

THE TRUTH ABOUT CANNABIS (MARIJUANA)

AND ITS WICKED EFFECTS ON TEENS



A REAL LIFE GUIDE – FOR TEENS 13 YEARS AND OLDER

MESSAGE TO JUST FOR YOU

A lot of people try to make **CANNABIS/ MARIJUANA** sound harmless, like it's just a **chill vibe** or a **“natural” stress reliever**. But that's cap. Today's cannabis is nothing like what your parents or older cousins tried. It's **stronger, hits way harder**, and **messes with your brain** in ways most people don't even understand.

This booklet cuts through the noise. No hype. No sugar-coating. Just **The Real Truth** about what CANNABIS is doing to teens right now. What is it doing to **your memory, your moods, your motivation, your goals**, and **your vibe**? Because the mind you're building today is the same mind you'll use for the rest of your life... and THC doesn't play fair with developing brains.

If you think “it's just CANNABIS,” **flip the page**.

If you think you're in control, **keep reading**.

If you want the **facts** that nobody else is telling you, **this is where it starts**.

Let's talk about the side of cannabis that **social media, friends, and dealers** won't show you...because your **future** deserves better than half-truths.



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

You're stepping into a world where drugs are packaged like a trend, a dare, or just something to try. Cannabis is one of the biggest examples. What used to be talked about as a chill plant has evolved into something much stronger, riskier, and more unpredictable.

This booklet was made for you, the curious, the bold, the future leaders, the main characters of the next generation. It contains real facts, real consequences, and real stories that prove one thing.

You don't have to try something to be impacted by its harm. Sometimes, all it takes is one bad moment, one wild influence, one wrong call, and everything can change forever.

We share this not just to inform you, but to excite your mind, sharpen your instincts, and prevent your story from ever becoming a sad update. Knowing the truth helps you spot danger early, move smarter, choose friends who protect your peace, and say nah to anything that threatens your future.

And remember, you're not alone in this. There's an entire team in Guyana that monitors risks, tracks data, and works to keep young people safe. Being drug-free isn't dull. It's boss energy.

It means your goals stay clear, your brain stays protected, and your legacy remains intact.

This booklet is more than a read. It's a level-up. Take the info, use it, share it, and walk through life undefeated.



Stay informed. Stay safe. Stay unstoppable.

James Singh

Director,

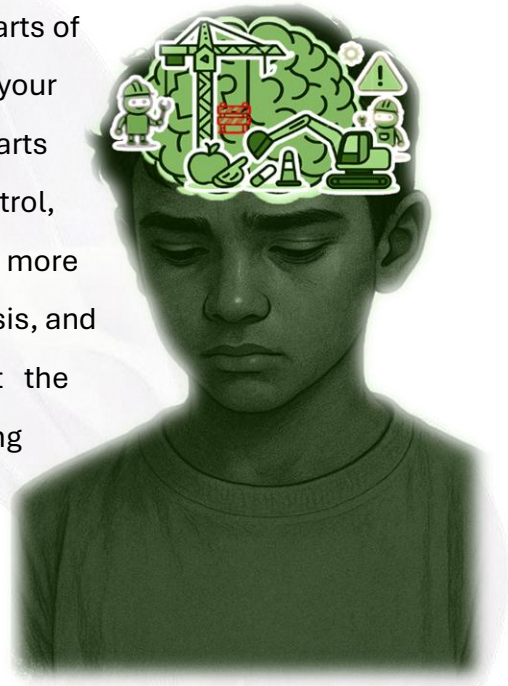
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WHAT EXACTLY IS CANNABIS?

Cannabis isn't just a plant. It's a psychoactive drug that has evolved into something way more potent than older generations ever used. Today's cannabis is supercharged. It is engineered with far higher THC levels, especially in vapes, edibles, oils, and concentrates, that can reach **60 to 90% THC**, compared to the **2 to 5% THC** found in the 1970s, according to reports made by the National Institute on Drug Abuse in 2023.

When teens use cannabis, THC interferes with the parts of the brain still developing, yes, actually the parts of your brain that are still under construction, the parts responsible for your memory, emotional control, motivation, and decision-making, making you more vulnerable to addiction, anxiety, depression, psychosis, and long-term learning problems. Studies show that the younger you start, the higher your risk of getting hooked, because the teen brain absorbs THC faster and adapts to it way easier, making you dependent on it. Just imagine you wouldn't feel good doing anything without using it.



