

Marijuana Addiction

What You Should Know
About Treatment, Usage
and Effects of Marijuana

1. What is Marijuana?
2. How addictive is Marijuana?
3. What are the real risks of Marijuana?
4. Is Marijuana medicine?
5. Am I addicted to Marijuana?
6. What are the symptoms of Marijuana detox?
7. How can I get through detox on my own?
8. If I can't do it on my own, what are some Marijuana treatment options?

Issue

2008

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Marijuana

*Within this book we
strive to answer the
questions we are
asked everyday about
the use and abuse of
Marijuana*

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INTRODUCTION

Marijuana today is not what it was even ten years ago, and as the drug has gotten stronger, increasing numbers are having real problems with addiction and with some of the health and cognitive deficits associated with heavy drug use.

Marijuana addiction is very real, and with a pretty serious syndrome of detox symptoms experienced after quitting, it can be tough to break free from a Marijuana habit that's dragging you down.

It doesn't help either that a lot of people still don't take Marijuana seriously, still don't consider it addictive or harmful, and that even those people who really struggle to quit feel as though they don't have a legitimate medical concern. Far too many people continue with Marijuana for too long not knowing how to stop, not knowing where to turn for help, and ignoring the evidence that tells them that they can't do it on their own.

This book is for two groups of people. It's for heavy Marijuana smokers that have had enough and want to stop, and it's for concerned parents, legitimately worried for their experimenting teens.

Marijuana when taken in moderation has little risks to health or quality of life, and we have no desire to scaremonger, mislead or participate in the propagation of half-truth and myth about the use of the drug. Marijuana when smoked heavily, daily and in great quantities becomes a very harmful drug, and in addition to the risks of addiction, there are legitimate threats to health, mental performance and overall quality of life. We do want to inform of these legitimate and worrisome consequences of a heavy Marijuana habit.

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Within this book we strive to answer a lot of the questions we at ChooseHelp.com get everyday about the use and abuse of Marijuana.

QUESTIONS LIKE:

- ✓ *WHAT IS MARIJUANA, AND HOW IS IT SMOKED?*
- ✓ *HOW ADDICTIVE IS MARIJUANA?*
- ✓ *AM I ADDICTED TO MARIJUANA?*
- ✓ *WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF MARIJUANA DETOX?*
- ✓ *HOW CAN I GET THROUGH DETOX ON MY OWN?*
- ✓ *IF I CAN'T DO IT ON MY OWN, WHAT ARE SOME MARIJUANA TREATMENT OPTIONS?*
- ✓ *WHAT ARE THE REAL RISKS OF MARIJUANA?*
- ✓ *HOW CAN I KEEP MY TEEN FROM SMOKING MARIJUANA?*
- ✓ *HOW CAN I SPOT TEEN MARIJUANA USE?*
- ✓ *HOW CAN I GET MY TEEN TO STOP USING MARIJUANA?*
- ✓ *SHOULD I BE DRUG TESTING AT HOME?*
- ✓ *IS MARIJUANA MEDICINE?*

Marijuana addiction is very serious, we hope that you find what you need within and once better informed, act positively towards change. Life is better without Marijuana!

WISHING YOU SUCCESS,

JOHN LEE

CHOOSEHELP.COM, 2008

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CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS MARIJUANA?

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A MARIJUANA OVERVIEW

Marijuana is the common name for the psychoactive genetic variation of the cannabis sativa plant. Used for over a thousand years in central Asia, it has been smoked for over a century in America, gaining wide usage during the counterculture 1960's, and ever since then has been the most widely used illicit drug in America.

The strength of marijuana has increased greatly through advances in genetic manipulation and growing conditions (hydroponics), and today's marijuana can be as much as 15 times stronger than the marijuana of the 1960's and 70's. This dramatic increase in potency has nullified much of our understanding of the effects of the drug, and any research done on the intoxication and damages of marijuana prior to about a decade ago do not accurately reflect the realities of today's marijuana.

The main active ingredient in marijuana is Delta-9-Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), which binds to the CB1 receptors of our cannabinoid systems in the brain and throughout the body. It is the THC in marijuana that gets you high, and it is the THC content in marijuana that has been steadily increasing over the past decades.

Although THC is the primary intoxicating active substance within marijuana, there are an additional 400 active or semi-active substances present in varying degrees in different strains of marijuana. Of these 400 active substances, few have been clinically explored, and although they do certainly exert some psychotropic influence, researchers do not fully understand what this influence may be. Marijuana smokers will realize that variations in the expression of these different molecules cause the highs from different types of marijuana to be quite different.

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These 400 active molecules also seem important for the drugs efficacy as a medication, and although scientists have synthesized THC in a pill form, the absence of this comprehensive mix of other chemicals seems to decrease the usefulness of this synthesized medication. Medical marijuana remains a controversial topic, even within the medical community, and although a great many public health groups have called for its usage, the AMA and the FDA most notably oppose its approval.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU SMOKE MARIJUANA?

After smoking marijuana, the THC and other active chemicals are absorbed through the lungs and passed quickly into the bloodstream; and within about a minute the effects of the THC start to be felt. The intensity of the high will continue to increase for about 20 minutes, before plateauing and gradually leveling off over about 2 hours.

When you smoke marijuana, the THC absorbed into the bloodstream passes into the brain and attaches itself to marijuana receptors in the endo cannabinoid system, a system found throughout many higher order parts of the brain. Once these receptors in the brain are stimulated by THC, the user begins to experience changes in sensory perception, in time perception, in concentration and cognitive abilities, in coordination, and in appetite. The endo cannabinoid system is linked to the pleasure system of the brain, and when activated it causes a dopaminergic reaction, allowing for pleasurable and relaxed sensations in addition to these other sensory alterations. For the vast majority of users, marijuana provokes a relaxed and enjoyable high that lasts for a couple of hours, and leaves little obvious harm in its wake.

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When marijuana is taken in very large doses, it can cause hallucinogenic reactions. Some users will also experience negative reactions to the drug, such as anxiety, paranoia and panic, and a full 30% of users who eventually give up the drug report that they do so as a result of these experienced negative sensations.

How Is It SMOKED?

There are different forms of marijuana. Most commonly dried marijuana buds are smoked (the leaves and stalks have a low THC content). Marijuana may also be smoked in a cigarette-like joint, a pipe or a water pipe (bong). Ingenious and alternative ways to smoke the substance also exist, and show a determination and creativity that parents only wish teens would reserve for their education!

Marijuana may also be eaten, most commonly as baked into cookies or brownies. Marijuana is not water soluble, so it is generally combined with high fat ingredients to ensure absorption. It can also be dissolved into alcohol. Eating marijuana is a less effective way to deliver the drug.

Increasingly processed forms of marijuana are hash and hash oil. Hash is a resinous sticky brown cake formed by compressing together resin from the sticky fresh plants. Hash can have a much higher THC content than marijuana. Even more potent is hash oil (extracted and processed THC containing oil from the plant) which can have a THC content of as much as 50%. Hash and hash oil are smoked in joints, with hot knives and in pipes and bongs, and once again, hash smokers do exhibit great creativity in ways to smoke the drug.

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RISKS OF OVERDOSE?

As far as acute reactions go, marijuana is one of the safest possible drugs. There can be a loss of coordination and as such driving or operating any form of machinery while high on marijuana does carry some risk; but direct risks from the smoked drug to the body are very low in the short term. There has never been a reported case of someone dying from an overdose of marijuana.

Marijuana can cause an unpleasant reaction if smoked to excess, and great anxiety, paranoia, hallucinations, nausea and vomiting are all very possible when smoking in great quantities, and especially by inexperienced users.

