

KEEP YOUR FOCUS CONVERSATION STARTER

The prevalence of cannabinoid use among college students today has increased nationwide. This educational poster addresses the negative effects and consequences using these substances can have on students' academic performance and cognitive abilities.

In this conversation starter, questions to ask and points for facilitators to note are in **bold**. Instructions for facilitators are in *italics*.

INTRODUCTION

Show the educational poster to the chapter via a PowerPoint presentation or by showing the physical copy of the poster.

What does “cannabinoid” mean?

“Cannabinoid” is the scientific term for any naturally occurring chemical substance, no matter its form, that has psychoactive properties found in or made from cannabis plants. Cannabinoids have three primary uses: recreational, medicinal or synthetic. Cannabis, also known as marijuana, is the most common cannabinoid. Cannabis can act as a depressant, stimulant or hallucinogen, depending on the potency level, strain and form of consumption.

FACTS AND STATISTICS

Research has shown that marijuana and cannabis use on college campuses is trending upward, reaching higher levels than in previous decades. According to the University of Michigan's 2020 national drug survey:

- 43-44% of students reported using some form of cannabis within the past year.
- 25% of students indicated they used cannabis in the past month.
- 7.9% students shared that they used marijuana or cannabis daily.

It is also important to note that the survey found more than 50% of college students reported that they did not use marijuana or cannabis-related products in the past year, signifying that it is more common for college students not to use these substances.

What do you think about these statistics?

Allow responses from participants.

CHAPTER DISCUSSION

Review these discussion questions with the chapter.

Why are marijuana and cannabis prevalent on college campuses?

Some college students report using these substances as a coping mechanism to relieve their anxiety, depression and stress. Others stated that they use cannabis and marijuana to assist with their sleep patterns, alter their mood, relax or avoid boredom. However, these could be early warning signs of addiction to the substance, also known as cannabis use disorder.

The legalization of cannabis and marijuana in parts of the United States has also made the drugs more accessible in recent years as state laws have evolved. At present, 18 states and the District of Columbia have legalized the recreational use of marijuana for adults over the age of 21. Additionally, 38 states and the District of Columbia have legalized marijuana use for medical purposes. Although legal access to cannabis and marijuana has increased, college and universities are held to federal law. Because cannabinoids are still considered illegal substances on the federal level, they are prohibited on campuses regardless of state laws.

How can cannabis and marijuana negatively impact your GPA?

Studies have demonstrated that college students who frequently use cannabis or marijuana are more likely to have issues with their attention span and concentration levels as well as their short-term and long-term memory. These findings also indicate marijuana or cannabis users are at higher risks for the following consequences than students who do not use these substances:

- Lower grades
- Lack of motivation
- Greater likelihood of skipping class and dropping out before graduation
- Increased chances of experiencing delays in graduation
- Impaired cognitive thinking and performance up to 24 hours after abstaining from cannabis or marijuana use
- Reduced ability to register, retain and process information
- Decreased problem-solving abilities

The quantity, type and potency of the drug used is a major factor in the types of adverse outcomes a student may experience. By decreasing their use of marijuana and cannabis, students can improve their academic performance and reduce negative effects.

What are other physical and psychological effects of cannabis and marijuana use?

Prolonged use of these substances and high potency usage of the drugs are associated with a higher risk of experiencing:

- Mental health challenges (e.g., hallucinations, paranoia, depression, anxiety, sleep disorders)

SOURCES

- **Cannabinoids** from the Alcohol and Drug Foundation
- **Daily marijuana use among US college students reaches new 40-year high** from the University of Michigan
- **Heavy Marijuana Use Affects Learning and Social Skills** from VeryWell Mind
- **How does smoking marijuana affect academic performance? Two researchers explain how it can alter more than just moods** from the Conversation

- Long-term breathing issues
- Chronic headaches
- Increased heart rate
- Judgment and motor coordination deficits

How can we promote safe, legal and healthy behaviors within our chapter and community?

- Partner with health and wellness centers, campus counseling centers, or alcohol and drug education centers.
- Facilitate evidence-based drug awareness and prevention programming.
- Host health and safety speakers or guest lectures.
- Coordinate academic workshops and tutoring services.
- Organize self-care and stress management initiatives (e.g., exercise, meditation).

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What is one potential risk of using marijuana or cannabis you learned about from our discussion?

What is one thing you do to be successful academically that others may also benefit from trying?