And even if social media tries to convince you that cannabis is “natural,” “chill,” or “non-addictive,” the science says otherwise. Modern high-potency cannabis can change how your brain grows, functions, and handles stress, turning what seems like a casual habit into something that can affect school performance, mental health, and future goals. This isn't anyone trying to scare you. It's the truth health experts around the world have been sounding the alarm on for years.

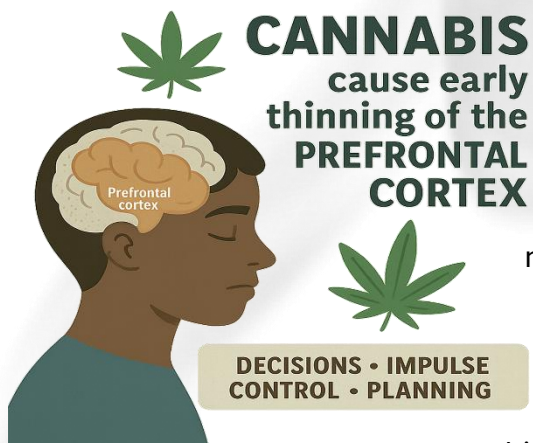
If you want to stay in control of your future, understanding the real impact of cannabis is the first step.

HOW CANNABIS AFFECTS YOUR BRAIN

Our brain is still under construction until around age 25, especially the frontal areas that handle planning, learning, memory, focus and emotional control, literally, every decision you make. Using cannabis during this time means the key chemical, which is called Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC).

Let's try that again, slowly...

TET – RA – HYDRO -CAN – NA – BIN – OL



This chemical locks onto the same receptors your brain uses to grow and alter how those systems grow and connect. Studies show that teens who use cannabis often struggle with memory and learning, and brain-imaging research even found that

cannabis use can cause early thinning of the prefrontal cortex, which is the part of your brain that handles decisions, impulse control, planning, and focus. That's why scientists keep saying cannabis hits teen brains way harder than adult brains. When THC gets in the mix, it can lower your motivation, make it harder to concentrate, mess with your mood, and raise your risk for anxiety or even psychosis. Your brain is literally wiring itself for your future right now, and THC can rewrite



that wiring in ways that don't just fade overnight. Those changes can stick around long after the high is gone.

Here's what the research shows	
Memory and Learning	THC blocks the signals your brain uses to store new information. That's why studying feels harder, instructions don't stick, and you forget things you usually wouldn't.
Focus and Reaction Time	It slows down the parts of your brain that help you stay alert. You react slower, zone out faster, and struggle to keep up when things get complicated.
Motivation	THC hits the reward system. Yes, the area that pushes you to get things done. Over time, it can make your drive drop, even for things you actually care about.
Emotional Control	It disrupts the prefrontal cortex, the part of your brain that helps you manage stress and make decisions. That can lead to anxiety, mood swings, or feeling low for no apparent reason.
Higher Addiction Risk	Because the teen brain absorbs THC more easily, it adapts faster. Which means dependence and cravings can happen way sooner than you think.

This isn't just "old people exaggerating." It's based on neuroscience.

Short-Term Effects

Cannabis doesn't always hit the way people expect. In the short term, THC can flip your mood fast, turning a chill moment into panic, anxiety, or full-blown paranoia where everything suddenly feels suspicious or scary. It also slows your reaction time, which is why people zone out, miss signals, and make risky decisions they usually wouldn't. Confusion and poor judgment kick in, too, making it harder to think clearly, follow conversations, or make quick decisions.

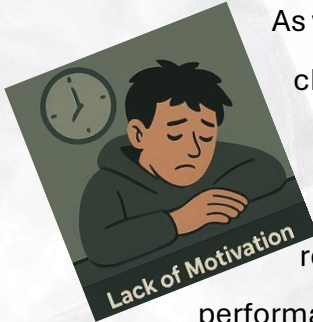
High-potency, especially in edibles, vapes, and concentrates, can push things even further. Because edibles take longer to kick in, teens often take more without realizing it, leading to intense highs, extreme anxiety, and even temporary hallucinations or seeing/hearing things that aren't real. These effects can last hours, and when they hit, they hit hard.



