



Did You Know?

May 2021

Marijuana and Mental Health: May is Mental Health Awareness Month! Established in 1949, this month long initiative aims to increase the public's knowledge and change social stigmas regarding mental health disorders. Although still illegal federally, the recent legalization of marijuana in NYS causes great concern for our community. This shift to full legalization in our state not only alters the perception of harm attributed with marijuana use, it also creates an environment of increased access to the drug. Marijuana and mental health have been proven to be a destructive pairing. There is a misconception that marijuana use can aid mental health issues, but research has shown that instances of anxiety, depression and psychosis can be linked to and worsen with marijuana use.

What You Should Know:

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shares that:
 - Cannabis use is associated with the development of schizophrenia and other psychoses (loss of reality). The risk is highest for the most frequent users.
 - Long-term cannabis users are more likely to develop social anxiety disorder than non-users.
 - Frequent and long-term cannabis use may be linked to worsened symptoms in individuals with bipolar disorder.
 - Heavy cannabis users are more likely to report thoughts of suicide than non-users.
- The National Institute on Drug Abuse lists anxiety and paranoia as acute consequences of marijuana. As for long-term effects, NIDA warns of an increased risk of schizophrenia in people with specific genetic vulnerability.
- A study conducted by the University of Washington found that pure THC increases anxiety in high doses.
- The National Institute of Mental Health reports that, "nearly one in five U.S. adults live with a mental illness, and that mental illnesses may include many different conditions that vary in degree of severity, ranging from mild to moderate to severe."
- Marijuana is an addictive substance and an addiction is a mental disease, as it alters the fundamentals of a person's brain (i.e. desires, impulse control, behavior, etc.)
- NIDA describes comorbidity as, "two or more disorders or illnesses occurring in the same person." Research shows that roughly half of the individuals suffering a substance use disorder also suffer a mental health disorder (and vice versa.) The rates of comorbidity increase when considering adolescents who are suffering a substance use disorder.

What You Can Do:

- **Find Your Community:** You are not alone in your pain and struggles. Surround yourself with those who love and support you. Check-in with those included in your "community" of support. If possible, consider being a support for someone else's need. Together we can overcome any obstacle.
- **Celebrate Mental Health Year Round:** This conversation, as well as the conversation regarding substance use prevention, continue far past their month long awareness campaigns. Continue to research, share information and promote awareness in your personal circles and communities all year long.
- **Contact Your Community Leaders:** Focusing on marijuana prevention in your specific community, there is the option to opt-out of the recent marijuana legalization. Decisions to do so must be decided prior to the start of 2022. For help and information on contacting those in power for your community, please contact us at 716.831.2298 or thecouncil@thepreventioncouncil.org

Information obtained from: adai.uw.edu; cdc.gov; drugabuse.gov; nih.gov

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The Prevention Council of Erie County, publishes Did You Know, a regular update about alcohol & other drugs - - America's #1 public health problem. The Prevention Council • 1625 Hertel Ave., Buffalo, NY 14216 • 716-831-2298 • www.thepreventioncouncil.org