Marijuana can in rare case cause a temporary break from reality, called a "marijuana psychosis". During a marijuana psychosis, people often hear voices instructing them, have great paranoia that others are planning to do them harm or kill them and may also feel as though they are dying. An episode of marijuana psychosis is not often harmful in isolation, and virtually all people who experience this unpleasant condition do make a full recovery after the effects of the drug wear off. Unfortunately, anyone who experiences a marijuana psychosis has been shown to have a 50% or greater chance of developing schizophrenia later in life.

LONG-TERM RISKS

Unfortunately, although marijuana is relatively safe for short-term usage and acute intoxication, with long-term heavy use marijuana does carry some risks; risks of cancer, cognitive declines and memory problems, risks of developmental delays and

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impairments in teens and an increased propensity towards psychiatric conditions. These risks will be covered in greater depth later in the text.

Additionally, marijuana remains illegal in all states of the nation, even for medical purposes, and in some states people may be facing jail time for simple possession of the drug.

Marijuana advocates argue that alcohol, a legal substance, causes far greater societal and health problems than does marijuana, and although they may be correct, this does not logically imply that marijuana is good for you or a good idea, and before anyone does start experimenting with marijuana, they should learn the real risks of marijuana consumption.

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CHAPTER 2

THE MYTH OF NON-ADDICTIVE MARIJUANA

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You can get addicted to Marijuana; about 1 in 10 who try the drug do end up Marijuana dependant.

A lot of people mistakenly believe that Marijuana is not addictive, reflecting views formed in decades past when Marijuana was a lot less strong than it is today. An average joint in the 1970's contained about 10 mgs of THC, and an average joint smoked today has about 150 mgs. With a potency increase of 1500%, it's not surprising that a lot of people find that with heavy use, they are no longer able to stop even when they want to.

There remains some lingering doubt about the true nature of Marijuana addiction. Scientists now know that Marijuana does induce a psychological addiction with heavy use. You get accustomed to the effects of the drug and eventually come to need these effects for normal functioning, but whether or not Marijuana is physically addictive is not yet conclusively known.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ADDICTION

Users do come to need the drug to function normally, and once psychologically addicted, they will start to feel symptoms of withdrawal within a day of their last joint. You get accustomed to the anxiolitics properties of the drug, and when you can't have it, start to feel very anxious. Many people also come to use Marijuana as a coping tool for the stresses of life, and find that with time they rely on and need Marijuana to deal with everyday and normal trials of existence.

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Marijuana smokers do develop a heavy tolerance to the drug, and a chronic user will consume as much as 10 times the quantity of Marijuana in a session as an inexperienced user. The greater the quantity of the drug smoked the greater the risks of addiction, and with heavy use and time, Marijuana users may find themselves psychologically dependant on the drug, and will need to endure a significant period of withdrawal pains when they attempt to quit.

PHYSICAL ADDICTION

Far less certain is the case for physical addiction. The pains of Marijuana withdrawal are physical in nature, and fundamentally, whether or not the addiction occurs through physical changes in the brain matters little to the addict going through detox.

Scientists have identified some long-term neurological changes to the dopamine systems of the brain as a consequence of heavy Marijuana use, but whether or not this qualifies as physical dependence is still open to interpretation.

THE HARMS OF HEAVY MARIJUANA USE

You can get addicted, you do develop a tolerance to the effects of Marijuana, and once addicted, you will experience a significant period of withdrawal and detox symptoms when you try to quit. Although occasional smoking does not really present with serious health risks, heavy daily use does impact on your health, your ability to think remember and concentrate, and your overall quality of life.

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With Marijuana addiction, most heavy users report a significant and negative influence of the habit on areas of their lives that include job performance and career advancement, social happiness, general mental abilities and quality of life. Heavy Marijuana usage is also associated with increased rates of mental illness, lowered cognitive performances on a variety of measures, and risks from carcinogenic smoke to the lungs, heart and oral cavity.

Heavy Marijuana smokers also report a lowered ambition and self initiative to achieve worthwhile goals in life, and frequent Marijuana smokers also report having given up activities they once found enjoyable due to their Marijuana-slowed lifestyle.

MARIJUANA WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS

Once addicted, when you try to quit you will experience irritability, aggression, headaches, shakiness, lethargy, loss of appetite, insomnia and anxiety, and all coupled with intense cravings for the drug. The symptoms of withdrawal are severe enough that many people cannot get off Marijuana on their own, and do require professional help and intervention to beat their addiction. 15% of admissions to drug treatment centers in America are for Marijuana addicts seeking change.

Today's Marijuana is different, and with such a dramatic rise in potency it's not at all surprising that we are also witnessing an exponential rise in the numbers of Marijuana users who find themselves addicted, and who find that they need treatment assistance to get off this drug.

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THE HARMFUL MYTH OF NON-ADDICTIVE MARIJUANA

Anyone who says that Marijuana is not addictive has obviously never spent an anxiety wracked sleepless night, battling incredible cravings to use. Marijuana isn't meth, but the detox is real, and it's tough enough to keep a lot of people using for a lot longer than they'd like to.

The public perception of Marijuana as a harmless and non-addictive drug is not only inaccurate and poorly reflective of the realities of today's strong Marijuana, it is also quite harmful. Marijuana addicts are made to feel as though they don't have a legitimate and treatment-worthy condition, and as a result too many people truly needing of therapeutic assistance suffer and smoke alone and in silence, not partaking in the therapies that could make such a big positive difference.

Marijuana is addictive, it won't addict all, but when 10% of those people who experiment with the drug develop a dependency to it, we are still talking about many hundreds of thousands of Americans. We need to take this problem a little more seriously, legitimize public perceptions of Marijuana addiction treatment, and intervene in those cases where treatment is surely required.

Marijuana addicts can and do get better, but sometimes they need a little help along the way.

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CHAPTER 3

THE RISKS OF MARIJUANA

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With long term heavy use, what starts as a relatively harmless way to get high begins to have some lasting and detrimental impacts. Marijuana when taken in quantity and over a long period starts to impact on health, quality of life, career or academic success, and significantly on mental performance.

Marijuana may not kill you, and if smoked in real moderation is not a particularly harmful substance, but once use becomes addiction, and once you start smoking daily or more, you will start to experience some declines.

When Marijuana use starts to do real lasting harms, when it starts to lower your potential and lessens your quality of life, it's time to reevaluate whether Marijuana is giving as much as it's taking.

Learn about the real risks of heavy Marijuana usage, and decide for yourself whether your habit is really worth it all.

COGNITIVE DECLINES

Anyone who smokes Marijuana in quantity will know that their habit does negatively affect their mental performance. While using heavily, you just aren't quite as sharp as you would be otherwise. Clinical studies replicate what's known by smokers and they have demonstrated quite clearly a number of the cognitive deficits caused by heavy Marijuana usage.

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Marijuana smokers in general aren't as likely to finish high school and also perform more poorly in college. Even on the job, reports by heavy smokers indicate that a Marijuana habit has real harmful implications for job performance and upwards career mobility. You just can't remember, concentrate and express yourself as well under a semi-permanent fog of Marijuana.

Clinical studies have shown that for about 24 hours after smoking a joint, Marijuana smokers experience noticeable cognitive declines; declines in memory performance, declines in an ability to shift focus and attention between subjects as readily, declines in verbal, mathematical and reasoning performances and declines in concentration.

This means of course that if you have a daily Marijuana habit, you are operating under a permanent state of lessened cognitive functioning, and you're just not quite as smart as you would otherwise be. Even when you abstain for a few days, Marijuana seems to exert a lingering influence on performance, and after three days of abstinence, heavy smokers tested far more poorly on a number of tests of cognitive performance than did non-smokers.

