



# CANNABIS WORKBOOK

EDAS/REACH YOUNG PEOPLES DRUG & ALCOHOL SERVICES

**This workbook is for completion on your own or with support.**

**Speak to your keyworker if you feel you may need support  
with this workbook. They will be able to advise  
on the best person to help.**

# What you need to know...

There is a tendency to believe that smoking cannabis is not as harmful as smoking tobacco. These misconceptions and 'urban myths' surrounding cannabis use, make it appear almost 'good for you' and therefore a more desirable drug.

However, just like other drugs such as alcohol or nicotine you can become dependent on cannabis. Cannabis dependence can have both physical and psychological aspects to it.

After using cannabis heavily for a long time, your body gets used to it. You may find that you need to use more to get the same effect. That is, you build up tolerance.

You may also find that going without a smoke might bring on some temporary unpleasant physical effects – these could be withdrawal symptoms. They might include trouble sleeping, stomach problems, feeling irritable, and cravings.

## So what is Cannabis?



Cannabis (also known as marijuana, weed, pot, dope, or grass) is a psychoactive hallucinogen drug from the Cannabis plant. The main psychoactive component of cannabis is **Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)**. Cannabis is the most widely used illegal drug in the UK.

# Types of Cannabis



Sativa



Hybrid



Indica



Ruderalis

**Cannabis strains** are either pure or hybrid varieties of the plant genus *Cannabis*, which includes three species: *Cannabis Sativa*, *Cannabis Indica*, and *Cannabis Ruderalis*. Street cannabis is speed grown, re-sprayed with THC, and often contains powdered glass.

- **Cannabis bud:** Chopped dried grass. Normally rolled into a cigarette (with or without ordinary tobacco) or smoked in a pipe or bong.
- **Resin or hash:** Can be hard or soft consistency, can be smoked in pipes, bongs, or off foil. Hash may also be baked in food and eaten.
- **Cannabis oil:** Thick substance, very strong in potency, usually spread onto an ordinary cigarette.

## Components of Cannabis

**Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)** – Responsible for the ‘buzz’ effect and paranoia and anxiety

**Cannabidiol (CBD)** – An anti-psychotic, reduces anxiety and may help with inflammation and depression.

**It also contains:**

- Twice as much tar as tobacco
- 32 carcinogenic chemicals
- Impairs cognition, memory, motor movements and pain perception
- At least 545 known chemical compounds

**How many different names does Cannabis have?**

**Weed, Green, Grass, Dope, Ganja, Wacky Backy, Bud, Blow, Skunk, Bush, Hash, Reefer, Sinsemilla, Mary Jane, Cheese, Pot, Ammy, Homegrown, Herb, MJ, Spliff, Doobie and probably a lot more!**



# Cannabis and You

Why did you first start to use cannabis?

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Why did you continue to use it?

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Does your using cannabis put your health at risk? If so, how?

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How does your cannabis use affect you financially?

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# Ways of Taking It...

## Smoke Spliffs

In the UK, most people mix it with tobacco and roll it into a cannabis cigarette known as a spliff or joint. Some people don't use tobacco at all and make weed-only spliffs.

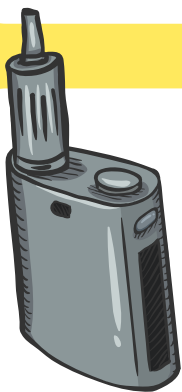


## Smoke Bong

Users do this by mixing the drug with tobacco and putting it in a pipe, lighting it, and then inhaling the smoke through water out of a large tube. Using tobacco in bong increases the risk of nicotine dependence.

## Edibles

Cannabis is mixed into cakes (hash brownies), tea, yoghurt or sweets (gummies, lollipops, chocolates). The amount of cannabis in these products can vary greatly and sometimes other harmful drugs are added too. The effects of consuming edibles are unpredictable and it can be very easy to accidentally take a larger dose than you wanted to.



## Vaping

This method has become more popular in recent years. Most people use a vapouriser which heats the cannabis, rather than burning it. Very little is known about the health impact of vaping cannabis.

**Smoking cannabis with tobacco increases the risk of becoming dependent on nicotine. To avoid this, don't use tobacco in bong and spliffs.**

# The Law

## True or False

How much do you know?