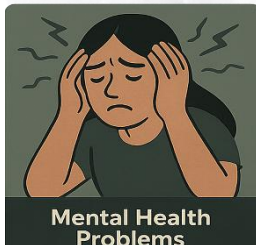
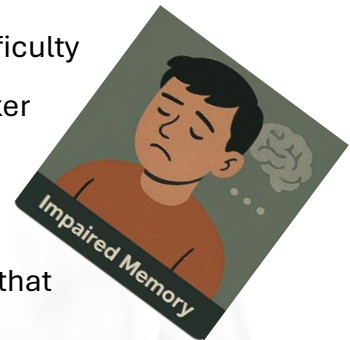
Cannabis isn't always predictable. One bad experience can throw your whole night off, embarrass you in front of friends, or put you in risky situations you never planned for.



Long-Term Damage



As was mentioned earlier, using cannabis regularly as a teen can seriously change how your brain develops. THC messes with the parts of your brain that control memory, learning, and problem-solving, and, over time, can lead to difficulty remembering things, slower thinking, and weaker performance at school or work. Research shows that heavy teen use is linked to lower IQ scores later in life because the brain is still wiring itself, and THC keeps interrupting that process.



Long-term use also increases your risk of addiction. Teens get hooked faster than adults because their brains absorb THC more easily and adapt to it more quickly. What starts as just on weekends can turn into feeling like you need it to relax, sleep, or feel normal.

Your motivation takes a hit, too. Cannabis affects your brain's reward system. The part that makes you want to try, succeed, and push yourself. Over time, that system slows down, leading to less drive, less energy, and less interest in things you used to care about.

The mental-health risks are real. Studies link teen cannabis use to higher rates of anxiety, depression, and even psychosis, and yes, especially with today's high-potency strains. For some teens, cannabis doesn't just change their mood, it drastically changes their mind.



cannabis doesn't just affect you in the moment. It can reshape your future, affecting your memory, motivation, mental health, and how your brain grows.

THE DANGER OF EDIBLES AND VAPES

Edibles and vapes might look safe because they come as candies, gummies, cookies, or sleek vape pens, but they're actually some of the most dangerous ways for teens to use



cannabis. Edibles hit much harder than smoking because once THC goes through your stomach and liver, your body transforms it into 11-hydroxy-THC, a form that's even stronger and lasts longer.

The high takes 30 to 90 minutes to kick in, so teens often take more time thinking "it's not working," then get slammed all at once. That's when panic attacks, vomiting, blackout episodes, severe paranoia, or hallucinations can hit. And because edibles are unregulated, especially in illegal markets, they can be contaminated, mislabeled, or way stronger than advertised.

Vapes carry a different kind of danger. THC vape oils can contain extremely high potency, sometimes 60–90% THC. That's several times stronger than traditional cannabis flower. A single vape hit can blast your brain with more THC than a whole joint. This increases the risk of addiction, anxiety, depression, memory problems, and panic episodes because the dose hits fast and hits deep. Vape liquids can also contain toxic chemicals like vitamin E acetate, heavy metals, pesticides, and solvents. These chemicals have been linked to serious lung injuries, chest pain, difficulty breathing, and hospitalisations in teens.



You never really know what's inside an edible or vape cartridge. You can't see contamination, you can't taste potency, and you can't tell if a product was cheaply made or dangerously mixed. One wrong edible, or one fake vape, is all it takes for things to go sideways.



Edibles and vapes might seem fun and low-key, but they're unpredictable, easy to overdose on, and way more potent than your brain is built to handle.

Social Consequences



Cannabis not only affects your brain, but it can also gradually ruin the things that matter most in your real life. When your memory, focus, and motivation start to decline, school is usually the first place it shows. Missed assignments, lower grades, falling behind in class, losing interest in things you used to enjoy, and it all adds up, and teachers definitely notice. Once your reputation starts to slip, it's tough to turn it around.

At home, cannabis use can strain the people closest to you. Mood swings, secrecy, lying about where you've been, or constantly needing money can break trust with parents, siblings, and friends. Family drama gets heavier fast when people see you changing and don't know why.



TROUBLE AT HOME



PROBLEMS AT SCHOOL

Your reputation also takes a hit. Whether it's getting caught with a vape at school, posting while high, smelling like cannabis, or hanging with the wrong crowd, rumours spread fast. One bad moment can follow you long after the high wears off. Teens have lost leadership roles, sports positions, friend groups, and even scholarships over choices they thought were no big deal.

Long-term consequences are real, too. Colleges, bosses, and opportunities look at patterns: grades, behaviour, discipline records, and online presence. If cannabis starts affecting how you show up, people notice, and doors start closing. What feels like just for fun right now can mess with your future in ways you won't see until it's too late.