Thankfully, these declines seem to be almost completely temporary and with a month or more of abstinence, clinical studies show that Marijuana smokers will once again perform equally well on measures of cognitive performance. You are not likely doing any long-term damage structurally, and the good news is that you can recover completely; but for all those months and years that you use heavily, you don't learn as well, don't consolidate information as well, and can't expect to advance as well. You are wasting years of opportunities to a habit that's supposed to be fun and relatively harmless, but it seems is anything but.

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CANCERS AND OTHER HEALTH RISKS

CANCERS

Marijuana smoke is carcinogenic, and contains 50% to 100% more tar and carcinogens than tobacco smoke. Additionally, as Marijuana smokers tend to smoke more deeply into the lungs and hold the smoke in the lungs for longer, ever greater percentages of these harmful toxins are absorbed into the body.

With heavy Marijuana smoking you are at risk for many of the same cancers as tobacco smokers are, and these cancers include lung cancer, oral cavity cancer and esophagus cancer amongst others. Respiratory problems such as emphysema can also be triggered by a heavy Marijuana habit. Young and otherwise healthy heavy Marijuana smokers have also been shown more susceptible to respiratory infection and bronchitis like conditions.

HEART ATTACK

Marijuana smoking has also been linked to heart attacks in sometimes very young smokers. These smokers were likely predisposed to have cardiac problems, but since few of us are aware of our heart health, the threat of an early heart attack affects us all. Marijuana smoking can cause tachycardia (accelerated heart rate), it decreases the red blood cells' ability to carry oxygen and increases the strain on the heart

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muscle. These factors combine together to create an increased risk for heart attacks and stroke while high.

IMMUNE SYSTEM

Just as Marijuana relaxes you and mellows you out, it seems to do have the same general effect on the white blood cells of the immune system. Clinical tests using THC on animal model immune systems have shown a substantial decline in white blood cell aggressiveness and effectiveness. If you smoke Marijuana heavily, you are more likely at risk for opportunistic infections. Marijuana may be quite dangerous for those people with already weakened immune systems, and although Marijuana has shown great efficacy in helping AIDS patients regain their appetites and in arresting AIDS wasting, there is a concern that the effects on the immune system may nullify the benefits of medical Marijuana for AIDS patients.

COUGH AND PHLEGM

Much like cigarette smoke, Marijuana smoke does induce a sometimes chronic cough. It increases phlegm production and it can cause an irritation of the throat, leading to a frequently experienced sore throat.

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THE RISKS OF PSYCHIATRIC ILLNESS

Smoking Marijuana, especially as a teen, increases your risks of experiencing psychiatric illnesses later in life, and the younger a teen starts smoking, the greater the risks of eventual psychiatric illness.

There is a legitimate and casual link between smoking Marijuana and increased rates of psychosis and schizophrenia later in life, and a number of different and independent clinical studies have come to these same conclusions.

If you smoke as a teenager, you are between 2 and 3 times more likely to experience clinical psychosis disorders later in life, and the younger you start smoking, the greater your chance of developing a schizophrenic like disorder.

Secondly, those people who experience a Marijuana induced psychotic reaction, (a temporary break with reality while high after smoking Marijuana) have about a 50% chance of developing full blown schizophrenia within the following three years.

A CAUSAL LINK TO SCHIZOPHRENIA

Researchers have concluded that use is casually linked to the development of schizophrenia, but it is not a sole cause, and it exists as a component cause amongst many different other factors. Still, after methodologies which examining the data on

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Marijuana use and schizophrenia, they have determined that if all Marijuana use could be eliminated, there would be an 8% reduction in the cases of later in life schizophrenia, which would be a very significant public health victory.

Schizophrenia remains a poorly understood disease, and the causes that lead to its emergence remain obscured. Researchers suggest that smoking increases the risks of disease expression on people already vulnerable to contract the disease, but who will not necessarily contract the disease.

Marijuana Psychosis Means a 50% Chance of Later Schizophrenia!

This is indicated by those people who do experience a Marijuana-induced psychotic episode. Marijuana psychosis is not a common occurrence, but does happen and it seems to happen in people already at risk to develop psychosis-like disorders later in life.

What seems to be happening though, with Marijuana-induced psychosis, is that although the symptoms of the drug-induced psychosis will disappear quickly after the effects of the Marijuana wear off, it seems to speed up the expression of the schizophrenia by many years. Patients who do experience a psychosis, will on average present with schizophrenic symptoms years before those people who do not experience a Marijuana-induced psychosis.

If you do have a Marijuana-induced psychotic reaction, you are very at risk for schizophrenia later in life, you will probably come down with schizophrenia sooner,

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and you should take steps to preempt the disease before it emerges. Talk to your doctor about this.

MARIJUANA CAUSES 8% OF ALL SCHIZOPHRENIA

The vast majority of smokers will not develop schizophrenia as a result of their use, but if we could somehow eliminate the use of the drug, we would see an almost 10% reduction in the prevalence rates of tragic and life-changing schizophrenia.

Scientists working on these studies point to the widespread usage of the drug as a problem, and conclude that we as a society are very unlikely to eliminate the usage any time soon. They conclude that for the best public health effects, at risk youth need to be targeted and hopefully deterred from smoking it.

PARENTS NEED TO KEEP TEENS SAFE FROM MARIJUANA

For a number of reasons, parents need to be very concerned about use by young teens. It seems as though if parents can keep kids from experimenting with the drug until the age of 18, they spare their children an enormous risk to schizophrenia, and these kids are at a far lower chance to ever develop any real substance abuse problems.

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Because Marijuana use amongst younger teens is on the rise, the study authors predict that in the coming decades we will see an increase in rates of schizophrenia.

AMOTIVATIONAL SYNDROME?

Amotivational syndrome, a collection of observable consequences of heavy Marijuana use that includes apathy, lethargy, reduced concentration, lowered intelligence and a lack of desire to partake in meaningful activities of upwards mobility; has never been clinically proven as factual or real.

TOUGH TO PROVE

Problematically, the difficulties inherent in proving a casual link between Marijuana usage and such a wide collection of behavioral changes prohibits a clinically demonstrable relationship, and some Marijuana users—even heavy smokers—do not seem to display the characteristic traits of amotivational syndrome.

A fact not lost to Marijuana advocates who argue of governmental propaganda and the propagation of myth, something that government has in the past been guilty of, and some would argue, remain guilty of to this day. This is unfortunate, as there are enough legitimate risks of Marijuana usage to give weight to arguments against its use, without resorting to half truths and myth.

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SOME FACTS ON MARIJUANA USE AND LIFE SUCCESS

Although amotivational syndrome cannot be proven as a casual result of Marijuana usage, there are certain statistics that do illustrate the correlation between Marijuana use and lowered academic and professional success and accomplishment.

- **Marijuana users are less likely to finish high school**
- **They get lower grades in high school and in college than do non-smokers**
- **They perform lower on tests of intellectual capacity**
- **They report a decreased ability to excel professionally**
- **Heavy Marijuana users report that their Marijuana habit decreases their ability to perform complex work tasks well, to learn new tasks professionally and that their Marijuana usage has hampered their upwards professional climb.**
- **Marijuana usage is conclusively and casually linked to a reduction in ability to consolidate new memories for about 24 hours after you smoke; which for heavy or daily Marijuana smokers means all the time. Essentially, Marijuana can decrease your ability to learn.**

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THE RISKS OF DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS

Psychologists argue that when a teen starts smoking Marijuana heavily, they lose the ability to consolidate the emotional and social learning necessary for a real transition out of adolescence and into adulthood. Marijuana blunts the emotional response to external stimuli, and as such when under the influence of Marijuana, teens do not appropriately experience complex emotional and developmental challenges, and do not learn healthy ways to navigate the emotional and psychosocial landscape of adulthood.