### CLASSIFICATION OF CANNABIS:

Cannabis is a class 'B' drug

TRUE / FALSE

### CULTIVATION OF CANNABIS:

The cultivation of cannabis is illegal in the UK

TRUE / FALSE

### PERSONAL CONSUMPTION:

It is legal to possess cannabis for personal use only

TRUE / FALSE

### IF YOU ARE CAUGHT CARRYING:

Police can issue a warning or an on-the-spot fine of £90 if you're found with cannabis

TRUE / FALSE

### IF YOU BUY CANNABIS:

If you buy cannabis for yourself or your friends and get caught you can be charged for supplying a class 'B' drug

TRUE / FALSE

### IF YOU GIVE A JOINT, SPLIFF, OR A PIPE:

You can not be charged with supplying if you get caught giving a friend a joint, spliff or a pipe to smoke cannabis

TRUE / FALSE

### IN YOUR HOUSE:

If you allow your friend or acquaintance to smoke cannabis in your house for their personal use you may still expect to face legal proceedings if you get caught

TRUE / FALSE

### THE PENALTY FOR POSSESSION:

The maximum penalty for possession of cannabis is 2 years in prison

TRUE / FALSE

### THE PENALTY FOR SUPPLYING:

The maximum penalty for supplying cannabis is 14 years in prison

TRUE / FALSE

Check your answers at the back of the workbook!

# The Effects of Cannabis



Cannabis is categorised as a **Hallucinogen**, which causes a 'tripping' feeling. Hallucinogens alternate between fast and slow effects on the chemicals in your brain, causing distorted perceptual information.

Cannabis has various mental and physical effects, including euphoria, altered states of mind and sense of time, difficulty concentrating, impaired short-term memory, impaired body movement, relaxation, and an increase in appetite.

## Chemical Messaging in the Brain



Neurotransmitters are chemical messengers manufactured by our brain. The ones most affected by drugs and alcohol are:

**Serotonin**  
Excited  
happy feeling

**Dopamine**  
Pleasure

**Adrenaline**  
Energy

**Endorphins**  
Pain killing  
effect

## What are 'The Munchies'?



Cannabis use disrupts the functioning of the **hypothalamus**. This area of the brain is responsible for moderating appetite, tiredness, and sexual arousal.



## Did you know?

**It is not the drugs that get you high, it is your own brain chemicals.**

Drugs release strong waves of your own brain chemicals, this is what we 'feel'.



## Cannabis causes depression

Within 3 weeks of regular use, cannabis will cause tiredness, lack of motivation, and the beginnings of depression.

Prolonged use will lead to anxiety, paranoia, and in some cases psychosis



# Cannabis and You

How does cannabis make you feel? Circle the ones that apply to you and add any others you would like:

Happy

Excited

Good

Relaxed

It can also have physical and behavioural effects. Do any one of the following happen to you? Tick them if they do:

- make you feel lethargic
- make you feel hungry, known as having 'the munchies'
- make you feel sick
- make you anxious and panicky
- make you hallucinate
- make you paranoid
- cause you problems remembering things
- cause you problems concentrating and learning new information

Cannabis affects people differently, but most users become:

- chilled out
- giggly
- chatty

Does this happen to you?

- Yes  No

Some people become:

- drowsy or sleepy
- unmotivated
- confused and anxious
- paranoid

Does this happen to you?

- Yes  No







# Cannabis and You

**The high is usually short-lived. The more you use, the highs become less and the comedown gets bigger.** Is this true for you? Explain the effects you experience from using.

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**Have you become more prone to depression, lack of confidence, experience more mood swings and low self-esteem as your use increased?** Please explain how you have changed since you started using.

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**Does your thinking become distorted the more you use?** Please explain your answer.

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# Cannabis and You

What effects has cannabis had on your sleeping pattern?

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**Cannabis may start out as a sociable drug but can develop into a habit.** Did this happen to you? If so, how did it develop to become a habit?

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**The feeling experienced from using cannabis is produced from the release of natural chemicals which are present in the human body. It is the chemicals already present in the body which get affected by the use of cannabis that produce the feeling.**



How easy do you think it was/ will be to give up cannabis? Why do you think this was/ is the case?

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Did you become addicted quickly and were you surprised by this? If so, why?

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# The Risks

## Physical Health Risks



Smoking cannabis is also likely to have many of the long-term physical health risks of smoking tobacco (even if you don't mix cannabis with tobacco).



### RESPIRATORY PROBLEMS

Wheezing, shortness of breath, chest pains, coughing, worsening of asthma, and increased risk of lung cancer.

