



Setting the Record Straight – Social Media Messaging on Marijuana

It's no big deal.

It's safe to use.

Marijuana is not-addictive.

It doesn't impact decision-making.

Everyone is doing it.

These are just some of the messages teens hear about marijuana on social media. And, according to Statista's February 2016 research, 16-24 year-olds spend nearly 200 minutes per day on a mobile device, so the messages can be powerful.

According to PreventTeenDrugUse.org, what parents say to their teens does matter and teens actually do listen. Parents need to reinforce strong messages. No alcohol. No tobacco. No marijuana. No non-prescribed prescription drugs.

Some facts to share with our teens — and for our own learning:

- Marijuana is addictive. Signs of marijuana withdrawal include anxiety, depressed mood, decreased appetite, irritability, restlessness, difficulty sleeping, stomach pain, aggression and anger. (*Journal of Clinical Pharmacology*)
- The average potency of today's marijuana is 244% higher than in the 1980s — which makes it more addictive and harmful. (*The National Drug Intelligence Center*)

- Heavy marijuana use may damage developing brains. (*Children's Hospital of Philadelphia*)
- Marijuana use is associated with lower academic achievement, school dropouts, mental health problems and drug addictions.
- Vaping was originally created as an alternative to cigarettes and now available for the intake of marijuana to deliver a high percentage of THC into the bloodstream.
- Marijuana use is a major cause of highway crashes, injury and death. Marijuana use doubles the risk of a crash. (*National Institute of Drug Abuse*)

Beware social media consequences.

What many don't know is what can

happen if you post photos of marijuana or activities related to marijuana. Social media companies are deleting accounts for illegal activity – which has impact more to cannabis-related dispensaries. But, even with marijuana growing in its legalization, it still remains illegal federally. FORTUNE ran a story, *Marijuana Photos on Instagram Could Cost You Big*, with one example in Arizona, which could lead to a \$150,000 fine and 18-month jail sentence. There have also been cases of impacting worklife and child custody battles.

The Coalition Against Drug Abuse did research, and were surprised by the ease and frequency of selling drugs on social networking sites. They found 50 Instagram dealer accounts in one day by searching hashtags like #weed4sale and user names "ihavedrugs4sale." Of the 50, 34% identified their faces on social profiles, with 56% bragging about their cash intake.

Since law enforcement monitors social media, social outreach could be tracked to the recipient. And, if a drug package is intercepted, the recipient could be arrested and face a potential Federal charge.

Social media is dramatically changing the landscape of drug messaging, understanding and access. We need to ensure that the true stories are shared on its impact and consequences.



Social Media & Drugs