The earlier teens start smoking, the greater the deficit in learned social behaviors, and the greater the eventual harms.

So there is no direct evidence linking Marijuana usage to amotivational syndrome, but Marijuana does cause decreased academic, professional and general life performance. It does lessen the ability to learn, and when younger teens smoke Marijuana heavily they do not effectively develop emotionally and do not learn effective and appropriate ways to deal with emotional and social challenges in life.

DOES IT MAKE YOU LAZY?

And although Marijuana cannot be conclusively linked to amotivational syndrome, most Marijuana smokers will concede that under the influence of regular

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intoxication they are not as likely to accomplish worthwhile goals, and are more likely to focus on transient and meaningless pleasures of stimulation.

Far less likely to crack the books, and far more likely to play video games.

Far less likely to look for a new job and far more likely to watch a movie.

Scientists may not be able to prove a casual link, but Marijuana smokers know that while high, they just aren't as motivated to accomplish in life.

MARIJUANA-CAUSED INFERTILITY

Heavy Marijuana use by either women or men decreases the chance of a couple conceiving a child.

Heavy Marijuana usage in men is associated with an increase in endogenous estrogen levels at the expense of testosterone (which can also cause enlarged male breasts by the way) which negatively affects sperm counts and sperm activity and effectiveness.

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ABOUT 50%

Studies of heavy Marijuana smoking men show that they produce roughly half the amount of seminal fluid when compared with non-smoking men, and within this decreased quantity of seminal fluid are a significantly reduced number of active sperm.

It has the effect of lowering fertility levels significantly. Men who boast a very high sperm count will still be capable of conceiving children, but any man with an average or below average count is going to be pushing his sperm count down into the infertile range.

TIRED-OUT SPERM

The sperm are not only delivered in a lesser quantity, the Marijuana-stimulated sperm also react differently, and after ejaculation start swimming far too quickly towards the ova on their multi-hour journey. They approach a marathon like a sprint, and by the time they reach the ova, they are too fatigued and lethargic to push through the wall of the ovum and cannot begin conception.

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WOMEN SHOULDN'T SMOKE EITHER

But it's not only male smokers who reduce the chances of procreation. When a woman smokes Marijuana, the THC lingers in the reproductive system and has the same hyperactivity and fatigue affect on delivered sperm, even if the man is a non-smoker.

Men who stop smoking Marijuana will gradually, over a period of several months, return to a baseline state of fertility.

Couples who use Marijuana and suffer difficulties in conceiving children are strongly advised to eliminate fertility-harming Marijuana consumption.

Women who smoke Marijuana can also alter their hormonal chemical levels, decreasing the odds of successful implantation in the womb. See below.

SMOKING MARIJUANA EFFECTS REPRODUCTION

It's remarkable that we can make babies at all. Really, when you consider all of the things that have to go right just to get the process started (and I'm only talking biologically here!) it's incredible that I'm here to write this, and you're here to read it.

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Even the perilous journey the egg takes through the fallopian tubes after implantation down into the womb requires a delicate balance of endogenous chemicals to proceed smoothly, and the slightest thing that changes the balance of these chemicals can destroy the whole process

THC AFFECTS THE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM

Well, scientists have discovered that one chemical that can have a very detrimental effect on the egg during its journey after implantation, but before its arrival into the womb, is THC, the active chemical in Marijuana.

Marijuana gets you high by binding to CB1 receptors in the brain. These CB1 receptors also exist outside of the brain, they exist all over our bodies, and the THC in marijuana will bind with these receptors all over the body. Importantly, a necessary chemical for the transition of the egg down to the womb, anandamide, also binds to these CB1 receptors.

TOO MUCH ANANDAMIDE

Anandamide is a chemical essential for the procession of the egg to the womb, and anandamide has to be present in just the right amount for the egg to survive the journey, or for the journey to take place correctly. When you smoke marijuana, and the THC binds to the CB1 receptors, the anandamide is essentially bumped out,

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cannot bind, and the levels of free floating anandamide in the fallopian tubes gets too high. Too much anandamide does not bode well for successful conception.

Additionally, when anandamide levels interfere with the procession of the egg to the womb, there is also an increase in the risks for an embryonic retention, or an entopic pregnancy (when the pregnancy begins to grow in the fallopian tubes, instead of the womb). Researchers also note that there has been a dramatic rise in the incidence rates of ectopic pregnancies in the last couple of decades.

So to be safe and to ensure the success of a conception, if you are trying to have a baby, you need to make sure you stay clear of marijuana. We know it's not good for the fetus after conception, and now we find out that it's harmful even at the point of conception.

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CHAPTER 4 MEDICAL MARIJUANA

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So is it a drug or is it medicine, and if it's so harmful to some, how can be it beneficial to others?

Learn the facts of medical marijuana, who it can help, the legal status of marijuana as medicine and why some groups would argue that medical marijuana does more harm than good.

MEDICAL MARIJUANA - THE FACTS

Medical marijuana exists in Never-Never Land.

It's a controlled and illegal substance used for decades for intoxication, and more recently a potent medication that can ease the symptoms of several serious conditions and can increase the health and wellbeing of people suffering from serious and terminal diseases.

Medical marijuana is illegal in all 50 states by federal law, and although a majority of people polled favor the use of medical marijuana in a controlled manner, as of yet, no legislation exists that allows doctors to prescribe this medication in complete security.

Medical marijuana faces some significant challenges to full-scale approval, and although there have been numerous positive study outcomes on its effectiveness, there are also some health risks, it remains a widely abused and addictive drug, and

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there is little will within the private healthcare system to introduce medical marijuana on a large scale.

WHY DO PEOPLE USE MEDICAL MARIJUANA?

Medical marijuana helps people enduring symptoms of disease, or enduring symptoms of harsh treatments for disease. Cancer patients, multiple sclerosis patients, AIDS patients and Glaucoma patients, amongst others, have all felt medical marijuana's remarkable ability to ease their discomforts.

One of the most impressive effects of medical marijuana relates to its nature as an anti-emetic and appetite increasent. For patients with AIDS wasting or cancer patients enduring severe regimens of chemotherapy, smoking marijuana can truly make the difference between life and death. Marijuana decreases nausea and vomiting and increases appetite. It allows these patients to eat, to gain strength and nourishment, and to arrest continuing and problematic weight loss. Medical marijuana seems to work better than anything else currently available for those people suffering and unable to keep food down.

It also seems to help a great deal to reduce the pains of glaucoma and the pains of multiple sclerosis, and it also eases the anxiety present with all of the above conditions.

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Because of marijuana's real efficacy as a life-saving drug, several organizations including the AIDS Council, The American Public Health Association and the California Medical Association, have all called for an easing of regulation on its use.

HEALTH RISKS

Two major issues currently affecting access are that marijuana is a widely abused intoxicating substance, and that marijuana is most frequently smoked. Opponents of medical marijuana point to the risks of abuse and addiction as a significant problem with its use and its acceptance.

Additionally, the health risks of marijuana smoke (a proven carcinogen) the inability to control the quantities of active substances within a freely growing plant and the existence of synthetic alternatives, all reduce the probability of a near future acceptance of marijuana as a viable public health option.

Medical marijuana has been widely promoted as a solution to deadly AIDS wasting, but there has been some recent evidence that the positive appetite increasing effects may be countered by a real lowering of immune system functioning.

