A Parent’s Worst Nightmare
How High-THC Marijuana Took My Son and How to Keep It from Happening to You
By Laura Stack

Suicide is an emotional topic. Feel free to disconnect at any time. Discussing suicide and loss can bring up unexpected emotions or feelings.
The National Suicide Hotline is 800-273-TALK.

Who’s Johnny?
A Beautiful Boy
A Beautiful Life
Meet John Kenneth Stack (Johnny)
Born February 7, 2000 – died by suicide November 20, 2019

Johnny Stack Tribute Video

November 20, 2019 - our living room, 1:03 AM

“Mr. and Mrs. Stack, I’m with the coroner’s office. I’m so sorry to tell you that your son is deceased.”

– the woman in black
The Timeline

- 2012: Colorado became the 1st state to legalize recreational marijuana.
- 2014: 9th grade. According to Johnny, pot was “everywhere,” and easy to get.

Scientific Advisory Board Video
Dr. Chris Thurstone explains adolescent brain development
The Impacts of Marijuana Use on Adolescents

1. Marijuana addiction.
2. A decrease in IQ.
3. Increased risk of addiction with higher potency.
4. Increases the odds you'll use other drugs.
5. Makes you a worse driver.
6. More likely to drop out of school.
7. Can result in psychosis and schizophrenia.
8. Decreases fertility rates.
10. Makes you paranoid and think others intend to harm you.
11. Damages your health.
12. Can kill you from throwing up.

The Timeline

2012: Colorado became the 1st state to legalize recreational marijuana.
2014: 9th grade. According to Johnny, pot was “everywhere,” and easy to get.
2015: Concentrates appeared on the market and “dabbing” became popular.

What Is a Dab?

Dabs are marijuana extracts made by running a solvent such as butane, ethanol, propane, or carbon dioxide through the cannabis plant, which allows the THC to leave the plant material and dissolve into the solvent. This concentrated THC solution is then filtered and placed in a tray to dry. The result of the extraction is sticky oil that typically appears bronze in color. Dabs can be additionally processed into distillates. Dabs are a chemical, not a plant, and they are highly potent, containing up to 99% THC. Dabs are typically heated on a hot surface and the vapors are inhaled through a dab rig or pen.
Think of other drugs that are consumed in rock form (concentrates in a solid state), and you will understand how concentrates are ingested:

**THERE IS NOTHING NATURAL ABOUT HIGH-POTENCY THC PRODUCTS!**

Coca plant → Cocaine → Crack

Cannabis plant → Marijuana → THC
NIDA, 2020

Scientific Advisory Board Video
Dr. Ken Finn explains the impact of marijuana on youth
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Substance Use Disorder (SUD)

2–3 criteria indicate a mild disorder; 4–5 a moderate disorder; 6 or more a severe disorder:
1. Taking the substance in larger amounts or for longer than you meant to
2. Wanting to cut down or stop using the substance but not managing to
3. Spending a lot of time getting, using, or recovering from use of the substance
4. Cravings and urges to use the substance
5. Not managing to do what you should at work, home or school, because of substance use
6. Continuing to use, even when it causes problems in relationships
7. Giving up important social, occupational, or recreational activities due to substance use
8. Using substances again and again, even when it puts you in danger
9. Using substances again and again, even when you know you have a medical or psychological problem that could have been caused or made worse by the substance
10. Needing more of the substance to get the effect you want (tolerance)
11. Development of withdrawal symptoms, which can be relieved by taking more of it

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The Timeline

2016: Around his 16th birthday, Johnny started using dabs. Mood changes and anxiety begin.
2017: The fall of his senior year, the unraveling begins: defiance, running away, verbal abuse, daily marijuana use
2018: After his 18th birthday, Johnny leaves the home. Frequent, high-THC marijuana use, dealing, legal troubles, plummeting grades, and threats. Graduates high school with honors.
2018: In late August, Johnny attends university #1 on a scholarship. “I've been dabbing for two weeks non-stop.” 1st Suicide attempt.
2018: Sept. to Dec, withdrawal from school, recovers at home.
2019: January, goes to university #2. April, psychotic break.

