

The Hills Valley Coalition Would Like To Invite You To A Dynamic Parent/Teen Education Program

**The Alarming
Truth About
Marijuana**

What Everyone Needs To Know

May 3 • Pascack Valley HS • Hillsdale

6:00 PM: Mental Health Resource Fair Over 40 Local Resources Will Be Represented

7:00 PM: Keynote Speaker: Kevin Sabet, Ph.D. Author of *Reefer Sanity: Seven Great Myths About Marijuana*

For More Information And To RSVP Go To
www.hillsvalleycoalition.org

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S.A.F.E. Homes is a network of parents committed to keeping our children and families safe and substance free. Families sign a pledge committing not to serve alcohol to minors.

John S. A. F. E. Homes
www.hillsvalleycoalition.org/SafeHomes.html



Hills Valley Coalition
The Hills Valley Coalition for Resilient Youth

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Parent Newsletter of the Hills Valley Coalition for Resilient Youth: Serving Hillsdale, Montvale, River Vale & Woodcliff Lake

The Alarming Truth About Marijuana
What Everyone Needs To Know
May 3 • Pascack Valley HS • Hillsdale



Wednesday, May 3, 6-9pm, The Alarming Truth About Marijuana: What Everyone Needs To Know, will be held at Pascack Valley High School. The evening program features a **Mental Health Resource Fair at 6pm followed by the keynote speaker at 7pm.**

Our program will feature **Kevin Sabet, Ph.D.**, author of *Reefer Sanity: Seven Great Myths About Marijuana*, and an assistant professor of psychiatry and Director of the Drug Policy Institute at the University of Florida. With Patrick J. Kennedy, he co-founded **SAM (Smart Approaches to Marijuana)**, which is the single biggest financial contributor to anti-legalization initiatives.

Facts About Marijuana Use and Abuse

Summarized by Pamela Martorana, MA, LPC, Kinderkamack Counseling

Marijuana is currently the world's most commonly used illicit drug. This alarming fact tells us we need to educate and inform parents, caregivers, and the community at large about the short and long term effects of marijuana abuse. We need to help adolescents and teens realize that they "are not just smoking some pot" what they are doing is putting themselves, their brain development, mental and physical health at risk each and every time they choose to "smoke."

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, marijuana use can have a number of negative effects on a user's daily life. School and work performance is negatively affected due to decreased motivation associated with marijuana use. Marijuana use has been connected to increased absences and decreased work performance. Simply stated, marijuana interferes with adolescents, teens and adults doing his or her best job in school or work. Marijuana use affects perception and judgment and is associated with low achievement. Memory and learning problems are both associated

with marijuana use which can especially affect high school students.

High school is a time when teens are trying to making decisions about their future, where to go to school, what to study, what do I want to do in life etc. The last thing teens need is to have impaired perception or judgment due to marijuana use. Adolescents and teens are not considering long term effects of marijuana use when they decide to "smoke" with their peers. We, the caretakers and educators have to help them realize their brain is still developing and research has shown brain problems are associated with marijuana use. Some of the affected brain processes include decision-making and concept/idea formation and planning. The brain effects are most likely to occur in people who began regular marijuana use as adolescents and engaged in heavy use.

The alarming truth is daily or persistent use of marijuana at intoxicating doses can lead to chronic problems in areas of social functioning, including problems in school, sports, work and the ability to sustain healthy relationships.

Common negative effects of smoking marijuana include:

- Impairments in cognitive functioning
- Impairments in learning
- Disruption of all stages of memory
- Impairments of motor control and reaction time
- Acute depressive reactions at very high doses
- Panic reactions
- Mild paranoia

Statistics on marijuana Use

- Marijuana accounted for 17% of substance abuse treatment admissions in the US in 2008
- In 2009, nearly 17 million people in the US, aged 12 and older, had used marijuana in the previous month.
- Between 2002 and 2008, marijuana usage increased every year.
- In 2009, 42% of high school seniors in the US had used marijuana at least once.

The Hills Valley Coalition Promotes A Stigma Free Community

Join us to learn about why anxiety is on the rise and how our families, schools, mental health professionals and communities can work together to address this epidemic. Understand how alcohol and drug abuse intensifies the symptoms of anxiety and mental illness. Understand the roots of anxiety disorders and how to combat the rising tide of anxiety in our youth.



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Today's Marijuana — Summarized by Gale Mangold, SAC, Pascack Hills HS

Marijuana today is typically four times stronger than it was several decades ago and sometimes referred to as “super pot.” It is not your parent’s weed! The fact that we are not getting rid of this drug anytime soon with legalization issues looming is cause for concern with the epidemic and alarming increase of use of this drug by teens and college-age individuals. According to experts the cultivators have cross-bred strains of today’s marijuana to boost potency. Today’s cannabis typically has 15, 20, 30 percent THC compared to 4% in the 90’s. In addition, the concentrates such as waxes, tinctures and oils can reach 60-80% potency. It is often contaminated with pesticides and heavy metal which the plant draws from the soil.