DAMAGED REPUTATION

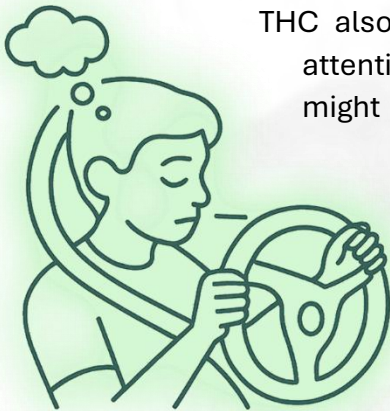


LIMITED FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

The truth? Cannabis doesn't only affect your mind. It affects your world, your goals, your circle, your reputation, and the opportunities waiting for you. One habit can change the way people see you, and the way you see yourself.

DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE

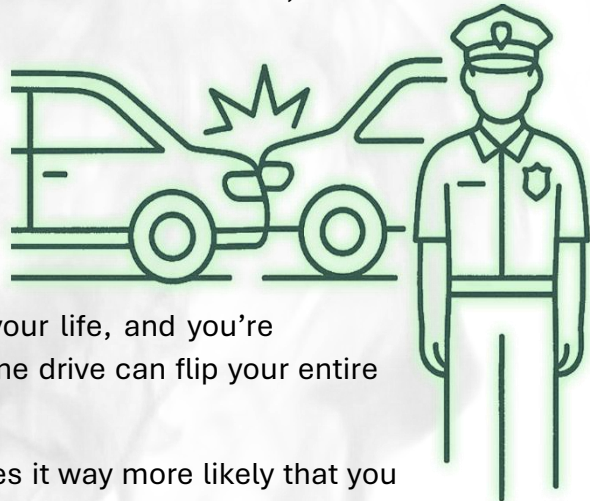
Driving high isn't "safer than driving drunk." It's still deadly, especially for teens. Cannabis slows your reaction time, messes with your coordination, and makes it way harder to judge distance, speed, and danger. That split-second delay, the moment your brain hesitates, and that is all it takes to miss a turn, drift into another lane, or fail to stop in time.



THC also messes with your focus. Your mind wanders, your attention jumps around, and simple decisions feel harder. You might think you're driving fine because you feel calm, but inside, your brain is running in slow motion. Studies show that drivers high on cannabis are more likely to swerve, drive too fast or too slow, miss traffic signals, and make risky moves they wouldn't make sober.

And here's the part most teens never think about:

If you get into an accident while high, even if it is a minor crash, the consequences don't end at the scene. Police can test for THC. You could face fines, a suspended license, criminal charges, or even be held responsible for someone's injury or death. That sticks with you for life, school, jobs, scholarships, everything.



When you're high, you're not just risking your life, and you're risking everyone else's on the road, too. One drive can flip your entire life upside down.

Nobody plans to crash. But cannabis makes it way more likely that you will.

WHEN CANNABIS STOPS BEING FUN

No one ever thinks they'll get hooked. Cannabis starts off feeling harmless, with a laugh with friends, something to chill you out, something you think you can control. But dependence doesn't show up with alarms or warnings. It creeps in quietly. One day it's "only on weekends." Then it's after school. Then it's every night because you can't relax without it. And before you even notice, it's part of your routine, something you need to feel normal.

That's how it happens for many teens. Not because they're weak. Not because they planned it. But because the teenage brain is wired for habit, reward, and fast learning, THC takes advantage of that wiring. The more you use it, the more your brain expects it. The more it expects it, the harder it becomes to say no.

When you start using cannabis, little changes show up first. You're tired all the time. You lose interest in things you used to love. You begin hiding stuff from people. You feel irritated when you can't get high. Sleep feels weird. School feels harder. And you swear everything's fine, even when it's clearly not.

