The Dangerous Truth About Today’s Marijuana: Johnny Stack’s Life and Death Story

By Laura Stack, Founder & CEO

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

What Do You Think of When You Think of a Person with a Drug Addiction?
November 21, 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 at high school parties. His friend had an 18-year-old brother with a med card.
• 2014: Concentrates more common on the market and “dabbing” became popular.

NO, Not THIS Kind of Dabbing!

If you said to yourself, “What does she mean by ‘dabbing’?” you are not alone.

How are Dabs Made?

• Dabs are marijuana extracts.
• Chemists run a solvent such as butane, ethanol, or propane through the cannabis plant.
• The THC leaves the plant material and dissolves into the solvent.
• The concentrated THC solution is filtered to remove (most of) the solvent and dried in a tray.
• The result is a sticky, bronze-colored oily substance that looks like beeswax or earwax.
• These 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 THC crystals are used (in a crack pipe).

**Coca plant → Cocaine → Crack**

**Cannabis plant → Marijuana → THC**

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consumption Method</th>
<th>Potency</th>
<th>Total THC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Edible (one serving)</td>
<td>Varies</td>
<td>10 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowl (.25 g of flower)</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60% loss to burning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint (.4 g of flower)</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>36 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>requires more pot</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vape (1 g cart = 200 puffs)</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>800 mg (4 mg per puff)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dab (1 g of wax assume 8 “servings”)</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>800 mg (100 mg per serving)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Gummies From Trash Blown Into Our Yard In Highlands Ranch, CO**

How Much THC Is In Each Method?

(Sample estimates gathered from cannabis websites, based on an “average” size and allowing for loss to combustion.)
THINK BEYOND WEED – THESE ARE THE THC PRODUCTS KIDS ARE USING TODAY

Hash Oil Syringe  Beverages and Drops  Elixirs and Tinctures
Infused Tampon  Suppository  Sensual Oil

Edibles of All Kinds!

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment “Monitoring Health Concerns Related to Marijuana in Colorado” 2020

- Among high school students who reported use of marijuana in the past month, the use of dabs saw a significant 156% increase.
- Regular youth marijuana use among those under 15 rose 14.8% in 2019 versus 2017.

Marijuana dabs and vaping oils commonly contain amounts of 80-99% THC, the main psychoactive chemical found in marijuana.

Thousands of studies have shown the use of THC in young people is linked to harms to mental health.
Human Brain Formation

Synaptogenesis: the formation of synapses between neurons in the nervous system

Apoptosis: the controlled pruning of cells as a normal part of growth to allow specialization

Myelination: the formation of sheaths around pathways to increase efficiency in transmission

Right lateral and top views of the dynamic sequence of GM maturation over the cortical surface

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Why is Marijuana So Much Worse for Adolescents? Their Brains Aren’t Formed.

Video of Adolescent Brain Formation
Ages 5 to 20

Regions of the Brain Containing CB1 Receptors Impacted During Adolescent Brain Formation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brain Part</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>THC Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prefrontal cortex</td>
<td>Executive function and higher reasoning</td>
<td>Increases impulsiveness and reduces judgment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nucleus accumbens</td>
<td>Reward circuit</td>
<td>Increase euphoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amygdala</td>
<td>Emotion, anxiety</td>
<td>Increases paranoia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hippocampus</td>
<td>Learning new information</td>
<td>Impairs memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caudate</td>
<td>Motivation and drive</td>
<td>Decreases desire to do things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cerebellum</td>
<td>Motor skills, balance</td>
<td>Impairs coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothalamus</td>
<td>Eating, sex drive</td>
<td>Increases appetite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subcortex</td>
<td>Feeling and movement</td>
<td>Alters sensations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"THC IS NEUROTOXIC" – Dr. Paula Riggs, Denver Health

The Impacts of Marijuana Use on Adolescents

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

Go to johnnysambassadors.org/factorfiction for the game and the research
The Timeline

- 2016: Johnny starts driving. Mood changes and anxiety begin.
- 2017: The fall of his senior year, the unraveling begins: defiance, running away, verbal abuse, marijuana vaping
- 2018: After his 18th birthday, Johnny leaves the home. Frequent, high-THC marijuana use, dealing, legal troubles, plummeting grades, and threats.

Johnny Came Full Circle.

He is Now the 18-Year-Old Marijuana Dealer with a Med Card.

Johnny didn’t have a single medical issue.
Colorado State Records of Medical Marijuana Cards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 to 10 years old</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 17 years old</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 to 20 years old</td>
<td>3,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given primarily for "severe pain." In one day from 17 to 18, over 3,700 teens in Colorado developed a debilitating illness. Their mood swings, anxiety, psychotic symptoms, and suicidal ideation are CAUSED by the marijuana, not "medicine" for these conditions.

Does a Regulated Pot Industry Keep Marijuana Away from Our 18-Year-Old Kids?