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CURRENT LEGAL STATUS

A number of states have decriminalized medical marijuana or have eased restrictions on doctors, allowing them to prescribe the medication. Unfortunately, federal law still prohibits the use of and possession of the substance, regardless of state initiatives to change its legal status, and as such clinics providing medical marijuana in these states have been subject to DEA raids and harassment.

No one in America may currently use medical marijuana without some fear of legal repercussions. It remains completely illegal in all 50 states.

MARINOL VS. MARIJUANA

Opponents of medical marijuana point to synthetic drugs such as Marinol, which synthesizes the THC from marijuana into an oral form of medication. They argue that these medications offer the same health benefits of medical marijuana, but are controlled in quantity per dose. Taking a pill also eliminates the risks of smoking on the respiratory system, and also reduces the probability of abuse.

Problematically, these medications have not performed as well as ordinary smoked marijuana in a number of studies, even studies seemingly designed to show that Marinol equals in benefits and exceeds in safety. It doesn't work as well, many patients suffering the effects of chemotherapy cannot keep any medications down

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due to extreme vomiting, and it doesn't seem to offer the same pain or anxiety relief as does the original plant.

Medical marijuana proponents argue that marijuana offers more than THC alone, and is composed of over 400 active substances, not all of which are completely understood. Marinol, and other replicated forms of the THC in marijuana, do not offer as much as simple marijuana can.

PUBLIC OPINION

Almost 3 quarters of Americans polled favor the use of medical marijuana. Americans overwhelmingly believe that doctors should be allowed to prescribe the drug in a controlled manner to those in real need, and to those for who medical marijuana can ease some suffering.

In response to this increase in public approval, Congress has been getting successively closer (increasing yes votes) to legislation that will make it easier for the decriminalization of medical marijuana for those in need.

Although there are certain medical organizations which do not call for medical marijuana (most notably the AMA) a majority of public health groups do favor its use in a controlled manner.

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PROBLEMS

One of the most significant challenges facing medical marijuana within the American health care system regards its composition as a natural plant. The FDA approval process, and indeed the entire medical industry, is not designed to accept medications from outside of the pharmaceutical industry. No one can patent a plant, there is no money to be made off of its use, and there is little incentive for anyone to lobby for its acceptance.

Additionally, because so many millions of Americans do smoke marijuana for non-medical reasons, there is a legitimate fear of broadening access to the drug, and possibly losing control over its distribution. No one wants to see more marijuana available to those who would abuse it, and even though it does seem to offer legitimate medical efficacy, the risks of abuse make it politically problematic.

SHOULD YOU USE MEDICAL MARIJUANA?

Medical marijuana is illegal, and if you do decide to use the drug, you must be aware of the risks of prosecution. You may decide that legal risks are an acceptable price to pay for a drug that may offer significant symptoms relief, and allow you better health and a better quality of life. Before trying medical marijuana you should talk with your doctor about your suitability for marijuana therapy. He or she may not be able to prescribe or even recommend its use, but they will be able to inform you better of medical marijuana's relevance for your symptoms expression.

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Medical marijuana is a valid choice for those in real need but although Marijuana may serve a beneficial function for people with certain health conditions, Marijuana is not a beneficial drug for anyone who does not explicitly require it for symptoms relief. Because medical Marijuana can help some people does not make Marijuana a good idea for all people.

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CHAPTER 5

ARE YOU ADDICTED TO MARIJUANA?

TAKE THIS QUIZ!

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Anyone who would argue that Marijuana is not addictive need only head down to one of the thousands of Marijuana anonymous meetings occurring on a daily basis across the nation to learn a new perspective.

With such an incredible increase in potency over the last years, Marijuana has become a powerfully intoxicating and quite addictive drug. Most people can smoke Marijuana recreationally and never develop a significant problem; but it is estimated that about one in ten who try Marijuana will end up addicted to it; and when you consider how many millions in America smoke the drug, even 10% becomes an alarmingly high number of addicts.

So do you have a problem with Marijuana? Here are 12 questions modified from the 12 questions of Marijuana anonymous, and if you answer yes to one or more of the following, you may want to reevaluate your relationship with the drug.

ARE YOU ADDICTED?

- 1. HAS SMOKING STOPPED BEING ENJOYABLE, AT LEAST SOME OF THE TIME?**
- 2. DO YOU SMOKE ALONE?**
- 3. CAN YOU IMAGINE LIVING WITHOUT MARIJUANA?**
- 4. DO YOU CHOOSE FRIENDS WHO ALSO SMOKE?**

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- 5. DO YOU SMOKE TO AVOID REALLY CONFRONTING YOUR FEELINGS?**
- 6. DO YOU SMOKE MARIJUANA WHEN YOU GET UPSET, AS A WAY OF COPING?**
- 7. DO YOU LIVE IN A SELF-DEFINED WORLD OUTSIDE OF REGULAR SOCIETY BECAUSE OF YOUR MARIJUANA USE?**
- 8. HAVE YOU EVER PROMISED SOMEONE YOU WOULD QUIT OR CUT DOWN (INCLUDING YOURSELF) AND FAILED TO DO SO?**
- 9. DO YOU NOTICE THAT YOU ARE NOT AS SHARP AS YOU WERE, OR THAT YOUR MEMORY IS WORSE BECAUSE OF YOUR MARIJUANA HABIT?**
- 10. WHEN YOU ARE NEARLY OUT OF MARIJUANA, DO YOU START TO FEEL ANXIOUS ABOUT GETTING MORE?**
- 11. DOES YOUR LIFE REVOLVE AROUND YOUR USE OF MARIJUANA?**
- 12. HAVE FRIENDS OR FAMILY EVER TOLD YOU THAT YOUR MARIJUANA HABIT HAS HAD A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON YOUR RELATIONSHIP?**

If you answer yes to even a single of the preceding, you may have a problem with Marijuana, and you may want to consider whether Marijuana in your life takes more than it gives.

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HERE'S ANOTHER TEST - THE APA 7 QUESTION SELF ASSESSMENT

You may also want to self-test your level of abuse using the American Psychological Association's clinical self-diagnosis questionnaire.

If you can honestly answer yes to three or more of the following questions about your behavior over the last 12 months, then you are addicted.

- 1) CAN YOU USE MORE MARIJUANA THAN YOU USED TO BE ABLE TO? DO YOU NEED MORE TO GET HIGH OR TO FEEL THE SAME EFFECTS?**
- 2) DO YOU EVER START TO FEEL ANXIOUS WHEN YOU CAN'T GET ANY MARIJUANA? DO YOU EVER TAKE ANOTHER DRUG INSTEAD WHEN THERE IS NO MARIJUANA AROUND?**
- 3) DO YOU EVER SMOKE MORE THAN YOU HAD PLANNED ON SMOKING? FOR EXAMPLE, DO YOU EVER HAVE A JOINT A FEW HOURS BEFORE WORK, AND INSTEAD OF STOPPING AT ONE, FIND YOURSELF REALLY HIGH A FEW HOURS LATER AS YOU START YOUR JOB?**
- 4) HAVE YOU TRIED IN THE PAST TO QUIT OR AT LEAST CUT DOWN ON YOUR SMOKING, AND FAILED?**
- 5) DO YOU SPEND A LOT OF YOUR TIME GETTING HIGH, THINKING ABOUT GETTING HIGH, OR WORKING TO GET THE MONEY TO GET HIGH?**
- 6) HAVE YOU STOPPED DOING THINGS YOU USED TO ENJOY BECAUSE OF YOUR SMOKING HABIT?**

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7) DO YOU CONTINUE TO USE EVEN AFTER YOU START TO EXPERIENCE ADVERSE HEALTH OR SOCIAL EFFECTS? FOR EXAMPLE, YOU CONTINUE TO USE AT THE SAME LEVEL EVEN AS YOU NOTICE THE DRUG IS AFFECTING YOUR ABILITY TO THINK OR CONCENTRATE, OR IS HAVING A NEGATIVE INFLUENCE ON YOUR WORK OR SCHOOL PERFORMANCE.