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Can Marijuana Cause Psychosis?

Researchers first needed to determine which came first, the marijuana use or the psychosis.

Those at the forefront of such studies were eventually convinced that the association was causal.

The consensus is that use of marijuana with a THC content over 10% increases the risk of a psychotic disorder by 4 to 5-fold.
Dr. Erik Messamore explains the significance of cannabis-induced psychosis.

What Does Psychosis Look like? Johnny’s Journals Four Days Prior

Marijuana Changes You – Photos Taken 2 Years Apart
The Timeline

2019:
- May: Moves to Urban Peak, recovers.
  Gets a job and rents a room.
- July: Moves to our condo and gets a new job.
  Goes to new university #3 and gets a new puppy.
  Re-unites with an old girlfriend who suffers from mental illness
  and dabs every day. Starts dabbing and drops out of school.
- October: Girlfriend punches him in the face.
  Quits weed cold turkey for 5 weeks.

Three Days Before Johnny’s Death
Nov. 17, 2019

“I just want you to know that you were right all along. You told me marijuana would hurt my brain. It’s ruined my mind and my life, and I’m sorry. I love you.” – Johnny Stack

Johnny’s Suicide Snapchat

For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. For one emotion to exist, there must be the opposing.
Dr. Libby Stydt explains the connection between marijuana and suicide.

2017 - Marijuana % Present in Suicides Ages 15-19
Colorado Department Of Public Health And Environment

What I Should Have Done and What Can You Do?
Regrets

1. Mindset
2. Knowledge
3. Testing
4. Treatment
5. Healthcare
6. Ask

Gifts

1. Lord’s comfort
2. Family Closeness
3. Extreme love
4. Grief work
5. Reaching families
6. New Community

What Can You Do? Use the 5-E™ Method

1. Educate – Learn ALL about marijuana yourself.
2. Engage – Talk to your children and grandchildren (open-ended questions, reflections, listening).
3. Empower – Encourage and reward good choices.
4. Enforce – Protect when poor choices are made.
5. Escalate – If your child displays suicidality, call the National Suicide Hotline at 800-273-TALK.
The Death of a Son and Birth of a Mission

"Forge ahead despite your pain and give meaning to your loss."  
Laura Stack

Johnny’s Ambassadors

To help us heal from our tragedy, we (Laura and John Stack) formed a 501c3 nonprofit, Johnny’s Ambassadors, in April 2020. Johnny’s Ambassadors educates parents and teens about the dangers of today’s high-THC marijuana on adolescent brain development and suicide. We hope to help other families by honestly and boldly sharing Johnny’s story and asking other Ambassadors to do the same. We keep Johnny’s spirit of altruism alive by getting teens to #StopDabbing. Johnny’s life has great purpose and will not be in vain!
“Altruism - To me, altruism means being selfless or giving to other people, even when there may be nothing to gain and something to lose. Altruistic people do things for the collective interest instead of their own.” - Johnny Stack

What Can You Do As An Ambassador?

1. Support – We would gratefully accept your donations to help us develop and offer our online teen curriculum.
2. Sign up – Join our Facebook page and newsletter.
3. Share – Share our posts to your social media and network.
4. Show up – Volunteer to lead a City Team for the 2nd Annual #StopDabbing Walk on Sunday, September 19, 2021 (22 so far).
5. Speak out – Become a Certified Johnny’s Ambassador and teach our materials – contact me at Laura@JohnnysAmbassadors.org
6. Shout – it from the rooftops about how dangerous high-potency marijuana is for our youth!

Thank you for being one of Johnny's Ambassadors!
WITH MUCH LOVE AND THANKS TO YOU

Laura@JohnnysAmbassadors.org  JohnnysAmbassadors.org/donate

Meagan
John
Laura
Johnny
James

Q&A