

# WHY YOUTH USE CANNABIS & OTHER ALTERNATIVES



YMCA  
Youth Cannabis  
Awareness  
Program

Programme de  
sensibilisation des  
jeunes au cannabis  
du YMCA

## FOUR REASONS WHY YOUTH USE CANNABIS

### 1. CURIOSITY

52% of youth report using cannabis out of curiosity.<sup>1</sup> They may be at a point where they are wanting to experiment, and may try cannabis to discover what it feels like.

### 2. ENJOYMENT

42% of youth report using cannabis to have fun.<sup>1</sup> Pleasure is a feeling that young people describe when choosing to use cannabis while with friends. They describe using cannabis to relax, or to experience feelings of excitement.

### 3. COPING

Cannabis is often used as a coping mechanism for people dealing with a variety of issues, including stress, pain, trauma, life difficulties, mental health concerns and other medical conditions. As there is very limited research supporting the use of medical cannabis in children or teens, determining whether using cannabis is an appropriate method to treat individual symptoms is best made through a discussion with a health care practitioner. 24% of youth report using cannabis to cope with stressful life experiences.<sup>1</sup>

### 4. PEER PRESSURE / PEER SELECTION

Occurs when an individual is pressured by peers to perform a specific behavior, or when an individual believes that they must behave in a certain way to fit in with their peers.

Approximately 5% of youth report using cannabis for this reason, and 30% of students report using cannabis because their friends are using it.<sup>1</sup> Research has found that cannabis use has become a “normalized” behavior among many youth.<sup>4</sup>

## WHAT ARE SOME ALTERNATIVES?

### COPING STRATEGIES

The word 'coping' is used to describe how individuals deal with problems and difficulties in life. Individuals handle stress through using coping strategies which can be classified as adaptive or maladaptive strategies.<sup>3</sup>

#### EXAMPLES OF ADAPTIVE COPING STRATEGIES:

- Seeking support
- Exercising
- Meditation
- Using problem-solving skills

#### EXAMPLES OF MALADAPTIVE COPING STRATEGIES:

- Using alcohol or drugs
- Being in denial
- Avoidance
- Giving up

### OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

Having good nutrition, good sleep hygiene, and regular physical activity can positively impact a person's mood, behaviour, and physical and mental health.<sup>5,6,7</sup>



BEING ABLE TO ASK FOR HELP WHEN NEEDED IS A STRENGTH!

KIDS HELP PHONE 24/7  
1-800-668-6868

## References

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