### HEART PROBLEMS

Increased heart rate and blood pressure problems, particularly harmful for people with existing heart disease



### FERTILITY ISSUES

Can cause suppressed ovulation in females and reduced sperm count in males.



### PREGNANCY DIFFICULTIES

Can lead to your baby being born smaller than expected if smoked while pregnant.

## Mental Health Risks

### DEPRESSION

Regular use of cannabis can cause low motivation to do things and depression.



### PSYCHIATRIC PROBLEMS

Can lead to induced psychosis or the development of schizophrenia.



**It can also impair your memory so you can't remember things or learn new information, give you mood swings, disturb your sleep, make you anxious, panicky, or even aggressive, cause hours (or days) of anxiety, paranoia, and hallucinations, cause a serious relapse for people with psychotic illnesses like schizophrenia.**

Have you experienced any of these effects due to cannabis use?

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Do you have any concerns about your health after learning about these risks?

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# Cannabis and You

## Consequences of Use

The consequences of using cannabis are usually the reason why people start thinking that they need to give it up. These consequences will differ from person to person but can range from it costing too much money to serious illness.

If you use a drug like cannabis for any length of time there will be consequences and these can get worse the longer that you do.

What are the consequences of continued use of cannabis with regards to yourself?

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What are the consequences of continued use of cannabis with regards to other people?

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What can you do to help overcome these consequences?

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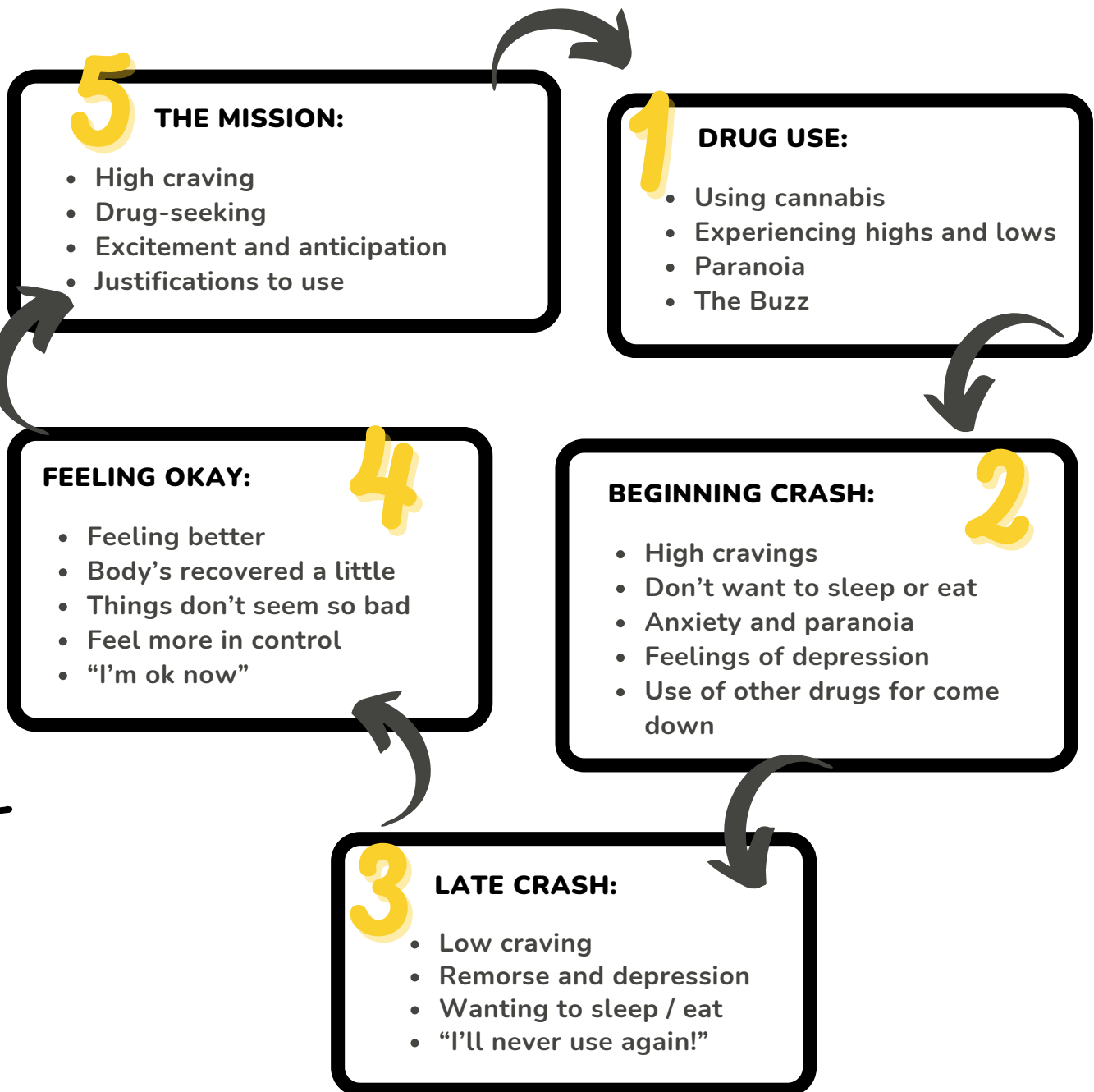
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# Cycle of Use

