



Establishing Rules About Marijuana

Summary

Why Establishing Rules About Marijuana?

Children/teens ages 11-14 will be introduced to greater risk-taking opportunities whether that involves alcohol, drugs, or risky sexual behaviors. Marijuana use by youth has been linked to negative mental health effects including depression. Establishing rules about marijuana can help your family prepare for dealing with challenges cooperatively while building essential skills in your child/teen.

Step 1. Get Your Child/Teen Thinking by Getting Their **Input**

- *“What are your hopes for your friendships?”*
- *“What are you and your friends most interested in trying that’s new and different?”*
- *“Where do you like to hang out with your friends?”*
- *“Does marijuana show up at gatherings with friends, and how do you feel about it?”*

Discuss challenges. In Step 2, plan to teach what they can do instead.

Tip Pick a time when you are enjoying spending time together. Driving in the car is ideal (when you don’t have a time pressure) since your child/teen will feel less “on the spot” because you are not looking directly at them.

Step 2. **Teach** New Skills by Interactive Modeling

- Learn together! Knowing what the laws are can help provide a starting point for discussion.
- Learn together: Marijuana impacts a child’s/teen’s growing body and brain differently than adults.
- Discuss values for family health and healthy development.
- Engage your child/teen in a discussion about setting up rules about marijuana.

Step 3. **Practice** to Grow Skills, Confidence, and Develop Habits

- Try out the new rules before your child/teen experiences peer pressure and is in a high stakes setting.
- Identify with your child/teen their closest friend and discuss the role of a safety buddy.
- Initiate the no-risk pick up. Assure your child/teen you'll pick up with no lectures if they are uncomfortable or there's been marijuana or drinking.

Tip After a tough day, your child/teen may be internally beating themselves up for what they did and said earlier. So end the day with love. They need to hear that you love them NO MATTER WHAT on those days in particular.

Tip Over pizza, chat about what kind of plan they could establish if they want to leave a party or an uncomfortable situation.

Step 4. **Support** Your Child's/Teen's Development and Success

- Ask key questions to support their skills: *"How are the rules we've established? Are they reasonable to you? Are you struggling at all? Are the plans we set up, like your safety buddy, working out so far?"*
- Monitor their activities.
- Recognize effort by using "I notice..." statements like, *"I notice how you called me when you were uncomfortable. That's taking responsibility!"*
- Stay engaged. Be ready to talk when your child/teen is eager.
- Engage in further practice.
- Apply logical consequences when needed.

Trap Don't create a situation where your rules are so tight, strict, and inflexible that you invite your child's/teen's rebellion. Show that you value their opinions and are reasonable. Learn together about the risks so that you are revisiting rules as a team. Children/Teens need to understand (and review, at times) the importance of rules and why they are reasonable.

Step 5. **Recognize** Effort and Quality to Foster Motivation

- Notice even small successes: *"I noticed you designated a safety buddy and got home on time. Yes! Excellent."*
- Recognize small steps along the way.
- Build celebrations into your routine. Consider a hug when the routine is accomplished.

Tip Be specific. "Good job" seems not to carry much meaning. However, a specific compliment about a pointed behavior -- *"You called when you needed a ride. That's so smart!"* -- can promote more of the same.

Trap Avoid bribes. A bribe is a promise for a behavior, while praise is special attention after the behavior. While bribes may work in the short term, praise grows lasting motivation for good behavior and effort. For example, instead of saying, *“If you talk with your friend about not going to the party, I will let you have additional screen time”* (which is a bribe), try recognizing the behavior after. *“You shared your concerns about the party with your friend. Love seeing that!”*

Celebrate yourself for making it your parenting priority to work on cultivating the social and emotional skills that are most critical for your child’s/teen’s success today and in their future!

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