- Can’t get tobacco or alcohol legally but CAN obtain a medical marijuana card without parental knowledge or approval.
- Physician is not required to write a "prescription" with recommendations on the type of product, route of administration, amount used, frequency of use, and period of use.
- No requirement for follow-up appointments to determine whether the recommendation has been helpful or if there are side effects.
- Can take the card to the dispensary and get anything they want or is recommended by the person selling the products, "budtenders" who have no requirements for any medical training.
- Patients can purchase twice as much in the medical (2 ounces per day) versus recreational dispensary (1 ounce per day), and it is less expensive because of lower tax.
- No tracking to see if someone is going from dispensary to dispensary and purchasing more product, a process known as looping.
- The "doctor" is protected, so you can’t find out who gave it to them. This is just like the "pill mills" in the opioid crisis - pay your $500 and get your "prescription," which is only a recommendation to buy.
The U.S. Health Department singled out Colorado in its report for the state’s high weed use and addiction rates, as well as its co-occurring mental illness problems with marijuana.

Having ever used marijuana was the top co-occurring substance use behavior for high school teens who have abused opioids in the past 30 days, even over alcohol use in the past 30 days.

The Association Between Teen Marijuana Use and Prescription Opioid Misuse

Has the Legalization of Marijuana Helped Our Drug Problem?

Drug Deaths in CO since marijuana legalization:
- Opioids increased 89.9%
- Heroin increased 40.1%
- Meth increased 38.2%
- Cocaine increased 40.8%
- Courtesy: Dr. Ken Ford

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Who Is To Blame for Johnny's Death?

Me? I didn’t shove marijuana down his throat or push him off the building.

Johnny? He killed himself, but the marijuana made him psychotic. So, he wasn’t in his right mind.

Marijuana? No, by itself, it’s just a plant and not dangerous if you leave it alone.

Who Is to Blame for Johnny’s Death?
These carpetbaggers who helped make marijuana legal.

*** pot doc who gave Johnny a med card
Robert Corry, attorney, founding father of amendment 64

Addiction is an Adolescent-Onset Disease
The Timeline

• 2018: May, Graduates high school with honors.
• 2018: August, Johnny attends university #1 on a scholarship. Dabs for two weeks and texts me he's suicidal. 1st mental hospital stay, then 1st suicide attempt.
• 2018: Sept. to Dec, sober from MJ, recovers at home.
• 2019: January, Johnny attends university #2. First psychotic break and 2nd mental hospital stay.

What Does Psychosis Look like? Johnny’s Journals

Jan 13

10:50 AM

Hi dad,

First day at school was rough. I got high 5 days ago and have been having some rough times. Today was the first day I've felt like myself. I think I'm ready to go back to school. I'm going to make myself more involved and try to enjoy it.

Titic Abuse Severe

Jan 14

10:00 AM

Hi dad,

I feel better today. I'm trying to focus on my studies and not let my mind wander. I'm going to try to stay positive and not give into my temptations.

Jan 15

10:30 AM

Hi dad,

I'm feeling better today. I'm going to try to stay focused and not let my mind wander. I'm going to try to stay positive and not give into my temptations.

Jan 16

10:00 AM

Hi dad,

I feel better today. I'm trying to focus on my studies and not let my mind wander. I'm going to try to stay positive and not give into my temptations.

Jan 17

10:30 AM

Hi dad,

I'm feeling better today. I'm going to try to stay focused and not let my mind wander. I'm going to try to stay positive and not give into my temptations.

Jan 18

10:00 AM

Hi dad,

I feel better today. I'm trying to focus on my studies and not let my mind wander. I'm going to try to stay positive and not give into my temptations.
How Do We KNOW THC Causes Psychosis?

RESEARCH!

- MORRISON: THC administration in the clinic triggers psychosis in 40% of users with no family history of psychosis. [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3055738/pdf/npp2010222a.pdf]
- HINDLEY: A single THC administration induces significant psychotic, negative, total, and other psychiatric symptoms with large effect sizes in adults with no history of psychotic or other major psychiatric disorders. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(20)30074-2/fulltext]
- D’SOUZA: The positive symptoms induced by D-9-THC included suspiciousness, paranoid and grandiose delusions, conceptual disorganization, and illusions. It also produced depersonalization, derealization, distorted sensory perceptions, altered body perception, feelings of unreality and extreme slowing of time. D-9-THC produced negative symptoms including blunted affect, reduced rapport, lack of spontaneity, psychomotor retardation, and emotional withdrawal. [https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/15173844/]

Genetic vs Marijuana Onset Schizophrenia in an Email to Me by Dr. Robin Murray

- You can have a heart attack because you have a heavy genetic loading, even if you exercise a lot.
- Even if you have no genetic loading, you can have a heart attack because you never exercise and get fat.
- It’s easiest to have a heart attack if you have genetic loading AND get very fat.
- You can develop schizophrenia because you have a heavy genetic loading, even if you never use marijuana.
- Even if you have no genetic loading, you can develop schizophrenia because you use a lot of marijuana.
- It’s easiest to develop schizophrenia if you have genetic loading AND use marijuana.