The negative social ramifications and health risks have risen with the increase use of marijuana. In the past the attitude regarding marijuana with low levels of THC and a “puff, puff, pass” culture was viewed as harmless. Today our teens smoke marijuana in cigars, bong, vaporizers, dabs, oils, “hotbox,” in cars, eat edibles, all with no knowledge of the dosage or toxicity.

Experts are concerned that with the increased potency of these products comes heightened health risks. Marijuana today and legalization movement is a hotly debated topic and is particularly alarming since we know the risks and the effect on the young brain, social emotional development and learning is significant.

Read more: <http://www.dailynews.com/general-news/20160803/todays-potent-marijuana-is-not-your-moms-maryjane>

Marijuana and Addiction

Marijuana is often portrayed as a “gateway” drug. However, it is an addictive drug. Since it is stronger, the “high” is higher and you stay “high” longer. “Pot use is most common in people between the ages of 16-28, and 90% of teens say they have been exposed to marijuana, either using it themselves or having a friend use it by the time they are a senior in high school.”

Daily News, 3/30/2017

Those thinking that stronger pot is always better pot might think again. Breeding for more powerful marijuana has led to the virtual absence of cannabidiol (CBD), a compound being investigated for treatments to a range of ills, from anxiety and depression to schizophrenia, Huntington's disease and Alzheimer's.

Read more: <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/modern-marijuana-more-potent-often-laced-heavy-metals-and-fungus->

According to addiction psychiatrist, Dr. David Sacks, marijuana users develop both dependence and withdrawal symptoms. Pot stays in the body for 4-5 weeks and withdrawal symptoms typically start 24 hours and peak within 7-10 days. This is why regular and chronic users do not realize how much their personality is changing when using.

Marijuana and Mental Health

Studies show that people who smoke several times a week have twice the rate of Men-

tal Health Disorders such as schizophrenia. Marijuana also exacerbates depression, anxiety, manic episodes of bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. It has a significant effect even when not under the influence on cognition, concentration, attention, memory, recall and mood. Chronic smokers are more irritable, hostile and can have withdrawal symptoms. We see increased memory loss, drop in IQ by 8 points, missed school, difficulty sleeping and lower productivity among youth.

Marijuana and Physical Health

Marijuana can cause hormonal changes in men causing enlarged breasts and can lead to infertility with low sperm mobility. It has the same effects as cigarettes on the lungs and smoking one blunt is like smoking a pack of cigarettes. Other respiratory issues such as chronic cough and a lower immune system response can also result. Smoking marijuana can raise or lower blood pressure, increase heart rate and cause additional risk for cardiovascular disease. “Marijuana is linked to respiratory problems just like tobacco. ONE marijuana joint has the same impact on an individual’s large lung airways as smoking 16 tobacco cigarettes. Additionally, marijuana smoke contains between 50-70% more cancer-causing chemicals than the levels found in tobacco smoke.”

North Dakota State University. (2017). Marijuana: The basics. *North Dakota State University: Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Prevention Programs.*

Read more: <http://www.nydailynews.com/life-style/health/debunking-myths-marijuana-experts-share-facts-today-stronger-pot-article>

Myths and Facts about Marijuana — Summarized by Julia Taner-PHHS Intern

- **Myth: Marijuana is harmless**
- **Fact: Marijuana can cause health, safety, social, and learning problems**

The use of marijuana has short-term effects such as anxiety, memory loss, trouble concentrating, difficulty sleeping, and procrastination. Marijuana can exacerbate symptoms of depression and lead to other serious mental health problems. Smoking marijuana increases heart rate and can raise or lower blood pressure, creating additional risk for those with cardiovascular disease.

- **Myth: Marijuana is not addictive**
- **Fact: Research shows marijuana use can lead to physical dependence**

When heavy users of marijuana stop using, they may develop withdrawal symptoms such as irritability, anxiety, and difficulty sleeping. There is also a probability for developing a social dependence.

- **Myth: Driving high is safer than drunk driving**
- **Fact: It is NOT safe to drive under the influence of marijuana**

Marijuana affects alertness, concentration, perception, coordination, and reaction time- essentially affecting the required skills needed for driving.

- **Myth: Getting caught with marijuana is not a big deal**
- **Fact: Marijuana is a Schedule 1 controlled substance, making it illegal in the U.S.**

Possession of the drug or drug paraphernalia is considered a misdemeanor.

Delivery or intent to deliver within 1,000 feet of a school is a class B felony. Penalties for these crimes range from \$1,000 fine and 30-day imprisonment for a misdemeanor, or \$10,000 fine and up to 10 years' imprisonment for a felony.

North Dakota State University. (2017). Marijuana: The basics. *North Dakota State University: Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Prevention Programs.*



Book Club Corner

Summarized by Pamela Martorana, MA, LPC , Kinderkamack Counseling

Reefer Sanity: Seven Great Myths About Marijuana

By Kevin A. Sabet, Ph.D.

