

Counselling Services

MARIJUANA USE AND TERTIARY STUDY

After alcohol, marijuana is the second most frequently used drug by university students. As with alcohol, occasional use of marijuana appears to have few negative effects on many people. However, for some people whose friendships and lifestyles revolve around more regular use, or for those with particular vulnerability, changes in cognitive function such as memory problems and concentration loss are particularly relevant for students. There are also clear links between marijuana use and ongoing depression, and psychotic episodes in some instances. Two other concerns are becoming increasingly common – anxiety and panic, and markedly decreased motivation.

Anxiety and Panic

Increasing research indicates that even occasional marijuana users, and those who increase their usage amounts are prone to anxiety disorders and panic attacks. If you can relate to this experience, you need to stop using marijuana immediately; to prevent these feelings persisting long after the occasion of use has passed.

It is likely that any reuse of marijuana after experiencing these symptoms will cause them to reoccur with greater intensity. Anxiety and panic symptoms are disruptive to both your personal life and your life as a student, so early action on your marijuana use will be well worth the effort. Sources of help are available on or off campus if you are concerned about your marijuana use or your ability to stop (see below).

Decreased Motivation

A second major problem with marijuana use is called “amotivational syndrome”. The severity of this decrease in motivation may depend on your genetic make-up, the frequency with which you use the drug, and the amount of THC in the marijuana. Irregular sleep habits can also contribute.

A person with decreased motivation will begin to withdraw from activities which need to be done but are not particularly enjoyed. High on the list are early lectures, group assignment meetings, housework and grocery shopping etc. Activities which are enjoyed tend to continue, but with less focus and drive. Over time, these changed patterns of communicating and living can result in poorer results, loss of personal goals, relationships and self-care.

Stopping marijuana use is sometimes difficult because of the rituals and friendships involved in it.

It is important to share your concerns with your friends and confront the behaviours which support your drug use. Students are often surprised by their friends’ supportiveness about this decision. You may find you need both practical and emotional support at this time.

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MARIJUANA USE AND TERTIARY STUDY (cont.)

Sources of help

- Counselling or health service on your campus
- 24-hour Alcohol and Drug Information Service – Ph: 3236 2414
- Hot House Youth Community team, Aspley – Ph: 32630871
- Australian Drug Information Network – www.adin.com.au/
- Centre for Education and Information on Drugs and Alcohol – www.ceida.net.au/
- Australian Drug Foundation – www.adf.org.au/

Consider talking with the counselling or health service on your campus, or:

Phone the 24-hour Alcohol and Drug Information Service for information about services in your local area

- (Phone 3236 2414 or 1800 177 833 – freecall outside Brisbane)
- The Hot House Youth Community team is an excellent resource for northside residents.
- Phone Hot House - 3263 0871.

QUT Counselling Services offers professional assistance with this and other issues

Kelvin Grove 3138 3488

Gardens Point 3138 2383

Caboolture 5316 7400

Disclaimer: References to other sources are provided as an information service only and should not necessarily be construed as an endorsement of them or the information contained within them. This information is provided on the basis that all persons accessing it undertake responsibility for assessing the relevance and accuracy of its content (eg by speaking with Counselling Services professionals).
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