Eventually I spoke to the local policeman who offered me advice and he also spoke to Fred. Seven years on Fred is now working and he has taken up fishing which he enjoys.

I am very proud of Fred in what he's achieved and all of it was down to him stopping smoking cannabis, as he now realises the problems it can cause. Some of his friends have not been so lucky, they have psychotic problems and they cant work because of it. Their lives have taken a different path to what they expected which I find very sad.

Let's talk about Cannabis

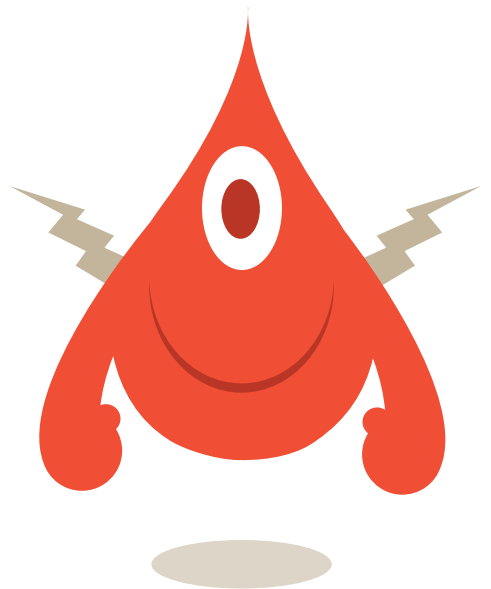


Cannabis can be called by lots of different names e.g. spliff, joint, pot, hash, and I'm sure you have heard of many more.

Cannabis is a natural substance from the cannabis plant. This contains chemicals and the main chemical is Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) for short. This chemical is the main ingredient in cannabis and marijuana and it acts on the brain to produce its effects causing feelings to change. Sometimes it makes you happy other times it can make you confused and sad. It is said that the amount of THC in cannabis today can be between 5-100 times the amount that was in it in the 1960s. THC causes a psychotic effect only lasting up to 1hr per cigarette. On the average person and as we are all not the same the effects maybe shorter or longer so basically the more you smoke the longer these effects will last.

Because it makes you feel good you tend to smoke it more often. Turn the page and look at the facts and myths about cannabis.

Myths & Facts



1. Myth - Cannabis/ marijuana is harmless.

Fact - Cannabis/ marijuana can cause psychotic problems when smoked as a teenager leading to mental health problems.

2. Myth - Kids that smoke cannabis/ marijuana move on to harder drugs.

Fact - 80% of kids that smoke cannabis/ marijuana do not move on to harder drugs but that does not mean that they will not get psychotic problems.

3. Myth - Cannabis/ marijuana is addictive.

Fact - Cannabis/ marijuana is not physically addictive but you become dependant upon it.

4. Myth - There's a minimal risk that smoking cannabis will go on to lead to psychotic diseases such as cannabis psychosis and schizophrenia.

Fact - On average cannabis smokers have a 41% more chance of getting these disorders.

THE BRAIN & CANNABIS



Young people who use cannabis regularly often find that their brain does not work as well as it used to. They may find that their memory is not as reliable and concentrating at school may become more difficult.

What causes these changes? Why should adolescents be more vulnerable? No one knows for certain, it may be something to do with brain development. Up to the age of 20 our brains are still developing. It is a jumble of tangled circuits that are being streamlined in order that they can work more effectively. By taking a substance such as cannabis, which may interfere with this process, it may have the potential to cause long term psychological effects.

Effects seem to last several weeks after use which may cause particular problems for students. Studies have suggested that cannabis use in adolescence may be linked to poor school performance.



Below is a list of effects that are associated with cannabis use. At some stage of smoking cannabis, the user may experience some, if not all of these effects. The immediate/ short term effects felt after using cannabis may be pleasant or unpleasant.

Pleasant:

- A high sense of happiness
- Enhanced senses (sight and sound)
- Increased confidence
- Sense of relaxation
- Sleepiness.

Unpleasant:

Around 1 in 10 cannabis users experience unpleasant effects including...

- Confusion
- Hallucinations
- Anxiety
- Paranoia (fear, mistrust, suspicion)
- Dependence

DEPENDENCY & addiction



Lets now move on and discuss dependency and addiction.

Dependency

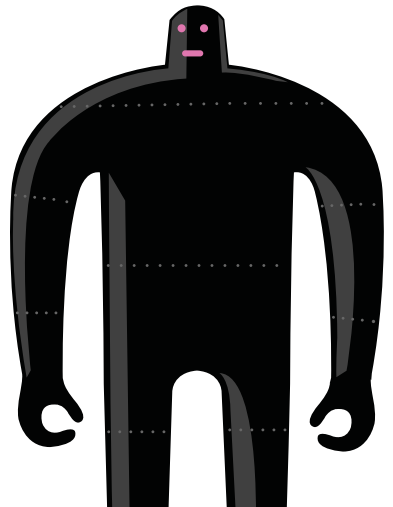
For a person whose using cannabis they may become dependent on it, the signs that a cannabis user is becoming dependant are...

1. Using it for a lot longer than you are meant to.
2. A desire to use it, trying to give it up but keep failing.
3. Tolerance (the need to use more of the drug to get the same effect.)
4. Spending less time doing the things you like or giving them up altogether.
5. carrying on using it knowing it can do you harm.

Addiction

Chemicals in drugs change the chemistry (chemical composition) of the cells. Over a period of time the cells accept the presence of the new chemical and work with it, then it comes to a point where the cells cannot function properly without the new chemical (from drugs). This is known as addiction, by giving up this will result in withdrawal symptoms.

Thank You!



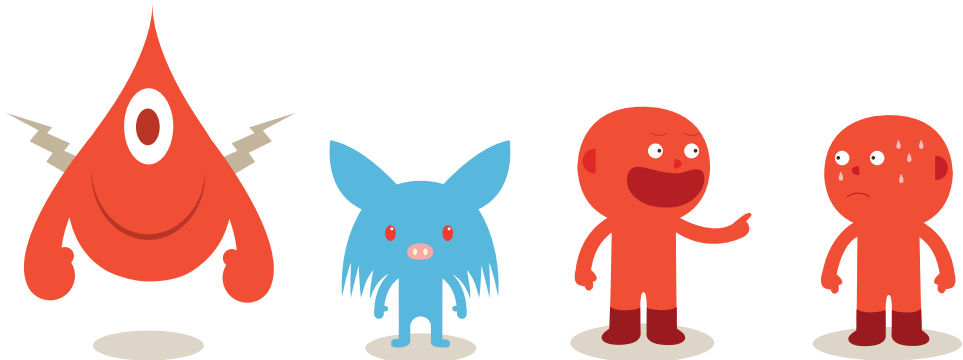
I would like to express a sincere thank you to all of the family, friends, and colleagues, and outside organisations that have put a lot of their own free time into helping me put this pack together.

But most of all I would like to thank the children who have listened and hopefully enjoyed learning about the dangers in using cannabis. I hope you will always keep this knowledge with you.

Thank You

Vanessa

Vanessa.



NOTES