MARIJUANA ABUSE OR ADDICTION?

If you answered yes to three or more of the questions, you are medically classified as chemically dependent. If you answered yes to 2 or less, you likely suffer from a chemical abuse problem.

ABUSE

If you suffer from a substance abuse situation you may well need professional help to change your behaviors and to better your health, but you may not require the intensity of a residential drug or alcohol rehab; and at the very least you may want to start the treatment process on an outpatient basis to see whether you can get healthier without suffering the expense and disruption of a residential rehab.

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ADDICTION

Once addicted though, the treatment requirements increase dramatically. Once we become chemically dependent we lose some degree of control over our actions. Addiction manifests in an area of the brain beyond our conscious awareness, and although this area of the brain (the mesolimbic) does exert an enormous influence over our behaviors and actions, and although we appear to be making conscious and willful decisions, in many cases we are merely following the directions of a part of our brain over which we have no control.

With addiction we lose control over our actions and since our will to stay sober is rarely enough, we instead need to learn effective strategies to manage these pre-conscious impulses. The brain does heal, and it will revert to a normal state of functioning, but it requires time for this healing process.

There are no guarantees, and for any real chance at success, a full and honest participation in the therapies of outpatient treatment or rehab, and a long involvement in therapeutic aftercare programming is required.

IF YOU ARE ADDICTED...

If you are addicted, you may find that outpatient therapies give you the tools you need to overcome your dependency, however, to have the best opportunity for success, a period of enforced sobriety and very intensive therapy and education offers a lot. If you are addicted, getting into a residential rehab program is likely the best chance you have at a better life of sobriety, health and happiness.

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You may also want to consider seeking the advice of an addictions therapist or psychologist. A single session with an experienced professional can offer insight into the extent of the problem and leave you with concrete suggestions for individually relevant therapies.

None of us plan on addiction when we begin experimenting with Marijuana, but for 10% of us, addicted is where we end up. Once addicted, when you try to quit there is a syndrome of withdrawal, and some people find it tough to get past the pains and cravings of detox. Thankfully, there are people that can help and therapies that work well. If you can't quit on your own, have the wisdom and the strength to get the help you need.

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CHAPTER 6 MARIJUANA DETOX

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Once addicted, when you try to stop there is a real syndrome of withdrawal, and the pains and cravings of detox can make it pretty tough to quit. Learn what you can expect from a Marijuana detox, and learn how you can get past that first week of withdrawal.

Learn also that if you can't get past detox on your own, you are not at all unusual and tens of thousands of people need in or outpatient rehab every year to break their addictions to Marijuana. Learn your treatment options and learn what type of treatment makes the most sense for you.

You can get past Marijuana addiction, but you may need a little help to do it. Also check out www.choosehelp.com/detox/marijuana-detox for more information and user reports on their detox experience.

MARIJUANA DETOX

Marijuana is addictive and when you try to quit you are very likely going to go through a few days of detox. Not heroin rolling on the floor kind of detox pains, but a quite uncomfortable period, and when combined with the intense cravings to smoke Marijuana, pretty tough to get past.

Medical professionals agree that Marijuana causes a psychological addiction, and it may or may not also cause a physical addiction, but the symptoms of withdrawal will be experienced both mentally and physically. Detox and withdrawal pains will start within a day or so of your last smoke, and will increase in intensity until

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peaking after about 48 hours. Detox pains will endure for 3 or 4 days, and then gradually subside. A week at most to be past the worst of it...but it's a very long week while you're going through it!

SOME OF THE PAINS OF DETOX INCLUDE:

- Insomnia
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Night sweats
- Lethargy
- Loss of appetite
- Cravings
- Others

Although Marijuana detox is a legitimate medical syndrome of withdrawal, there does not yet exist any effective medication for the easement of experienced symptoms. Only time will truly cure you, and if you can make it through the first week, you're past the worst of it and have an excellent opportunity to leave Marijuana behind for good.

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When attempting to quit Marijuana, you need to expect some discomfort, expect some cravings and at best have a plan ready to deal with these obstacles to sobriety. Although most people don't feel inclined to get up off the couch, staying at home, inactive and thinking about Marijuana all day and night does not offer you much chance at success. You need to get out, keep busy and get sober support along the way. For great suggestions on making it through and home detox remedies, please read the text on getting through detox!

YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO IT ALONE

A lot of people can't do it on their own, and this whole societal myth of Marijuana as a non-addictive and harmless drug keeps many people who do need a little help from seeking the treatment that they need. Even still, more than 15% of all drug treatment patients in America each year deal with Marijuana addiction as their primary substance abuse problem. Literally hundreds of thousands of Americans suffer through Marijuana addiction every day, and a lot of people who would dearly love to stop just can't seem to get past that tough initial first week.

If you need some help getting past the pains and cravings of withdrawal, there are people who are waiting to help you and places you can go for safe and sober recovery. There is no shame in getting a little help when you can't do it on your own, but there is great tragedy in knowing that you need help and lacking the strength or courage to get it.

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GETTING THROUGH DETOX

During detox you can expect to feel anxious and irritable, maybe depressed and you will very likely have insomnia, headaches, no appetite and maybe even feel nauseous. These symptoms will peak within a day or so of quitting, and will continue for three or four days thereafter.

There's not much that can be done to alleviate the pains and discomforts of withdrawal; ibuprofen helps a bit with the pains and headaches, but other than that, it's pretty much just a waiting game...and it can feel like a very long waiting game.

Getting through detox can be tough, but it's worth it. It no fun to be addicted and to lack control over your use. It's not fun to have to use, even when you otherwise wouldn't feel like it, and because you have to use so much, it can be a drag to feel the symptoms of Marijuana use constantly present.

Quit and you'll feel better, you'll have more energy, you'll have more initiative, your concentration and memory will improve dramatically and by default so will your school or work performance, and you'll lower your risks towards a number of cancers and psychiatric conditions.

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THE FIRST DAYS OF DETOX

1) Get out of the house

You won't feel like getting off the couch, but sitting around moping and thinking about the cravings all day is not an effective strategy. Get out and do something enjoyable, something as far removed from associations with Marijuana as possible. Go for a hike in the forest, take a CPR course, go to the library, do something that's going to take all day, that requires your focus and attention, and that you don't normally smoke while doing. You only need to make it through about four days to start to feel the pains of detox subside, so you just need four good days of busy activity, and you're through.

2) Exercise

Get your heart pumping and keep that rate up, and you'll be surprised at how much better you'll feel. The lethargy of a Marijuana detox can make even the thought of exercise unappealing, but force yourself into it. Once you get those endorphins firing you'll feel your mood improve, the anxiety lessen, and if you keep up exercise for long enough, you may even tire your body enough to get to sleep at night.

The days of Marijuana detox are the perfect opportunity to go for a long canoe trip.... just remember to leave your bag of grass at home.

3) Go to a meeting

I know this last one sounds a bit extreme, but you've got to face the facts here...you're addicted, therefore you are an addict, and that's just the kind of people that go to NA meetings.

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I'm not saying that you'll have to go forever, although a lot of people do find them pretty helpful, but NA meetings are filled with people just like you. People that never planned on getting addicted, that are otherwise normal in every way, and just find that a bit of shared support helps them get through the day without using. You may not like NA meetings, but they may not be as bad as you envision, and if they can help you get through those first few days, what's the harm in trying?

