



YMCA  
Youth Cannabis  
Awareness  
Program

Programme de  
sensibilisation des  
jeunes au cannabis  
du YMCA

# How Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers Can Support a Youth Using Cannabis



## Identifying Reasoning Behind Using Cannabis

It is important to understand that youth use cannabis for a variety of reasons, which may change over time. These include, amongst others<sup>1</sup>...



## Watch for Signs of Risky Cannabis Use

A combination of behavioural and other factors experienced by youth who use cannabis can indicate that there could be a problem with cannabis use. Some of these include but are not limited to...

## Continuum of Use

Cannabis use exists on a spectrum: no use, low risk use, risky/problematic use and dependent use/cannabis use disorder. People can choose not to use cannabis and when they do choose to use cannabis, this does not automatically mean they will experience problems or cannabis-related dependency. A person may move either way on this spectrum; it is never too early or too late to seek support!

## Cannabis and Dependence

Cannabis use dependency is linked to many factors and is more likely in situations where higher doses of THC are used and more frequent use occurs.<sup>1</sup>

Ignoring responsibilities

Relationship difficulties

Lack of participation

Changing friends

Mood & habit changes

Secrets & dishonesty

# Where Do I Start?

Reviewing your feelings about cannabis, your personal history with it, and any biases that you may hold, are important considerations in taking the first step towards supporting youth. Keeping your personal values and biases in check is important to help you act in better alignment with your good intentions.



## How Do I Help A Youth Make Informed Decisions?

- Be a good listener & stay calm
- Acknowledge their point of view
- Use open ended questions
- Avoid 'lecture mode'



## What Might This Look Like?

- “How do you feel about cannabis?”
- “Why do you think your friends use cannabis?”
- “What worries you about cannabis use?”
- “How can I help?”

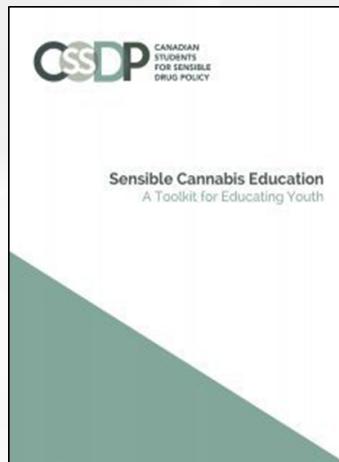
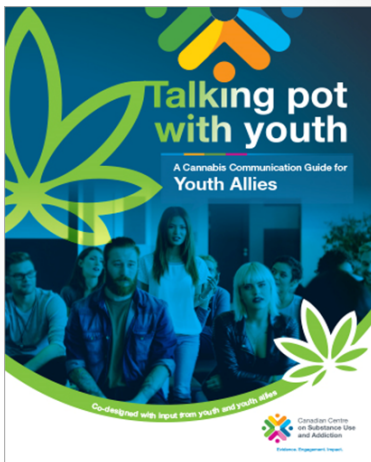
## What Can I Do Next?

**Discuss Strategies to Lower the Risk:** Discuss safer ways to consume cannabis, safer contexts and safer settings for use. Additionally, reminding them that mixing cannabis with alcohol and tobacco carries additional risk, and can lead to further physical, mental, and legal consequences.<sup>1</sup>

**Offer Alternatives:** Support your youth in finding healthy coping strategies. Consider journaling, yoga, swimming, biking, rock climbing, soccer, meditation, and much more!

## Need More Support?

If you are worried about a youth who uses cannabis, always remember that you are not alone. Speak with your local healthcare provider or access any of these helpful resources!



### References:

(1) Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research. (2018). Cannabis use and youth: A parent's guide. <https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/workbook/cannabis-use-and-youth-a-parents-guide>

(2) Centre for Addictions and Mental Health. (2020). Cannabis: What Parents/Guardians and Caregivers Need to Know. <https://www.camh.ca/-/media/files/cannabis-parent-infosheet-pdf.pdf>