DID YOU KNOW…. A big burst of brain development occurs during adolescence which may explain the unpredictable and sometimes risky behavior typical in teens. Because the brain is not fully developed until about age 25, synaptic refinement occurs as part of brain development and is especially rapid during adolescence when brains are most vulnerable to reinforcement of positive/constructive behaviors or risk behaviors.

Sources: ADAI of the University of Washington; Forbes/Pharma & Healthcare , March 2015; US Surgeon General Report: 2015; more sources at tritowncouncil.org
The Key to Prevention: Talk, Talk, Talk!  
Talking to your teen about marijuana

Recreational marijuana use is now legal in Massachusetts (for those aged 21 and over) and retail operations will be opening in a few short months selling a host of THC laced tinctures, creams, edibles and other products. With youth’s perceptions of risk and harm of marijuana use at an all time low, what’s the best way to keep our kids informed, safe, and empowered to make healthy choices? TALK, TALK, TALK — EARLY and OFTEN!

#1 BEFORE the talk

Know the facts — get credible info. Go to tritowncouncil.org or Partnership for Drug-Free Kids.

Be patient and ready to listen — avoid criticism. Remember your goal is to have a conversation, not deliver a lecture.

Set a positive example. Model good behavior.

Be clear about your message. Talk early and often about drug (and alcohol) use.

Seek support: Ask your health care provider to talk to your teen. Suggest your teen talk with other trusted adults (coaches, relatives, etc.).

#2 BE PREPARED to answer their questions

• Why don’t you want me to use marijuana?
• What’s the big deal about THC?
• It’s legal so it must be safe...
• Did you ever use marijuana?

#3 THEN...start the conversation

Find the right moment. Driving by a Weed Map billboard sign, after hearing or reading a story on the news, or passing by a retailer (yes it’s coming!), ask your teens what they think about marijuana use. BTW, the car is often the perfect place to start these conversations!

Appeal to their intellects. What does the science tell us about marijuana use? Help your teen contrast marijuana use with other health choices ---even though 18 (or 21 in some cities) year olds can legally purchase and smoke cigarettes, does that mean they should?

Make your message clear. Don’t treat pot lightly. State your expectations for your teen clearly and concisely.

Discuss ways to avoid uncomfortable situations. Practice comfortable refusal skills through role play.

And FINALLY...

Don’t underestimate your power! Your voice matters! Believe it or not, your teen IS listening!

MORE RESOURCES HERE!

What about Tri-Town Youth? Masco 2016 YRBS DATA:

The HOPE & the NORM

♦ Most youth are NOT using marijuana

♦ 8 out of 10 HS youth did NOT use marijuana in the past 30 days

♦ 99% of MS youth do NOT use marijuana

...EVERYONE IS NOT DOING IT!

CONCERN

♦ Significant misperceptions—6 out of 10 HS youth over perceive peer use & 4 out of 10 MS youth over perceive peer use

♦ Marijuana use increases with age and grade level

♦ 50% of HS youth don’t think marijuana is risky & 50% say their peers don’t disapprove of marijuana use

BTW, promoting positive NORMS MATTERS because it can empower kids to choose not to use.

The #1 reason teens choose NOT to use drugs or alcohol is PARENTS!

“The #1 thing that teens say when they’re asked ‘Why are you not using drugs? What’s holding you back?’ is ‘My parents expect me not to use them.’ That’s the #1 reason. It’s still parental expectation.”

- Janet Williams
(University of Texas Researcher)