MAKE A PLAN

Before you start, be prepared for what's coming. You may be one of the very lucky few who experiences only minor and mild symptoms of detox, but be ready for the worst and have a plan to get through it. It's not easy, but it just takes a few days of determination to be past the worst of it.

8 MORE HOME REMEDY SOLUTIONS FOR MARIJUANA DETOX

Mostly just common sense, easy and natural cures for the pains and anxieties of a Marijuana detox.

There are no magical cures for Marijuana withdrawal, and for the most part you just have to endure it, get a lot of support, keep busy and power through those first really tough three or four days.

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Withdrawal symptoms will peak within a day or so, and will stay intense for about three or four days before gradually subsiding in intensity. If you can make it out of the first week you are halfway home, and you just need a little determination and support to get past those tough first few days.

The source for this information is Marijuana anonymous, and contains the collective knowledge of a whole lot of Marijuana addict in continuing recovery, and these are some of the tips and tricks that they have found useful.

8 WAYS TO EASE THE PAINS OF MARIJUANA DETOX

- 1. HOT BATHS. THEY EASE ANXIETY, CAN RELAX MUSCLES MAY HELP WITH HEADACHES AND TEND TO RELAX YOU, MAKING IT EASIER TO FALL ASLEEP.**
- 2. PLENTY OF FLUIDS, KEEP YOUR STRENGTH UP FROM THE SWEATS.**
- 3. NATURALLY DETOXIFYING CRANBERRY JUICE HAS BEEN SAID TO HELP SOME**
- 4. A GLASS OF WARM MILK BEFORE BED. SOUNDS CLICHÉ, BUT IT REALLY WORKS TO PUT YOU TO SLEEP.**
- 5. EXERCISE, THIS CAN REALLY HELP A LOT. IT CAN TIRE YOU OUT, EASE YOUR ANXIETY AND GET SOME ENDORPHINS FIRING, LESSENING FEELINGS OF DEPRESSION.**

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6. EAT BANANAS. WHEN YOU SWEAT A LOT YOU DEplete YOUR NATURAL STORES OF POTASSIUM.

7. AVOID GREASY FOOD, WAIT UNTIL YOUR STOMACH SETTLES BEFORE THINKING ABOUT CHEESEBURGERS.

8. NO COFFEE. IT DOESN'T HELP WITH YOUR ANXIETY, YOUR SHAKINESS AND IT CERTAINLY DOESN'T HELP WITH INSOMNIA.

So, nothing groundbreaking, but all stuff that may help to take the edge off the pains of detox, and might just help you to make it through another day. Remember, as bad as it seems, you've only got to make it through a few days to be past the worst of it, and by then you can expect to start feeling a lot better.

You can do it, you need to stop, and everything you do that breaks you free from addiction is worth it.

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CHAPTER 7

MARIJUANA TREATMENT OPTIONS

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Many tens of thousands seek professional treatment help for their Marijuana addictions each year in America. There is no shame in getting help when you can't do it on your own, and it's a far more courageous and sensible thing to do than ignoring the reality of your addiction, and continuing to lower your quality of life and health through ever more heavy Marijuana usage.

But when you do make the decision to get help...where do you go, and what do you need?

Firstly, here is a basic overview of some of the available treatment options. Later, we'll explore which best fits your needs.

12 STEPS GROUP MEETINGS

Such as NA or MA (Marijuana Anonymous)

These free peer support meetings can be a great venue to explore your compulsion to use and to gain insight and strength towards recovery. Learning what you need to know from other people also dealing with an addiction to Marijuana or other drugs of abuse.

Like AA, Marijuana and narcotics anonymous use the 12 steps to sobriety as a philosophical framework to recovery, and as with AA, you must subscribe to certain core beliefs for the steps to work. You can't fake it, and you either believe in the process and approach it with commitment or dedication, or you don't; and if you don't it's not likely going to work for you.

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HERE ARE THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF 12 STEPS RECOVERY:

- 1) You are a drug addict, and whatever you may do, you will be an addict for the rest of your life. You may never relapse, but you will never be able to use in moderation, and you can only hope for continued recovery. There is no cure.
- 2) You need to believe in a higher power, really believe. You can't fake it, and if you can't pray to a higher power, can't feel the guidance and strength of a higher power, then you cannot hope to get much benefit from 12 steps based programs of recovery. The 12 steps are not Christian or denominational and any higher power larger than yourself can work, but you have to truly believe.
- 3) You've got to make things right for your past misdeeds. Lingering guilt and shame drags you back to temptations and eventually to relapse, and if you're not willing to make a full and honest amends for your past wrongs, you cannot hope to benefit from the 12 steps.
- 4) You have to give back. Once you have achieved a certain length and stability of sobriety, you have to help others to also achieve their goals of sobriety.

NA and MA seem to work very well for some, and not at all for others. They are a valid option though, they have helped millions overcome compulsions to use, and they're free and they're everywhere. Don't let any preconceptions deter you from giving the meetings a try. You may be surprised at what you find and you may find that the 12 steps style of support and relapse prevention is just what you need.

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INDIVIDUAL THERAPY

One-on-one sessions with an experienced addictions therapist or psychologist can also help a lot as you grapple with getting and staying off Marijuana. These can be expensive, but getting some individual attention and help with your particular issues does have real value, and the insights gained from a few sessions can offer you a very solid foundation for your attempt at getting clean.

Working with a therapist, you should expect to explore any personal issues that lead you to seek such intoxication, and also explore why it is that you turn to Marijuana as a coping mechanism. You may also want to explore any unresolved personal issues that linger and contribute to your drug seeking behaviors.

A trained therapist can also help you to devise a tailored relapse prevention plan, help you to identify those things in your life that led you to crave Marijuana and help you to understand just what you can do to beat these temptations.

GROUP SUPPORT THERAPY

A generally more affordable alternative to individual therapy is the participation in a peer support group. Ideally, you will join a group of people with similar world views and facing similar life challenges, and explore together what works and what doesn't on the road to long term recovery and sobriety.

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Group therapy generally occurs with 6-10 others, and there is most commonly a trained group leader who guides the sessions and offers insights where appropriate. Group sessions offer a number of benefits to addicts in recovery. Firstly, no one in this world is quicker to spot dishonesty or denial faster than another addict in recovery. You may get away with a lot of your manipulations (even the one's you're not aware of) in a lot of places, but in group they're going to call you on it, and you can't deny their expertise either!

You can also learn effective and concrete strategies for staying clean. Exploring together what seems to help gives you some real world workable options to try when you feel you can't go on anymore. Additionally, recovering together with a group of people you can get to know pretty intimately can offer a lot of encouragement and inspiration. Nothing keeps you going more than watching someone that you know struggles as you do, break free from addiction and really reap the benefits of sobriety.

DRUG REHAB

A lot of people just can't do it on their own, and either can't do it on an outpatient basis, or are just so tired of their problem that they want to start with the most intensive and effective therapeutic option to recovery.

Getting into a drug rehab program offers a lot, and although it is disruptive and it is expensive, sometimes you just need to get out of the environment of abuse, get

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into a safe and sober environment and start to learn what you'll need to know to stay sober over the long term.

In drug rehab you will get a comprehensive blend of individual and group therapy, MA style 12 steps meetings and drug and relapse prevention education. You also get the time away from abuse to gain self-awareness over those things in your life that lead you to need to use. Without outside distractions you have the opportunity to focus all of your attentions on getting better, without all of the everyday concerns that normally distract your attention.

Drug rehab is a big commitment, but it also offers the best chance at recovery and a long future without Marijuana.

GET SOME HELP

There is no shame whatsoever in getting help when you can't do it on your own. Marijuana is a very addictive drug, and the cravings and temptations to use can overwhelm even the best of intentions. Through therapies and support, you can learn what you need to know to get off and stay off Marijuana for good.

