

Title Page 1:

Marijuana

Burned Out

Panel 2:

What is Marijuana?

Many Names, One Drug

You might call it dope, weed, pot, reefer, or Mary Jane – but no matter what it’s called, marijuana is one of the most abused drugs in the world. Many marijuana users might not know how harmful it is to their health.

Marijuana comes from the hemp plant *Cannabis Sativa* and it also contains hundreds of chemicals, including delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), which is the drug’s main mind-altering ingredient. When people smoke marijuana, all they need are a few puffs of it to feel high.

Some users claim that marijuana is harmless because it comes from a plant and is therefore natural. But marijuana actually has a long list of negative consequences.

Marijuana messes with your head in all sorts of ways: It’s a depressant and a hallucinogen and it can also make you paranoid – potheads often feel like people are “out to get them.” Did you know that teens who smoke marijuana are more likely to try other drugs? That’s why marijuana is known as a “gateway drug.” Marijuana users are more likely to have friends who are into harder drugs like meth, cocaine or LSD. Because people who smoke weed regularly build up a tolerance, they’re more likely to try something new to get high.

Panel 3:

All in Your Head

This is Your Brain on Weed

You already know that smoking marijuana can make you feel a little fuzzy, but how badly does pot mess with your head? When you smoke weed, THC takes just seconds to go to your head and attach itself to your brain’s neurotransmitters – which help your brain communicate to the rest of your body. That “high” feeling means that your brain isn’t doing its job.

Being high may have permanent effects – marijuana use can actually shrink parts of your brain, including your hippocampus (the part of the brain that controls memory) and your amygdala (the part that helps with emotions and memory).

Bottom line? Marijuana can actually kill your brain cells and shrink your brain.

Is It Worth It?

The Short and Long-term Effects of Weed

It's common knowledge that marijuana can give you a high, but do you know about its other side effects? Here are a few ways that marijuana can affect you mentally and physically:

- Memory loss and trouble concentrating
- Weight gain from increased appetite
- Panic attacks
- Paranoia
- Trouble sleeping
- Increased risk of several types of cancer
- Weakened immune system
- Greater risk of having unprotected sex
- Chest and lung problems, including emphysema, bronchitis and chest colds
- Increased heart rate

Bad for Your Body, and for Your Future

Another side effect of pot: it can land you in jail. Yes, it's true, some states like Colorado and Washington have legalized both medical and recreational marijuana use. But everywhere else, just having weed in your pocket or your purse is enough to get you arrested. If you're under the legal age, it's illegal everywhere. Getting arrested for having marijuana can affect your ability to get into college or get a job.

Panel 4:

Getting High. Crashing Down.

Jennifer's Story

Jennifer was one of those girls who seemed to have it all: The pretty, blonde volleyball player had just been awarded a partial athletic scholarship to a college in Florida, where she planned to study broadcast journalism. On top of that, Jennifer had recently signed a contract with a local modeling agency after winning several local beauty pageants. She'd just finished her first job – a shoot for a local catalogue. She was on top of the world.

One night, Jennifer's world came crashing down: Jennifer and a few friends went out to eat at a local restaurant and they left without paying their bill. The staff at the restaurant was angry and called the police. Unfortunately for Jennifer, she left her purse at the table. The police searched the purse looking for identification and they found it.

They also found lip gloss, a cell phone...and a small baggie of pot.

Jennifer and her friends spent the night in jail after being arrested for theft and possession of marijuana. A few days later, Jennifer lost her scholarship: The school didn't want to give money to a thief and a pothead. The modeling agency canceled her contract. They didn't want the bad publicity, they told her.

Think weed is harmless? Think again. One bag of pot can destroy your future.

Panel 5:

The Need for Weed

Marijuana is Habit-Forming

A lot of people claim that you can't become "addicted" to marijuana, but stoners can get so dependent on weed that they may not be able to function without it. Marijuana harms the body and mind, so constant use can lead to "burned-out" feelings of depression, anxiety and physical addiction. Heavy users often find that they need to smoke more of it to get the same high.

Simply put, marijuana can wreck your mind, your body *and* your life. Being dependent on marijuana has some really negative side effects, including:

- Low self-esteem
- Depression
- Lack of motivation
- A drop in grades
- Weight gain

Everybody's Doing It, Right?

People might talk as if smoking pot is the cool thing to do, but it's really not. The truth is, not everybody's doing it. Most teens *don't* use marijuana and neither should you. If someone offers you marijuana, just say "no," or try one of these lines:

- "No way! I need to keep my concentration on the big game."
- "No thanks. I'm applying to colleges and need to stay straight."
- "Weed makes you fat. No thanks."

Page 6:

The Truth About Getting High

Think you know everything about marijuana abuse? Test yourself here.

1. Since marijuana comes from a plant, it can't be bad for you.

- True
 - False
2. Driving drunk is more dangerous than driving under the influence of marijuana.
- True
 - False
3. THC is the substance in pot that makes you feel high.
- True
 - False
4. Marijuana is often called a “gateway drug.”
- True
 - False
5. Marijuana use can cause you to become tired, unmotivated and paranoid.
- True
 - False

Answers:

- 1. False
- 2. False
- 3. True
- 4. True
- 5. True