



Sigma Nu Fraternity

EXCELLING WITH HONOR

Keep Your Focus Discussion Guide

The prevalence of cannabinoid use among college students today has increased nationwide. This educational poster addresses these substances' negative effects and consequences on a student's academic performance and cognitive abilities.

Discussion question: What does cannabinoid mean?

Solicit a few participant responses.

Cannabinoid is the scientific term for any naturally occurring chemical substance, no matter its form, which has psychoactive properties found in or made from Cannabis plants. Cannabinoids have three primary uses: recreational, medicinal, and synthetic. Marijuana is the most common cannabinoid. Cannabis has depressant, stimulant, and hallucinogenic effects based on its varying potency levels, strands, and forms of consumption.

Facts and Statistics

Research has shown that marijuana and cannabis use on college campuses is trending upward, reaching higher levels than previous decades. According to the University of Michigan's 2020 national drug survey:

- 44% of students reported using some form of cannabis within the past year.
- 25% of students indicated using cannabis in the past month.
- 7.9% of students shared that they used marijuana or cannabis daily.

It is important to also note that the survey found more than 50% of college students reported that they did not use marijuana or cannabis-related products in the past year, signifying that it is more common for college students to not use these substances.

Discussion Question: What is your reaction to these statistics?

Solicit a few participant responses.

Chapter Discussion

Discussion Question: Why are marijuana and cannabis prevalent on college campuses?

Solicit a few participant responses.

Some college students report using these substances as a coping mechanism to relieve their anxiety, depression, and stress. Others state that they use cannabis and marijuana to assist with their sleep patterns, alter their mood, relax, or avoid boredom. However, these could be early warning signs of addiction to the substance – also known as cannabis use disorder.

The legalization of cannabis and marijuana in parts of the United States has also made the drugs more accessible in recent years as state laws have evolved. As of early 2022, 18 states and the District of Columbia have legalized the recreational use of marijuana for adults over the age of 21. Additionally, 38 states and the District of Columbia have legalized marijuana use for medical purposes. Although legal access to cannabis and marijuana has increased,

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colleges and universities are held to federal law. As a result, cannabinoids are still considered illegal substances and prohibited on campuses regardless of state laws.

Discussion Question: How can cannabis and marijuana negatively impact your GPA?

Solicit a few participant responses.

Studies have demonstrated that college students who frequently use cannabis or marijuana are more likely to have issues with their attention span, concentration levels, and short-term and long-term memory. These findings also indicate other academic achievement risks for marijuana or cannabis users in comparison to those who did not use substances, such as:

- Lower grades
- Lack of motivation
- Greater likelihood of skipping class and dropping out before graduation
- Increased chances of experiencing delays in graduation
- Impaired cognitive thinking and performance up to 24 hours after abstaining from cannabis or marijuana use
- Reduced ability to register, retain and process information
- Decreased problem-solving abilities

The quantity, type, and potency of the drug used is a major factor in the types of adverse outcomes a student may experience. With decreased use of marijuana and cannabis, students can improve their academic performance and reduce negative scholastic effects.

Discussion Question: What are other physical and psychological effects of cannabis and marijuana use?

Solicit a few participant responses.

Prolonged use of these substances or high potency usage of drugs is associated with a higher risk of experiencing:

- Mental health challenges (hallucinations, paranoia, depression, anxiety, sleep disorders, etc.)
- Long-term breathing issues
- Chronic headaches
- Increased heart rate
- Motor and judgment coordination deficits

Discussion Question: How can we promote safe, legal, and healthy behavioral choices within our chapter and community?

Possible responses could include:

- Partner with health and wellness centers, campus counseling centers, or alcohol and drug education centers
- Facilitate evidence-based drug awareness and prevention programming
- Host health and safety speakers or guest lectures
- Coordinate academic workshops and tutoring services
- Organize self-care and stress management initiatives (exercise, meditation, etc.)

Reflection Questions

Solicit a few participant responses to the following reflection questions, as time permits.

- What is one potential risk of marijuana or cannabis use you learned about from our discussion?
- What is one thing you do to succeed academically that others may also benefit from trying?

While the social perception and state laws continue to evolve on the use of marijuana and cannabis, we must understand and recognize the potential consequences the use of these drugs can have on our physical and mental health, much like the same considerations we should have when considering to use tobacco, alcohol, or prescription medication. Use this knowledge to make and encourage healthy decisions for you and your fellow chapter members.

Resources

- [Cannabinoids](#) from the Alcohol and Drug Foundation
- [Daily marijuana use among US college students reaches new 40-year high](#) from the University of Michigan
- [Heavy Marijuana Use Affects Learning and Social Skills](#) from VeryWell Mind
- [How does smoking marijuana affect academic performance? Two researchers explain how it can alter more than just moods](#) from the Conversation

KEEP YOUR
FOCUS

CANNABIS AND MARIJUANA CAN IMPACT
YOUR BRAIN AND GPA IN NEGATIVE WAYS.

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