In his book, Kevin A. Sabet argues that the U.S. should not legalize pot, with all of its attendant social costs, nor damage the future prospects of pot smokers by prosecuting and jailing them. Rather, he reviews the “Seven Great Myths About Marijuana” and contends that we should shift our emphasis to education about the newly revealed health dangers of pot use, and invest seriously in interventions and treatments targeted to those users who require them.

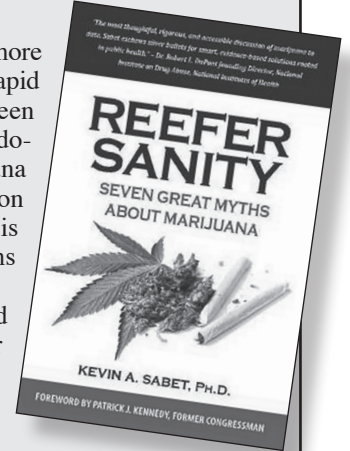
A most compelling look into the complex issue of marijuana. Sabet explores this challenging landscape and arrives at more comprehensive, effective solutions than either simply legalization or incarceration could provide to deal with marijuana use in the US.

— Dr. Drew Pinsky, Host, HLN, “Dr. Drew on Call,”
Board Certified MD

A wide array of studies that have shown the more chronic the marijuana use and the earlier in life that marijuana use begins, the greater one's chances are of developing psychosis and other mental health concerns. Sabet contends, that “early onset

of marijuana use renders a person more susceptible to addiction due to the rapid brain development that occurs between childhood and adolescence. Even if adolescents or teenagers using marijuana don't become dependent the impact on IQ and brain structure and function is at the root of mental health problems that may occur in later life.

Sabet outlines the propaganda and risks of legalization as being similar to the big tobacco company push in the 60's. In the Obama Administration, Sabet served as a consultant and his colleagues at the ONDCP determined that a policy of marijuana legalization would pose too many risks to public health and public safety, and asked themselves, “Do the benefits of legalization outweigh the potential risks?” This book contains the information they used to get their answer and reviews pertinent issues regarding adolescent brain development and the alarming truth about marijuana.



As Marijuana Becomes Legal, Dr's Worry About Addiction

Summarized by Anne Earle, Addiction Recovery Coach

In Colorado, one of the first states to legalize the use of recreational marijuana in 2012, use among teens is the highest in the U.S., (13 percent).

At the same time, some recent surveys including *Monitoring the Future*, by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, and public health agency, *Healthy Kids Colorado*, have found that, although attitudes of acceptance have gone up, actual use among 8th and 9th graders has gone down while use has remained the same for 12th graders.

Experts in the field and treatment professionals cannot explain this trend except to say that a few things are possible. The fact remains that it is still illegal to buy marijuana until age 21 even in states where it is now legal to use (8 states).

Treatment professionals, including school nurses in Colorado note an increase in students' willingness to talk about their marijuana use now, “The difference is that they are more open about it now. There's less secrecy. And they are not hiding the reasons they feel sick,” says Carolyn Swenson, director of a local drug and alcohol prevention program called SBIRT. As a result, there has been a big push in parent education aimed at helping parents talk with their kids about legal and health risks of pot use, even if parents used (or use) it themselves.

It is important to dispel myths that have been fueled by legalization and the medical marijuana use movement. Teens (and parents) are easily confused and there is a growing perception that the “botanical drug is safe and can be therapeutic for all ages.” Nothing is farther from the truth.

According to the NIDA, about 9 percent of all marijuana users become addicted and that number increases to 17 percent among users who start young. “And teens that use on a daily basis operate at a lower level intellectually, which make them less likely to

achieve life goals and more likely drop out of school.” Studies show a decrease in IQ in regular use, an increase in likelihood of using other illicit drugs and even attempt suicide. Also, concentration levels of THC (the primary psychoactive component in marijuana) have been increasing in the last two decades, which could account for the increase in emergency room visits associated with pot since legalization.

Vestal, Christine. (2017, March 13). As marijuana becomes legal, doctors worry about teen addiction. *PBS*. Retrieved from <http://www.pbs.org>

Marijuana and Teens

Summarized by Anne Earle, LMSW, Addiction Recovery Coach

Many teens experiment with marijuana, and many believe it is safer than alcohol. As with all substances, parents play a crucial role in influencing their kids' attitudes around marijuana use and so it is important to be familiar with the myths that are common with our teens.

When discussing marijuana use with our kids we need to keep the following in mind:

- **We need to listen & not interrupt**
- **We need to validate their feelings, thoughts and opinions**
- **We need to be factual**

- **We need to be honest about our fears and concerns**
- **We need to avoid glamorizing the marijuana of the 60's & 70's**
- **We need to keep the conversation going**

Continue discussions over time and seek professional help and advise if you have concerns.

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. (2013, July). Marijuana and teens. Retrieved from https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Marijuana-and-Teens-106.aspx