Most habits usually develop into a cycle, which is similar to a washing machine cycle (wash, rinse, spin, and back to wash again). Heavy cannabis users often get cravings and find it hard not to take the drug.



**You may bounce between the first two stages all night, or for days, but eventually, you will move through the cycle. If you want to give up cannabis, you have to interrupt this cycle, usually between feeling okay and the mission.**

# Cravings: Urges to Smoke



Cravings or 'hanging out' are strong urges to smoke. They are normal. Almost everyone who stops or cuts down their smoking or can't get any cannabis for some reason has some cravings. **Can you think of a time when you were really craving a smoke?**

Cravings tend to happen in events or situations that you have previously associated with smoking or 'triggers'. Examples of 'triggers' could be: experiencing a particular emotion, specific people or places, a particular time of day, boredom and isolation.

Cravings only get stronger if you give in and 'feed' them. They will eventually weaken, die down and go away if you don't give in to them.

You may have noticed that cravings tend to last only a short time. **Have there been times when you couldn't have a smoke when you had a strong urge to have one? Did the urge pass?**

The key point is that cravings generally last between 30–60 minutes. This is true for everybody, but few people give themselves the chance to prove it.

## Handling Cravings/Urges



Urges usually come and go in waves and so it is important to ride them out. This is called **urge surfing**. Imagine you are a surfer on a board riding a wave – you need to stay on that board and ride that wave until it subsides without falling off. Therefore, if your urges feel intense, try to distract yourself for a little while and you will soon notice that the worst part has passed. Each time you overcome a craving, it makes the craving weaker next time and makes you stronger as your technique for resisting improves. Knowing that they are short-term will help you handle them. If you ride them out, they will weaken.

## If your cravings are feeling strong try:

**Distracting:** do something unrelated to smoking.

**Delaying:** check the time and make a deal with yourself not to have a smoke for at least half an hour.

**De-stressing:** it's important to take time to relax and unwind, e.g. have a bath, walk, or listen to music.

**Keeping the craving in perspective:** don't get carried away.

**Remember the negatives:** often when having cravings people tend to remember only the positive effects of smoking and forget the negatives.

**You win every time you beat your craving. It makes the craving weaker next time and makes you more confident you can resist a smoke.**



# Cannabis and You

## Triggers & High-Risk Situations

Another useful strategy for handling cravings/urges is to avoid situations with strong personal triggers.

**Triggers** are feelings or events that cause strong thoughts about wanting to smoke. They can be internal (certain moods or feelings) or external (sitting down to watch TV, listening to music, or having a visit from friends).

**High-risk situations** include times and places where you usually smoke. For example, if you usually smoke with certain friends, then you will probably feel like a smoke whenever you are with them.

What are your internal (thoughts and feelings) high-risk situations and triggers?  
e.g. bored, stressed, angry...

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What are your external (situations and places) high-risk situations and triggers?  
e.g. someone offers me a smoke, seeing my friends who smoke, watching a video

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# Withdrawal Symptoms

Although not everyone gets them, you may get some withdrawal symptoms after you stop smoking cannabis. These can be uncomfortable but are not dangerous and usually only last a week or so.

Withdrawal symptoms are actually signs that your body is getting used to going without cannabis. So, they can be seen as a good sign of progress.

