

Parenting Matters

Quarterly Newsletter

October 2007

For Colorado Parents

Marijuana and Mental Health

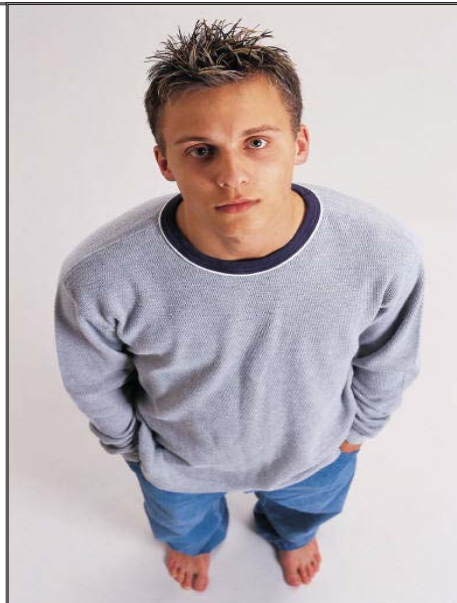
Marc Galanter, M.D., Department of Psychology at New York University School of Medicine, answers questions regarding drug use.

How does smoking marijuana affect the mental health of teens?

Marijuana use can have a marked effect on a young person's mental health, as well as their overall well-being. Marijuana has been linked to depression, anxiety and schizophrenia. There is also a growing body of research indicating that marijuana smoking may actually cause many of these and other mental health problems. Youth who use marijuana weekly have double the risk of depression later in life, and teens aged 12 to 17 who smoke marijuana weekly are three times more likely than non-users to have suicidal thoughts.

Can chronic marijuana use produce psychological changes to a developing brain?

While researchers still have a long way to go in understanding the complexity of brain function, we do know that illicit drug use produces psychological- if not physical- changes, impacting on a young person's developing brain, as brain development continues into the early 20's. The average age for teens trying marijuana is 14. That means that many people who smoke pot do so before their brain development is settled. This can affect brain centers that control emotion and reason.



“Be aware. Kids can get any drug they want. You can't keep them away from it, but you can inform them of it before they see it.”

--Anonymous teen

What are signs of mental health problems?

It is often difficult for parents to know the difference between emerging mental health problems and typical changes in mood or attitudes in teens. It is normal to see temper outbursts, changes in sleeping habits and changes in hobbies. Be attentive. Look for signs of depression, withdrawal, carelessness with grooming habits or hostility.

Other questions you can ask yourself: Is your child doing well in school, getting along with friends, taking part in sports or other activities? If there have been marked changes in your teen's activities, it's time to do some more homework. Look for evidence of drug paraphernalia such as pipes, rolling papers and so on; missing prescription drugs- especially narcotics and mood stabilizers; and bottles of eye drops, which mask bloodshot eyes.

Where can I get help if my child has symptoms of mental illness?

An excellent place to find help for mental health issues is to visit the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), National Mental Health Information Center Web site: <http://mental.health.samhsa.gov/cmhs/>

Here you can find resources in your area, as well as tips to assist you with specific mental health problems, like anxiety and suicide.



Source:

www.theantidrug.com
edited to fit this publication

PARENTING MATTERS, PREVENTION WORKS

FOOD ADDITIVES COULD FUEL HYPERACTIVITY IN KIDS

Some common food colorings and preservatives appear to increase the risk of hyperactive behavior among children, British researchers report.

The link between food additives and hyperactivity has long been suspected, but this is the first study to show a direct connection.

“Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is an increasingly common problem, and theories abound to account for that,” said Dr. David Katz, director of Prevention Research Center at Yale University School of Medicine. “Among them is the notion that food additives induce hyperactivity.”

Despite this apparent connection, Katz cautioned that the increasing number of children with ADHD cannot be blamed on food additives alone.

“No one factor is solely responsible for rising rates of ADHD,” Katz said. “Along with the hazards of a highly processed food supply, children are getting less and less physical activity.”

“Parents of children showing signs of hyperactivity are being advised that cutting out certain artificial food colors from their diets might have some beneficial effects on their behavior,” the Food Standards Agency said on its web site.

“However, we need to remember that there are many factors associated with hyperactive behavior in children. These are thought to include genetic factors, being born prematurely, or environment and upbringing,” Dr. Andrew Wadge, chief scientist at the Food Standards Agency, said in a statement.

Parents should use preventative measures such as maintaining a healthful diet and regular physical activity, in an effort to reduce the effects of artificial food colors and additives on their children.

www.EverydayHealth.com
Edited to fit this publication

SYMPTOMS OF ADHD

Although specific symptoms of ADHD vary from child to child, a child with ADHD generally shows several of the following characteristics:

- Difficulty organizing work, often giving the impression of not having heard the teacher’s instructions
- Easily distracted
- Excessively restless or fidgety behavior; unable to stay seated
- Impulsive behavior (acts without thinking)
- Carelessness
- Frequently calling out in class (without raising hand, yelling out answer before question is finished)
- Failing to follow through with teachers’ or parents’ requests
- Difficulty waiting for his or her turn in group settings
- Unable to stay focused on a game, project or homework assignment; often moving from one activity to the next without completing any

Source:

www.EverydayHealth.com



PARENTING DOESN'T END WHEN THE KIDS HEAD OFF TO COLLEGE

Tips for parents of college-bound freshmen:

1. Remember, it's a myth that parental control ends when kids turn 18. Young people between 18 and 25 are emerging adults who often need support from their parents and can benefit from a close relationship with them.

2. Parents should do their own development work, preparing for the changes in their own lives when a child goes off to college. **When parents are indecisive or unsure about the change, it sends the wrong signal to their child.**

3. Parents should convey their faith that the same competence that got the young person into college will see them through it well.