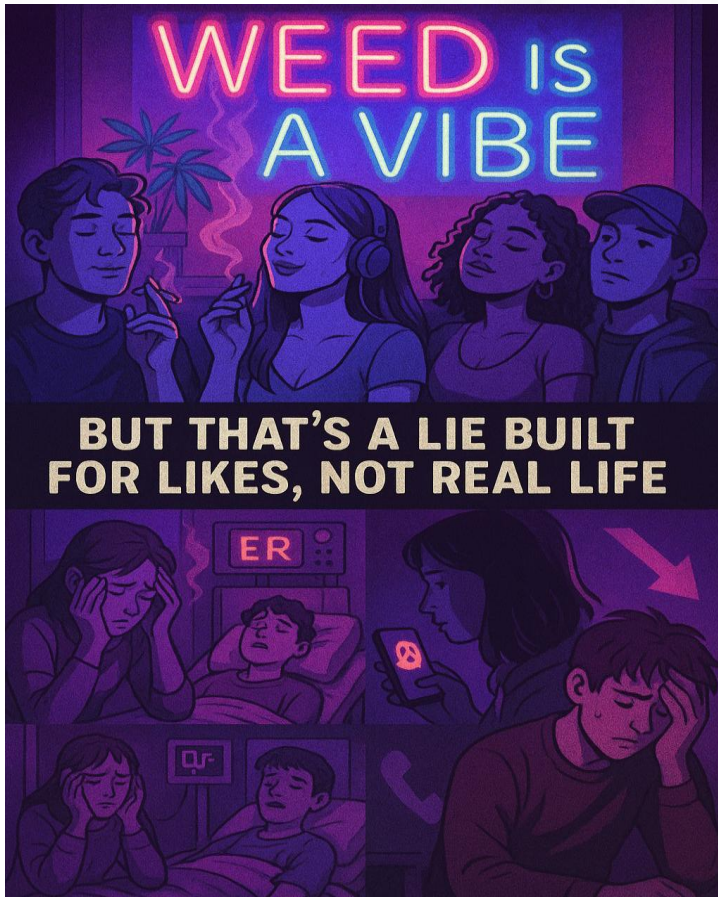
That's the trap. Dependence doesn't look dramatic. It looks quiet. Normal. "I'm just stressed." "It's not a big deal." But over time, the fun fades, and the feeling of being in control disappears. Cannabis becomes less something you want and more something you feel you can't go without.

And once you hit that point, it's not fun anymore. It's a cycle. A cycle that can take over your choices, your mood, your goals, and your future. You're supposed to be in control of your life, not a substance. And cannabis doesn't ask permission before it takes that control.



The Social Media Lie

Social media makes cannabis look like a vibe, neon lights, chill music, perfect outfits, and everyone looking relaxed and unbothered. But that's a lie built for likes, not real life. What you don't see are the panic attacks happening off-camera, the teens who end up in



the ER after a bad edible, the “friends” who ghost you when things get messy, or the people who quietly lose their future because cannabis took over their motivation.

Influencers and TikTok edits show the fun parts because that's what gets views, and nobody posts the nights they couldn't breathe, the paranoia that made them feel like they were losing their mind, or the moment a parent found their stash and everything blew up. They don't show getting kicked off

a team, failing a class, or missing out on opportunities because they were too high to care.

Social media glamorises cannabis like it's a harmless lifestyle, but the hidden side is full of anxiety, addiction, hospital trips, and consequences that never make it into the comments. The algorithm sells you “aesthetic highs” while hiding the reality that people your age are dealing with long-term damage they never saw coming.

Don't fall for a highlight reel. Real life doesn't come with filters, and cannabis's consequences don't either.

CARIBBEAN REALITY

What's happening in the Caribbean isn't the chill, harmless cannabis story people talk about online. Across the region, we're seeing stronger, more dangerous cannabis than ever before, strains with sky-high THC levels, edibles mixed in home kitchens with no regulation, and vape cartridges imported with zero quality control. Teens are getting hit the hardest.

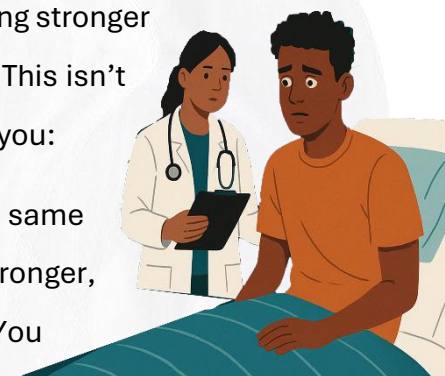


In places like Guyana, Trinidad, Jamaica, and Barbados, hospitals are reporting more cases of teens showing up with panic attacks, psychotic episodes, and reactions from edibles that were way more potent or contaminated than they expected. Some of these edibles look like regular candy, chocolate, or snacks, but contain levels of THC that can overwhelm a teen's developing brain in minutes.

