

Hold on...not so fast.

HERE'S WHY CHOOSING **NOT** TO USE IS A GREAT CHOICE

MARIJUANA

Marijuana contains approximately 400 chemicals including THC which is the active ingredient in marijuana. THC affects the brain's control of emotions, thinking, and coordination and distorts how the mind perceives the world. Long-term, regular use of marijuana—starting in the teen years—may impair brain development and lower IQ, meaning the brain may not reach its full potential.

Using marijuana can lead to:

- ⇒ problems with memory, concentration, thinking and problem solving
- ⇒ same breathing problems as smoking cigarettes (coughing, wheezing, trouble with physical activity, and lung cancer)
- ⇒ increased aggression, paranoia, anxiety, risky behaviors, and use of other drugs or alcohol
- ⇒ decreased motivation or interest
- ⇒ impairs brain development and lower IQ
- ⇒ it is estimated that about 1 in 6 people who start using as a teen become addicted to marijuana



ALCOHOL

Youth who abuse alcohol increase their risk of negative health effects because their organs and brain are still growing. I'm sure you've heard that abusing alcohol hurts your health. But how many years of drinking do you think it takes to visibly affect your brain? Ten years? Twenty? It turns out that it doesn't take that long at all - scientists can already see changes in the brains of teenagers who drink.

Underage alcohol use can lead to:

- ⇒ increased risk of academic failure, illicit drug use, and tobacco use
- ⇒ physical consequences - hangovers, alcohol poisoning, and death
- ⇒ damage to the structure and function of the brain while it's developing
- ⇒ legal consequences like losing your driver's license before you're old enough to have it and huge fines
- ⇒ young people who use alcohol before the age of 15 were 5 times more likely to become addicted
- ⇒ DEATH when mixed with medications



PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

People often think that prescription and over the counter drugs are safer than illicit drugs, but that's only true when they are taken exactly as prescribed and for the purpose intended. When misused, they can be addictive and increase risk for serious effects, including overdose—especially when taken along with other drugs or alcohol.

Misuse of prescription medication can lead to:

- ⇒ nausea, disorientation, seizures
- ⇒ changes in mood, perception, behavior, and judgment
- ⇒ difficulty with breathing, sleeping, speaking, and coordination
- ⇒ intense paranoia (like something or someone is after you)
- ⇒ death



TOBACCO

There are many chemicals found in tobacco or created by burning it and nicotine is the ingredient that can lead to addiction. Tobacco use (both smoked and smokeless tobacco use) is the leading preventable cause of death in the United States. It is a known cause of human cancer. For example, tar causes lung cancer and other serious diseases that affect breathing.

Use of tobacco and nicotine products can

- ⇒ highly addictive and poisonous
- ⇒ narrows blood vessels causing heart strain and poor blood circulation
- ⇒ shortness of breath and sleep disturbances
- ⇒ bad smelling breath and discolored teeth, hair, and clothes
- ⇒ poor skin leads to more zits that last longer and girls who smoke are more likely to grow excess facial hair
- ⇒ more likely to develop ear infections, allergies, bronchitis, pneumonia, asthma, and lung cancer



Tips to Remember...or something like that

⇒ It's brave to stand up for yourself.

Be that guy or girl who chooses not to drink alcohol or do drugs. It might be hard at first, but eventually people will respect you for sticking to your beliefs. You might even start to influence some of your friends to stay away from alcohol and other drugs too.

⇒ Not everyone is doing it.

In fact, most young people believe they *do not* have to use alcohol or other drugs to have a good time. Teens say that they respect their friends who make the choice not to use.

⇒ It's okay to make up an excuse.

If someone is really hounding you, and you aren't able to dodge the conversation, throw out that your parents randomly drug test you for their own curiosity. Most parents say they really don't mind taking the blame if it helps you make healthy decisions.

⇒ Ask 101 questions.

For example, if a pal pressures you to smoke, ask her why she smokes, how long she has smoked, if she minds having ashtray breath.

⇒ Say "No" like you mean it.

Make eye contact, then say "No" forcefully, with authority. The more certain you are in your refusal, the less people will bug you.

⇒ Back-up a no with a positive statement.

For example, if you're turning down an offer to smoke weed, say something like, "I like my brain the way it is, thanks."

⇒ Be repetitive.

Don't hesitate to state your position over and over again and practice saying 'no' in safe environments, like when your big brother asks you if you'd like to spend Saturday night doing his laundry.

⇒ Choose your friends wisely.

Surround yourself with others who are making good choices. Your friends are going to influence your behavior, so why not pick ones who will be a positive influence?

Find others who can...

- help you to become your best self
- leave you happier after spending time with them
- help you achieve your most important goals
- lift you up, challenge, inspire, and hold you accountable
- friends who see the potential in you that you may not even see in yourself
- Friends who are making positive choices

The
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