## Psychological Symptoms



- feeling cranky and irritable
- anxiety
- confusion
- trouble concentrating
- depression
- anger
- craving/urges to smoke
- finding it hard to eat and sleep

## Physical Symptoms



- sleeping problems and vivid dreams
- night sweats
- loss of appetite
- tremors or shaking

**During any period of withdrawal, it's important to look after yourself: eat well and drink plenty of water, get a bit of exercise, try and get some regular sleep.**

The techniques of distraction, delay and de-stressing can be helpful ways of dealing with symptoms (p. 14). Try to keep them in perspective.

Have you experienced any of these symptoms due to cannabis withdrawal?

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How did you manage or how do you plan to manage these symptoms?

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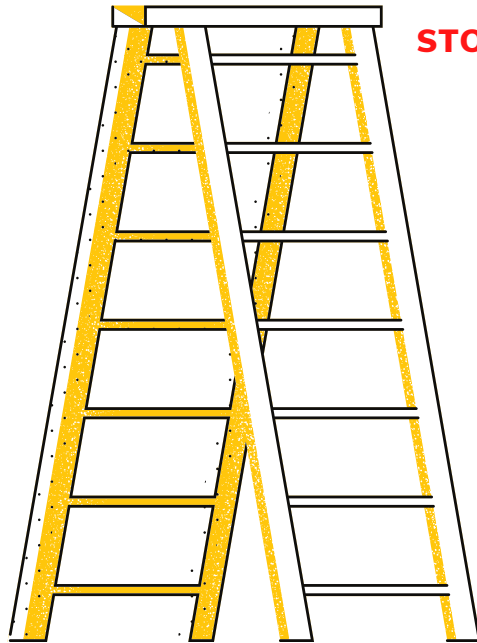






# Cannabis and You

## THE LADDER OF CHANGE



**STOP USING**

**CONTROL USING**

**CONTINUE AS NORMAL**

Where do you see yourself on the ladder?

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Where would you like to be on the ladder and why?

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How will you get there?

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# Cannabis and You

## COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS

Using this **Decision-Making Model** you can learn to think through all aspects of why you are making a decision to change or to not change.

The purpose of this model is for you to **become more aware** than you may be now so that you can make an **'informed choice.'** Having a choice is really important because it means that you have real power in your life.

You can easily learn how to change things that aren't so good for you and take responsibility for your actions.

List the **POSITIVES** of smoking cannabis  
(e.g. what are the benefits and rewards for smoking)

List the **NEGATIVES** of smoking cannabis  
(e.g. what don't you like about it during or afterwards, what bad consequences happen)

List the **POSITIVES** of **NOT** smoking cannabis (e.g. what **do** you like about **not** smoking)

List the **NEGATIVES** of **NOT** smoking cannabis (e.g. what **don't** you like about **not** smoking or what bad things happen)





# Cannabis and You

## CHANGE PLAN SHEET

<b>What do I want to change</b> (this could be anything!)	
<b>The reasons I want to do this are:</b>	
<b>To do this, I will need to take these actions</b>	
<b>People who could support me in this area</b>	
<b>What are my possible obstacles to change?</b>	
<b>How will I deal with obstacles?</b>	
<b>I will know my plan is working when....</b>	



# Reduce the Risks

MAKE SAFE



The only risk-free drug use is no drug use, but if you are using, or considering using cannabis, this advice will help **minimise** the risks to your health.

## Don't mix it with tobacco

Tobacco is addictive and has been proven to cause cancer and heart disease.

## Don't use plastic bottles, rubber hoses, PVC, foil and aluminium

These give off toxic fumes when hot. Glass, steel or brass pipes are safer.

## Don't hold the cannabis smoke in your lungs

You won't get more 'high'. It just means more tar and other nasty chemicals will stick to your lungs.

## Don't use a cigarette filter for a roach

You will inhale more tar. Use plain card, loosely rolled up, for a roach – this lets the smoke flow easily.

## Don't use too many papers

Three skimmers will do – or you'll breathe in too much burnt paper.

## Don't Mix With Other Drugs

**Any time you mix drugs together you take on new risks.**



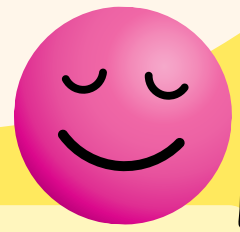
For example, if you drive when stoned or high you double your chances of having a fatal or serious injury car crash, but if you drive after mixing cannabis with alcohol, you're 16 times more likely to crash.