Addiction is rising too. Caribbean youth are getting hooked younger because today's cannabis isn't the mild plant older generations smoked. This cannabis is engineered, concentrated, and often cut with chemicals or grown with pesticides that stay in your body. And because it's cheap and easy to access, more teens are using it to cope with stress, school pressure, or social problems, without realising how fast dependence can take over their lives.

The Caribbean isn't immune to the global shift. We're facing stronger drugs, higher risks, and more teens struggling in silence. This isn't about judging people, it's about seeing the reality around you:

the cannabis available today in our region is not the same cannabis your parents or grandparents knew. It's stronger, riskier, and hitting Caribbean teens harder than ever. You deserve the truth.



HOW TO STAY IN CONTROL

Staying in control is not about being perfect. It is about understanding yourself and making choices that protect your future rather than limit it.

START BY KNOWING THE FACTS



Cannabis today is much stronger, hits harder, and affects the teen brain in ways most people never talk about. When you understand how it impacts your memory, motivation, and mental health, it becomes easier to see through the hype.

PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR TRIGGERS



The situations or feelings that make you want to use. It might be stress, boredom, pressure from others, or certain friend groups. When you know what sets you off, you can avoid it, handle it differently, or change your environment before things get out of control.

CHOOSE PEOPLE WHO GENUINELY WANT THE BEST FOR YOU



If your friends pressure you to get high, tease you for saying no, or only want you around when you are using, that is not real friendship. Surrounding yourself with positive people is not a weakness. It shows that you value your goals.

PROTECT YOUR BRAIN



Your mind is your power. It is what opens opportunities, helps you succeed, builds your talents, and guides your future.

Do not hand that power over to something that pulls you backwards. If you ever feel like cannabis is becoming a habit you cannot control, speak up early. Talk to a trusted adult, a counsellor, a teacher, a coach, or someone who truly listens. Asking for help is not a failure. It is one of the smartest, strongest choices you can make. You get one brain, one future, and one chance to shape the life you want. Keep control of it. Your goals are way too important to risk.

The STRAIGHT TRUTH



Saying no is not a weakness. It is one of the strongest choices you can make. It shows that you are in control of your life and your future, not the people around you or the pressure that tries to pull you off course. Anyone can follow the crowd. Anyone can go along with whatever everyone else is doing. Real strength is being able to stand firm and choose what is right for you, even when it is not the easy option.

Staying drug-free protects the parts of your life that matter the most. Your mind stays sharp. Your emotions stay balanced. Your goals stay focused. The dreams you are chasing stay within reach because nothing is dragging you backwards. Every time you choose to stay clear, you are choosing your future over a moment that does not actually benefit you.

Your ambition deserves a chance to grow. Your talent deserves space to shine. Your opportunities deserve a version of you who is fully present, fully capable, and fully aware. Cannabis can blur that. It can dull your motivation, slow your progress, and steal your drive before you even notice. Staying drug-free keeps your path wide open. It gives you a real chance to reach every goal you set.

This is not about being perfect or avoiding fun. It is about knowing what you want from life and refusing to let anything take that away from you. When you say no, you are not missing out. You are levelling up. You are showing that you understand your value and your potential. You are choosing a future that is bigger than any high could ever be.

The straight truth is simple. Protecting yourself is power. Choosing your future is power. Saying no is power. And the strongest, smartest version of you is the one who stays true to your goals, your dreams, and the life you are working hard to build.

FROM chill TO chaos

True Stories, Real Stakes

Cannabis isn't always a vibe. Even if it helps patients medically, street cannabis is unregulated

and high-

THC, and

it can

wreck

your body.

Teen Brian

and his

mom

dismissed

the

warnings, he

kept smoking

while

constantly

vomiting, got

dehydrated, and

died at 17. Autopsy showed

dehydration from **Cannabinoid Hyperemesis Syndrome.**



Takeaway: if something is making you sick, it's not medicine, it's harm. Don't trust the online hype over your own brain and body. Protect your mind, listen to symptoms, and choose your future and your life by saying no. Stay sharp, hydrated, and alive.

Cannabis snacks that look like candy aren't sweet, they're dangerous. Unregulated THC products are landing in schools, hospitals, and

kids' bodies with adult-strength doses.