4. Come up with a plan for handling spending allowances, and tailor it to the particular freshman. Some might be able to handle their own credit card responsibly; others will need more parental oversight.

5. How often should parents contact their college freshman? If your child is begging you not to call so many times, or is waiting three days to respond to e-mail, that's a signal to make an adjustment. The child will let you know.

Source: Laura S. Kastner and Jennifer Wyatt, "The Launching Years" (Three Rivers Press, 2002)

Available in Spanish by request

Parenting Matters

Published quarterly by Partners in Parenting
**Colorado State University
Extension**

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PARENTING MATTERS, PREVENTION WORKS

Teens Benefit When Families Eat Together - *Not Just At Thanksgiving*

As families gather around the Thanksgiving table, they may be doing more good than they realize. Research has found that, like other forms of parental involvement, there is a link between frequent family dinners and positive teen outcomes. **Teens who eat regularly with their family are less likely than other teens to get into fights, think about suicide, smoke, drink or use drugs.** They are also likely to do better in school and initiate sexual activity later than teens who do not have regular meals with their families. Are families gathering for meals together?

The Child Trends DataBank, the nation's largest online source of trends and indicators on children and youth, reports that in 2003, 42 percent of adolescents ages 12-17 ate a family meal six to seven days a week. Twenty-seven (27) percent did so four to five days a week, and 31 percent ate meals with their family three or fewer days a week.



The numbers are higher for children ages 6 to 11. Among this age group, 56 percent ate a meal as a family meal three days a week or less.

Most families try to spend the holidays together, but eating together on a regular basis may have a lasting positive effect on their teens' behavior.

source: www.childtrends.org



3 Styles of Learning Can Unlock Success

Learning is reflected in the way we respond to stimuli from our environment. Learning style is the way we process that information.

Most people show a preference for one of the following three basic learning styles: visual, auditory, or kinesthetic. There is no best or worst learning style. While it is possible to have a different learning style for different subjects, most students have a primary learning style.

Parents also show a preference for one of these learning styles. It is not unusual for parents to prefer a different style of learning than their child. In order to work effectively with your child, it is important to understand your own learning style.

Have you ever experienced frustration when helping your child with homework, wondering "Why can't she just get this? I have explained it 10 times!"

Sometimes, being aware that your child has a different learning style will help you change to a more effective approach.

Understanding your child's preferred learning style will allow you to assist your child with the important skills he needs to be successful in school. With this information, you can also learn which styles your child needs to strengthen. For example, many classes use lecture as a primary delivery mode; students who learn best visually or kinesthetically might struggle with this method of delivery.

Many people have an intuitive sense of their primary learning style. If you need a little help deciding, try this activity with both yourself and your child. What comes to mind when you hear the word 'dog'? Those who visualize a picture of a dog or see the letters are probably visual learners.

Those who hear a bark are probably auditory learners. Those who imagine the feel of the soft fur of a dog are probably kinesthetic learners.

Here is more information about the three types of learning styles, including some study tips for each type of learner:



- **Visual learners** learn by watching. They recall images when trying to remember and memorize things by how they look.
- **Study tips: Use devices such as graphs, charts, and pictures.** Encourage visualization of stories and other information. Use color when writing to highlight important information
- **Kinesthetic learners** learn through movement and manipulation. They are highly active and might not be able to sit still for long periods of time. These learners are the most likely to be labeled ADHD.
- **Study tips: Use hands-on activities to reinforce ideas.** Let the student stand or move while working. Take frequent study breaks.
- **Auditory learners** learn by listening. They tend to remember facts when they are presented in the form of a poem, song, or melody. They can sometimes have trouble reading because they might not visualize well.
- **Study tips: Read text aloud.** Create mnemonics to help memorization. Encourage the student to think aloud and have discussions about the information.

source: *Rebecca Richards*
Kumon Math and Reading Center
Fort Collins, CO



Positive Comments Build Confidence in Preschool Children

Healthy self-esteem is one of the best qualities you can nurture in your child to prepare him for school. It will allow her to respect herself, accept that things sometimes go wrong, and think positively enough to try again.

Here are some ways you can help your child enjoy a healthy self-esteem:

- **Notice effort.** A young child who is still learning may need a lot of practice to get things right. But a simple comment such as, "Wow, you are a hard worker!" can motivate him to keep trying.
- **Don't label your child.** "You're a bad boy!" can make your child decide that since you think he's bad, there's no point for him to try to behave. Instead, talk about the behavior, not the child. "Hitting your sister is hurtful. I'm disappointed in that kind of behavior."



Teens Value Families

"Recently, I asked my seventh graders to list the *characteristics of a good, healthy family*. This is what they included:

- They read, play, and talk together instead of watching television
- They put the family first
- They rely on each other
- They don't say bad, hurtful things to each other
- They acknowledge each other's strengths
- There is more love than hate
- They don't hit each other
- They don't resolve to violence

- They don't abuse drugs/alcohol
- The children respect the parents
- The parents respect the children
- The children are happy with what they have and aren't always wanting something
- They speak in calm voices
- They love each other
- They have faith
- They accept and acknowledge change
- They all work hard
- They all have hope
- They believe in each other

And you thought teenagers didn't have the "stuff." *Maybe we should listen to them more.* As printed in the Fort Collins, CO

Coloradoan Newspaper

Source: A teacher at Blevins Junior High



PARENTING MATTERS, PREVENTION WORKS



Colorado State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Colorado counties cooperating. Cooperative Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.

Produced by PARTNERS IN PARENTING (PIP)
A program of Colorado Family Education, Resources and Training with funding from the Alcohol & Drug Abuse Division and CSAP.
odad Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division
CSAP Center for Substance Abuse Prevention

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