## Stay in Control

**If you or someone you are with is having a bad time while using cannabis, the information below will help you stay in control:**

- If one of your friends is having a bad time sit them somewhere quiet and comfortable, away from others. Stay calm and keep them calm, take their mind off things by talking to them. Tell them the bad feelings will wear off soon.
- Cannabis lowers blood-sugar levels. You will feel better if you have something sweet to eat or drink.
- If you feel bad when stoned you should think about stopping, if only for a short time. Give your mind and your body a break.
- If you use it every day, have a couple of days off each week. Smoke fewer spliffs a day, or put a bit less in them.
- If you are trying to cut down, avoid places, people, or events that remind you of cannabis.
- Don't buy extra, thinking you will save some for tomorrow – you probably won't.

# Relapse Prevention



## 'Relapses' and 'slips'

A **relapse** is when you return to your old level of cannabis use. A **slip** is a 'one-off' case of having a smoke, which does not necessarily mean you will have a full relapse.

**It is quite common to make mistakes when you begin learning a new skill.** Changing your cannabis use is no different, and you may make the odd mistake.

**If you do have a slip it is important to remember that this doesn't mean you have failed, or you are unable to change or can let yourself slip into a full relapse.** What is important to long-term success is how you handle the slip. How to handle it will depend on how it happened. The slip may have been intentional or unintentional.

### Intentional Slips

Slips can happen 'on purpose' for a couple of reasons. You may tell yourself that you are tired of sticking to your plan and want a night off. Or you may decide that you deserve a reward (a smoke) for what you've achieved so far, or it is just too hard. If this happens to you, think carefully about your reasons for wanting to change.

- consider your reasons for changing. How important are these to you?
- remind yourself that each slip reduces your chances of long-term success. Your craving will return more strongly, which means more hard work

### Unintentional Slips

You may have a slip, despite your best intentions, because you find yourself in a high-risk situation with your guard down. If you do, look at your strategies to see what can be improved.

- did you just slip into an old habit again without thinking?
- are you finding some high-risk situations too hard right now?
- is there a better way of dealing with them?

## Plan ahead for dealing with a slip

**A slip can feel like a crisis and getting back to your chosen goal will take some effort. Here are some things to do.**

### If you have a slip you can:

- **get rid of the cannabis and get away from the situation where you smoked**
- **remind yourself that one smoke or even a day of smoking doesn't have to result in a full-blown relapse**
- **remember that feelings of guilt or blame will pass**
- **call for help from someone you trust**
- **look at the slip to see what triggers there were and your reaction to them**
- **think about what you expected cannabis to change or provide**
- **set up a plan for coping with similar situations in the future**

# The Law

## True or False

### ANSWERS

#### CLASSIFICATION OF CANNABIS:

Cannabis is a class 'B' drug

**TRUE**

#### CULTIVATION OF CANNABIS:

The cultivation of cannabis is illegal in the UK

**TRUE**

#### PERSONAL CONSUMPTION:

It is legal to possess cannabis for personal use only

**FALSE**  
It is illegal

#### IF YOU ARE CAUGHT CARRYING:

Police can issue a warning or an on-the-spot fine of £90 if you're found with cannabis

**TRUE**

#### IF YOU BUY CANNABIS:

If you buy cannabis for you or your friends and get caught you can be charged for supplying a class 'B' drug

**TRUE**

#### IF YOU GIVE A SPLIFF OR A PIPE:

You can not be charged with supplying if you get caught giving a friend a spliff or a pipe to smoke cannabis

**FALSE**  
You could be charged

#### IN YOUR HOUSE:

If you allow your friend or acquaintance to smoke cannabis in your house for their personal use you may still expect to face legal proceedings if you get caught

**TRUE**

#### THE PENALTY FOR POSSESSION:

The maximum penalty for possession of cannabis is 2 years in prison

**FALSE**  
You can get up to 5 years, an unlimited fine or both

#### THE PENALTY FOR SUPPLYING:

The maximum penalty for supplying cannabis is 14 years in prison

**TRUE**  
You can also get an unlimited fine

**How many did you get right?**



# Need Support?

For further support and advice contact the **EDAS/Reach Young Peoples team. We are here to help!**

We are a specialist free and confidential alcohol and drugs support service for under 25s living in the county of Dorset. We offer non-judgemental advice and information about how to keep safe and discuss potential treatment and support options.

Get in touch with us on 01202 741414 or 0800 0434656 - option 2.



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