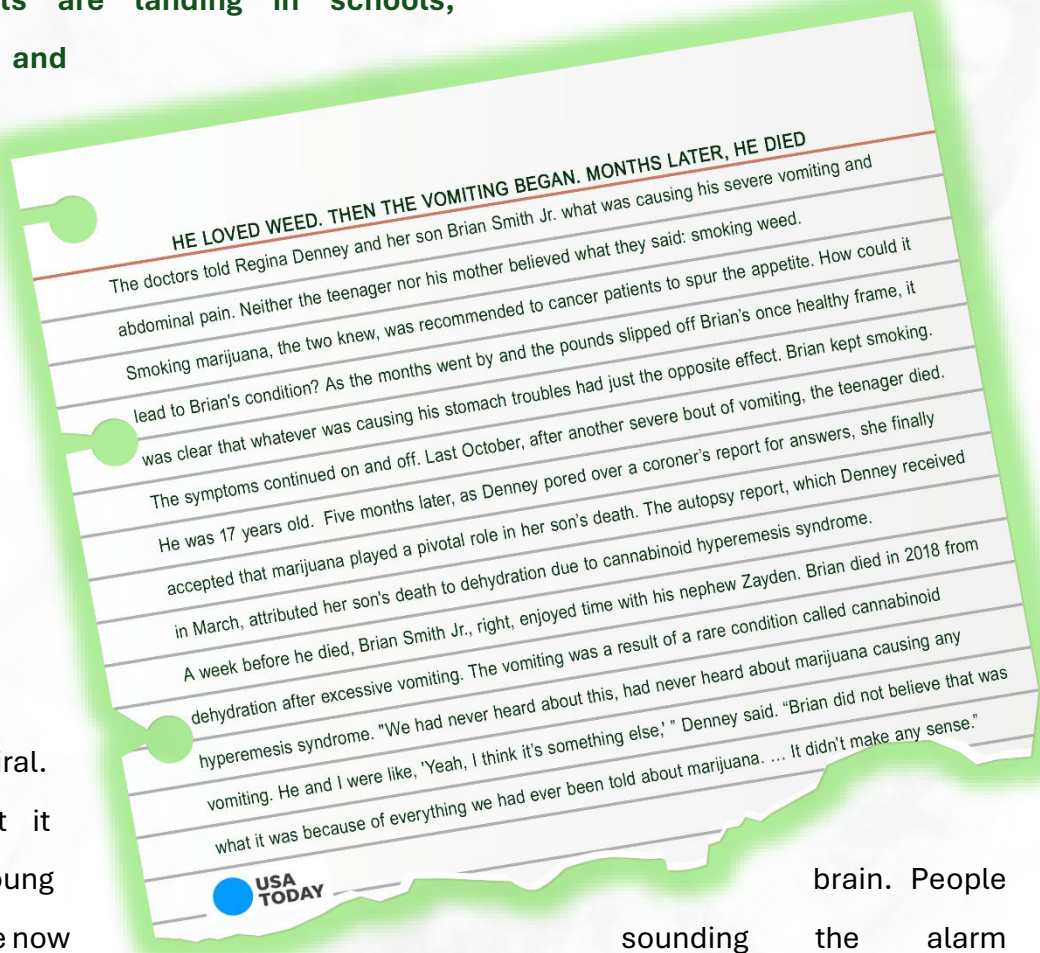
Over 100mg THC can make even grown, experienced

users spiral.

Imagine what it does to a young

in authority are now

because this stuff is understood the risks.



brain. People

sounding the alarm

becoming way too accessible to kids who don't

Takeaway: If it looks like candy but isn't regulated, it's gambling with your brain. A dose that makes adults crash can straight-up fry a teen or kid's brain in minutes. Don't test your limits, protect them. Saying no to cannabis snacks isn't weak, it's literally health-first + future-first energy. Stay alert, avoid mystery edibles, and keep your brain

safe. Don't let the cloud of hype make you think cannabis is safe, especially concentrates. Henry wasn't just "high," he was hit with near-pure THC that his brain and body couldn't handle. Passing

out is your body waving red flags, not a flex. And driving after is an absolute game-over move. Your reaction time tanks, your decisions glitch, and you don't just risk yourself, you risk everyone around you.

GORDON MACDOUGALL

On October 6, 2017, 16-year-old Henry MacDougall was with a 19-year-old friend "dabbing" marijuana, using an inhaler to breath in the smoke of highly potent marijuana concentrates and

The older teen took videos of Henry dabbing the concentrates and again after he passed out. The older teen allowed Henry to get in his car and drive home shortly after this. On the way home, Henry passed out again, but this time he was behind the wheel. He drove through a stop sign and was hit by an on-coming semi-truck. Henry died a few hours later. In an effort to honor the legacy of his son, Gordon has become a vocal opponent of marijuana legalization in the hopes that no other parent suffers the grief of losing their child because of marijuana use.