Marijuana and Suicide
The Timeline

2019:
• May: Recovers on antipsychotics. Gets a job and rents a room.
• July: Moves to our condo and gets a new job at Petsmart.
• August: Goes to university #3 and gets a new puppy.
• September: Re-unites with an old girlfriend who suffers from mental illness and dabs every day. Starts dabbing again and drops out of school.
• October: Girlfriend punches him in the face. Quits marijuana, nicotine, and his antipsychotic meds for five weeks.

Johnny Made a Valiant Attempt to Be Sober

October 2019

Girlfriend and I broke up, long story, but she punched me in the face and I now have a shrapnel pintal against her. A lot of old friends we changed and extremely dislike me for still being in the past I can't change, but I'm focusing on becoming a better person right now. Keeping the right influences and connections in my life to become who I want to be. I've stopped smoking for most two weeks now, and I want it to stay that way. My head is already much cleaner and I'm genuinely more happier being who I am and not worrying about what other people think of me. I don't have anything prove to people who's main personality trial smoking a drug.

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

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Marijuana and Suicide Research Shows a Connection

Two independent studies of adolescents who use marijuana have demonstrated a big elevation in suicide attempts:

1. The first study was a large longitudinal study of over 2000 adolescents conducted in Australia and New Zealand, which found that teens who are daily users of marijuana before age 17 had a seven-fold increase in suicide attempts compared to non-users.
   
   [Link](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(14)70307-4/fulltext)

2. The second study was conducted with 700 teens and corrected for a prior history of depression or other mood disorders. In other words, they factored out kids who were already depressed when they started using marijuana. They found that marijuana use in those who weren’t depressed before increased the risk of a suicide attempt 7.5-fold.
   
   [Link](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4219077/pdf/wps0013-0322.pdf)

What happened in Colorado in 2014? Coincidence?
Now let's expand and overlay the data.

Marijuana % Present in Suicides Ages 15-19 from 2004 to 2018

To Summarize

1. Repeated cannabis use in teens interferes with the development of the prefrontal cortex, (the part of the brain directly behind the forehead), which affects executive functions. The PFC is particularly active in adolescence, as the brain prunes some synaptic connections and firms up those most useful.
2. There's no doubt marijuana impacts mental development in young people, which is also why it's illegal for recreational use until the age of 21. Even proponents of marijuana acknowledge this science.
3. The loophole for young people ages 18-20 to get "medical" cards makes it worse. They can't buy alcohol or cigarettes, but they can lie about having a migraine and legally buy shatter and sell it to other younger children (this creates the GRAY market).
4. Our youth are becoming psychotic and dying by suicide at alarming rates.

What Should I Have Done? What Can Parents Do?
Parenting Recommendations
(Looking back – what I wish I would have done better doing)

- Start talking about marijuana (and alcohol and cigarette) use early!
- Discuss short-term and long-term risks of marijuana use
- Set clear NO USE rules, including appropriate consequences for breaking these rules
- Keep lines of communication open
- Keep track of your children and their phones
- Pick up anywhere, anytime – no questions asked
- Monitor your own behavior
- Help your child plan for social pressure to use
- NEVER provide your child with marijuana, no matter the age
- Teach and practice refusal skills

The 3-S Marijuana Refusal Method (or Any Drug)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Your Reasons</th>
<th>Suggest Something Else</th>
<th>Stick to Your Boundaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“My parents drug test me.”</td>
<td>“Why don’t we go…”</td>
<td>“Definitely, I don’t want it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I don’t want to mess up my grades.”</td>
<td>“Let’s do this instead…”</td>
<td>“I don’t want to disappoint my folks.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I’m driving.”</td>
<td>“This would be more fun…”</td>
<td>“If you keep bugging me, I’m out of here.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Death of a Son and Birth of a Mission
“Forge ahead despite your pain and give meaning to your loss.”
– Laura Stack

Teach a Healthy Fear of Marijuana

What did you teach your children about rattlesnakes?

STAY AWAY, because it can bite you!
Please Become One of Johnny’s Ambassadors!

- **Support**: We gratefully accept donations: johnnysambassadors.org/donate
- **Sign Up**: Join our weekly newsletter: JohnnysAmbassadors.org/blog
- **Share**: Join and share our Facebook posts: facebook.com/groups/JohnnyxAmbassadors
- **Show Up**: Join us for the 2nd Annual #StopDabbing Walk on Sunday, September 19, 2021: StopDabbingWalk.com
- **Speak Out**: Get involved: JohnnysAmbassadors.org/join

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YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO

[QR Code]

Laura@JohnnysAmbassadors.org