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SO, DO YOU NEED INPATIENT OR OUTPATIENT THERAPY?

Once you face up to the fact that you have a real problem, that you can't seem to stop using on your own, and that for any chance at getting better you're going to need some professional help, you've taken a great step forwards to recovery.

However, even once we make that monumental decision to get help, we are left facing some pretty tough decisions about what we need and where to get it.

Inpatient rehab can be very costly, and requires that you leave your job and family for a month or more; is it really necessary, wouldn't outpatient therapy work just as well?

THE ADVANTAGES OF OUTPATIENT THERAPY

You'll save a fortune, you can support your family, and you'll be home every night to tuck the kids in; outpatient therapy for addiction offers a lot. Because it is far less disruptive, most addictions professionals recommend that anyone who has never before received professional therapy for the treatment of addiction start with outpatient therapy.

It just makes sense to start with the easiest solution and see if it will work before progressing upwards to more expensive and intrusive therapies on an inpatient

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basis. You can get outpatient therapy from a psychologist or counselor, by joining a peer support recovery group, or even through the 12 steps meetings of organizations like NA or MA.

If it works, it's the best possible solution.

THE PROBLEMS WITH OUTPATIENT THERAPY

While it does make good common sense to begin your healing journey on an outpatient basis in the hopes that you'll not need anything more intensive, a lot of people find that they cannot resist urges to use without getting away from the home environment for a while.

When you participate in therapies on an outpatient basis, you remain immersed in an environment of temptation, exposed to relapse provoking triggers to use, and exposed before you've gained enough strength and awareness to get past them. You're also constrained by your normal family and professional responsibilities in how much focus you can give to your therapeutic recovery. No one can concentrate exclusively on getting better while they remain working and pulled in the thousand directions of normal everyday life. Without extreme focus, it's pretty tough to consolidate these therapies and lessons that will keep you sober.

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THE BENEFITS OF INPATIENT THERAPY

Inpatient therapy costs a lot, it takes you away from friends and family and it disrupts your life; but for a lot of us, nothing less than a complete exit from our environment of use offers much chance at recovery.

During inpatient rehab we benefit from a month or more of enforced sobriety, a month where we can start to heal without continual exposure and temptation. We also have the time and focus needed to really get to know why we use, and to learn how we can do better. Inpatient therapy is a big commitment, but when drugs or alcohol have made life unmanageable, sometimes it's the only thing that offers much hope.

TRY OUTPATIENT FIRST

If you've never before received professional therapy for your addiction or alcoholism, you may want to consider attempting therapy and abstinence on an outpatient basis. It makes sense to start with easier and less costly outpatient therapy.

But if this doesn't work, or if you've tried outpatient in the past and failed, or if you're just so tired of using that you want to make a clean break; try inpatient rehab. It costs a lot and it requires a big commitment, but it works better than anything else and if it can get you sober, it's surely worth it at any price.

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IF OUTPATIENT THERAPY DOESN'T WORK

Fundamentally, the problem seems ridiculous; and when all that's required for better health and a better life is just to stop doing something harmful, it can be tough for those who have never endured an addiction to understand exactly why this is so difficult.

A lot of us abusing don't even completely understand our actions. We just know that we can't seem to stop, and whenever we even try we fail so badly that it seems completely hopeless.

Addiction creates neurological changes in the brain. Your brain just works slightly differently after you become chemically dependant; and once you are addicted, choice goes out the window, and willpower becomes meaningless. Addiction equates to a loss of control over your actions and your use, and very few people can better an addiction with determination alone. You can't stop doing what you have no control over.

Addictions professionals and scientists have been working diligently on the mysteries of addiction for decades, and although complete clarity eludes us, we do now have a much better understanding of what's really going on in the brain with addiction; and we also know some effective strategies to manipulate behaviors and give people a great opportunity to get past devastating chemical dependencies.

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You want to do it on your own; you feel badly to need such disruptive and expensive treatment, and you can't even explain why you couldn't just stop. Here are 5 reasons why you need professional help.

5 REASONS TO GET HELP

1) ENFORCED SOBRIETY

Never mind any of the therapies offered, simply staying sequestered away from access to Marijuana for a month or more has incredible value. The clarity of sobriety comes only with time, and none of us are truly ready to participate honestly in the therapies of relapse avoidance until we've got a couple of good weeks of sobriety completed. Enforced sobriety also gives our minds a chance to begin the healing process, and we start to relearn how we can enjoy ourselves without a need for intoxication.

Rehab offers a lot, but simply staying sober for a month or more can be life changing in itself.

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2) LEARN WHY YOU ACT AS YOU DO

For a lot of us, there exists something within our beings that makes us seek out intoxication. It may be a lack of confidence, family trauma or anxiety that drove us to abuse initially; but whatever it is that makes us need to get high, unless we can start to unearth our issues, we are destined to repeat our failures.

You may not solve all of your problems in a month or more of rehab, but through working with a therapist you will at minimum gain a greater self-awareness, and begin the self-healing that's always required for long-term success and sobriety.

3) LEARN HOW YOU CAN INCREASE YOUR CHANCES BY MINIMIZING YOUR TEMPTATIONS

Addiction occurs deep within the brain in an area beyond our conscious awareness or control (the mesolimbic). While addicted, we act in ways that appear willful and decided, but are in fact just the end result of powerful impulses from deep inside us.

Nothing but time allows the brain to heal and for the damage done by addiction to fade, but we can learn concrete and effective strategies to minimize the influence of the mesolimbic, and hopefully get past the period of its relapse provoking pulls.

Through therapies and cognitive behavioral teachings we learn how we can control not only our actions, but even our thoughts to reduce the temptations that doom so

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many of us to failure. We also learn concrete and effective strategies that can get you out of situations of temptation, and keep you sober for another day.

Time will heal you, but you need to give yourself time. Therapies and education show you how to get past the first few months of cravings and temptation.

4) **DEVELOP A UNIQUE AND WORKABLE RELAPSE PREVENTION PLAN**

You cannot leave anything up to chance during the first few months of sobriety, and to ensure you stay on a path of sobriety, in rehab you will develop a relapse prevention plan. Most people that relapse do so only after they start to ignore their self-produced document of sobriety. Within this living and changing document are the strategies, inspirations and even phone numbers that you'll need when you feel you can no longer resist.

You can make one on your own, but developing a plan in consultation with addictions professionals ensures that you've really got something that's going to work, and that accurately reflects the unique threats to your sobriety.

5) **RECOVER AND GET INSPIRED BY OTHERS JUST LIKE YOU**

When you try it on your own, it feels impossible; but when you recover in a group with other people that you know suffer the same trials that you do, watching them

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get better can be a real source of inspiration. Most people working in rehabs are themselves recovering addicts. They know what you're going through, they know what you need to do to get better, and they understand just how tough it can be. Learn what works from others in recovery, and learn how those people who've done it got clean, and stay clean everyday.

You can't say it's impossible when you spend time everyday with a group of people overcoming their demons, and with a group that already have.

Get the Help You Need!

Some people can make a willful decision to stop using and never get high again. The vast majority of us are not so fortunate, and need professional help to have any chance of getting sober. It's not easy, and if you're like most addicts considering help, you've tried and failed on countless occasions to quit.

There's no shame in admitting you need help. It takes great courage to reach out in your time of need, but there is tragedy in knowing that you need help and lacking the motivation or determination to get it.

You can get better, you can start tomorrow, and you'll never regret a single thing you do that gets you there.

Check out www.choosehelp.com for more information about quitting Marijuana!

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