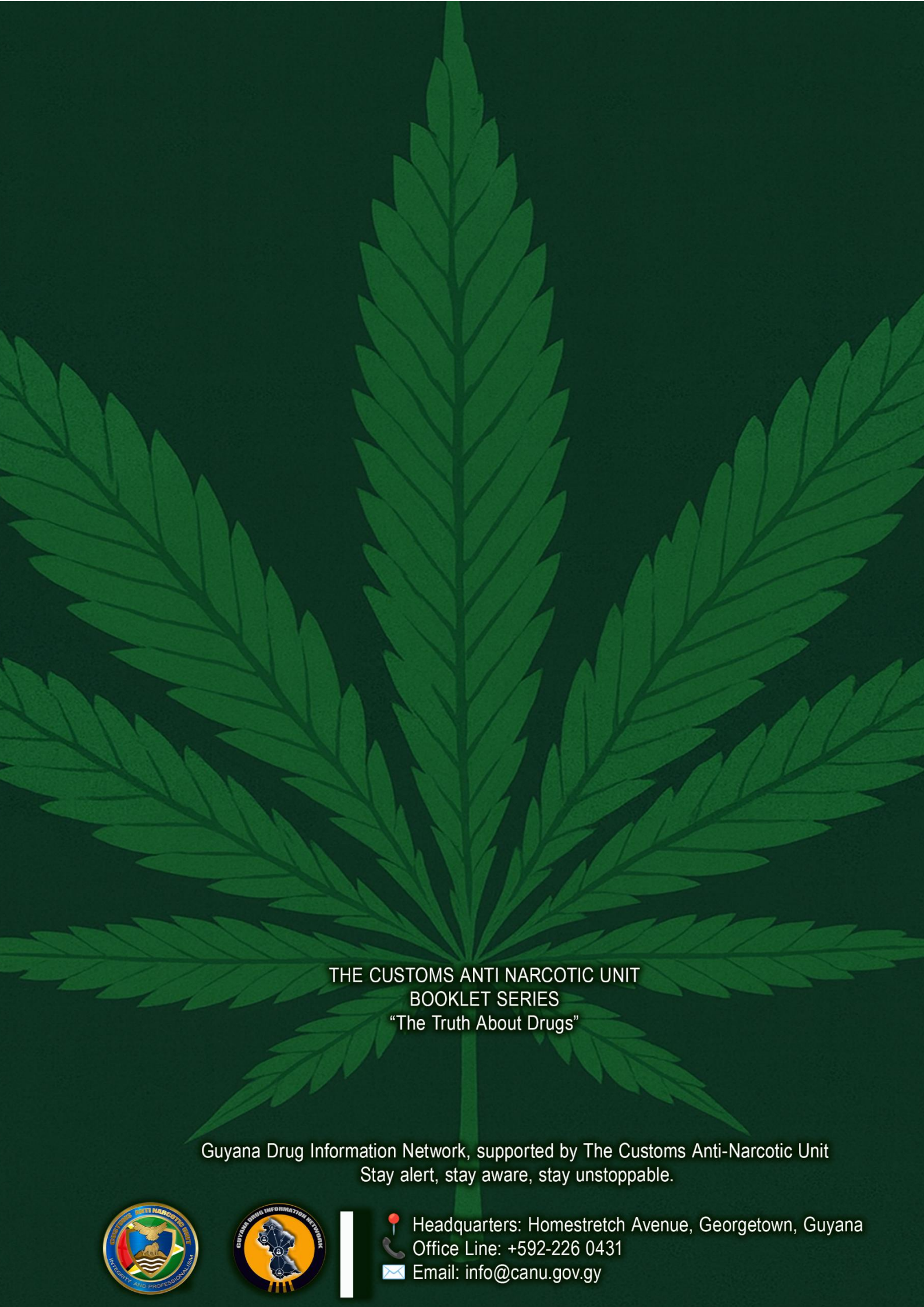
Jeffrey Yeatch was a netw
SAM Smart Approches to Marijuana
preventing another big tobacco

Takeaway: Real strength is knowing when to say nah, even if the situation looks like a vibe. One bad choice can cost your whole story. Protect your brain, protect your life, protect your legacy. Don't be content with someone else's camera roll, be the main character of your future.

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