

# Making Things Worse: Depressed Teens Use Marijuana to 'Self-Medicate'

Millions of teens report feeling hopeless and losing interest in everyday activities for weeks at a time. Many of these teens are making a bad situation worse by using marijuana and other drugs in an effort to make themselves feel better.

- Over the course of a year, **two million teens report feeling depressed!**<sup>1</sup>
- Depressed teens are more than **twice as likely** to use marijuana as non-depressed teens. Twenty-five percent of depressed teens used marijuana during the same period they report feeling depressed.<sup>2</sup>
- Depressed teens are **more than twice as likely** as their peers to use or become dependent on marijuana.<sup>3</sup>
- The odds of developing symptoms of depression are **more than five times higher** for girls who smoke marijuana daily than for girls who do not.<sup>4</sup>

Research shows that using marijuana can worsen depression and lead to more serious mental health problems. In fact, teens who used marijuana at least once a month in the past year are three times more likely to **have suicidal thoughts** than teens who don't use marijuana.<sup>5</sup>

If you see a change in your teen's behavior, do not dismiss it as a "phase." Your teen could be depressed, using drugs – or both. Now is the time to take action:

1. Talk to your teen. Young people who learn about the risks of drugs at home are up to 50 percent less likely to try drugs than those who don't hear from their parents.<sup>6</sup>
2. Set clear rules and consequences for breaking them.
3. Recognize signs and symptoms of marijuana use, including depression, withdrawal, and hostility.
4. Get help. Depression is one of the most common emotional problems for teens – and the most treatable.

Find out more about how to keep your teen healthy and drug-free at [www.TheAntiDrug.com](http://www.TheAntiDrug.com).



<sup>1</sup> 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, SAMHSA, September 2007, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, SAMHSA, September 2007, Table 6.34B.

<sup>3</sup> 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, SAMHSA, September 2007, Table 6.36B.

<sup>4</sup> Patton, GC et al. Cannabis use and mental health in young people: cohort study. *British Medical Journal*, 325:1195-1198, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Greenblatt, J. Adolescent self-reported behaviors and their association with marijuana use. *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)*, 1998.

<sup>6</sup> The Partnership for a Drug-Free America, 2005 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study: Key Findings on Teen Drug Trends, May 2006.