

For more information contact:

National Cannabis Information and Helpline 1800 30 40 50 (toll free)

Dunlea Youth Drug and Alcohol Treatment Program (02) 9721 5714

Useful websites include the following:

National Cannabis Prevention and Information Centre www.ncpic.org.au

Australian Drug Foundation (ADF) www.adf.org.au

Youth Off The Streets www.youthoffthestreets.com.au

Reachout – an interactive website for young people www.reachout.com.au

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Father Chris Riley's



Youth Off The Streets®

CLEAR YOUR VISION



a do-it-yourself guide
to quitting cannabis

ncpic

national cannabis
prevention and
information centre

Cannabis...Pot...Weed...Grass... Yarndi...Dope...Marijuana...Ganja...



They say that smoking cannabis (pot) causes all sorts of problems including serious health problems.

Some people who use it can become dependent on it and find it really hard to give up or even cut down – it becomes a ‘habit’.

Do you think you have a problem with cannabis? Or are other people telling you that you have a problem with cannabis? If you think you do, this booklet may be able to help you take some steps to change.

Let me introduce you to
Tara, Samir, Kiah and Alex.

Tara has just turned 16. She was suspended from school for getting into fights with other students and threatening the school principal.

Tara has been smoking cannabis since she was 11 years old and drinking since she was 10 years old. Her parents both smoke

cannabis and drink every day. Tara hates being at home. The house is always a mess and there is never any food. Tara’s best friend died at a party six months ago. Right now Tara’s life really sucks...



Tara



Samir

Samir is 19 and has been smoking cannabis since he was 12. He has lived on the streets on and off for the last six months since his mum freaked out about him stealing money from her to score some cannabis.

He just got kicked out of the refuge he was staying at for bringing cannabis into the house so he is back on the street again.

Samir has also been in trouble for doing graffiti at the local park. Things aren’t that great for Samir at the moment...

Kiah is almost 17 and lives with her mum and little brother. She is going to TAFE to complete her schooling. She wants to eventually go to uni and maybe do nursing.



Kiah

Kiah has been doing pretty well until recently when she started hanging out with some friends who smoke cannabis and she decided to try it. She has been fighting with her mum about these friends and has started to miss her classes at TAFE.

She feels better when she smokes cannabis because then she doesn’t have to think about all the other crap going on for her...



Alex

Alex is 14. He lives with his mum and step dad and has just started Year 9 at the local high school. He hangs out with some of his mates on the weekends and doesn't really get into too much trouble.

He went to a party a few months ago and there was cannabis there. He decided to try some and has started to smoke it every weekend and is now smoking it during the week.

His girlfriend is really worried about him and they have been fighting about him smoking cannabis...

Does any of this stuff sound familiar to you...
Is this happening in your life right now?

Let's move on... Samir, Tara, Kiah and Alex really want to change the things in their lives that aren't working for them.

- They aren't sure how to do this but what they do know is that smoking cannabis has made the situation with their families, school and elsewhere more difficult.
- Smoking cannabis has become one of the biggest things in their lives and some of them will do almost anything for that 'high'. Even when they are using, they are thinking of the next time they will use and how they will score their cannabis.

Samir, Tara, Kiah and Alex know that cannabis has become a problem in their lives and they are thinking about making some changes.

What to do next...



Tara



Samir



Kiah



Alex

Tara is not sure what to do and Samir thinks he might talk to his caseworker at the last refuge he stayed at.

Kiah goes to see the counsellor at TAFE, and Alex talks with his girlfriend who suggests they go to the local youth health service to speak to a youth worker there.

When Kiah and Alex meet up with the workers, they complete a short quiz. This helps them to work out if cannabis is a problem for them.

Let's work out whether your cannabis use may be a problem for you?

Severity of Dependence Scale (SDS)

Over the last 3 months:

1. Did you ever think your use of cannabis was out of control?

- Never or almost never (0)
- Sometimes (1)
- Often (2)
- Always or nearly always (3)

2. Did the prospect of missing a smoke make you very anxious or worried?

- Never or almost never (0)
- Sometimes (1)
- Often (2)
- Always or nearly always (3)

3. Did you worry about your use of cannabis?

- Never or almost never (0)
- Sometimes (1)
- Often (2)
- Always or nearly always (3)

4. Did you ever wish you could stop?

- Never or almost never (0)
- Sometimes (1)
- Often (2)
- Always or nearly always (3)

5. How difficult would you find it to stop or go without?

- Not difficult (0)
- Quite difficult (1)
- Very difficult (2)
- Impossible (3)

SDS Score /15

How did you score?

If you have a score of three or more on the SDS chances are you are dependent on cannabis.

Even if you think you don't have a problem and can handle using cannabis, sometimes it can cause problems with your family and friends or at school or work.

Remember Tara, Samir, Kiah and Alex?



Tara wants to get back into school and finish her schooling and eventually get her own place.



Samir really wants to change things in his life. He wants to move back home and finish school so he can get an apprenticeship as a mechanic.



Kiah wants to finish her course at TAFE and apply for uni and work things out with her mum.



Alex knows that his girlfriend cares about him and his choices and he wants to start making some better choices for himself.

The quiz that Kiah and Alex completed showed very high scores and when they spoke with the workers about this and what was happening for them and how smoking cannabis was affecting their lives, each of them made a personal choice to change.

Making a choice to change is the first step.

- ♦♦ Tara and Samir were still a bit undecided, Tara got some information from a booklet that one of her friends had been given by a health worker. Samir decided to chat with his caseworker, but he got on better with another worker and started to talk to them about his life and where he was at.

What does that mean for you...

***YOU** are the only one that can make the choice to stop smoking cannabis.*

So, how do you change?

There are three basic steps to changing your cannabis use:

- ♦♦ Thinking (about your behaviour)
- ♦♦ Planning (for the changes you want)
- ♦♦ Acting (on your decision)

Tara, Samir, Kiah and Alex all thought about why they smoked cannabis and the reasons they wanted to cut down and stop. When they talked to the workers they began to understand some of the reasons they used.

They looked at some of the things they liked about using cannabis...

HAVE FUN & hang
OUT WITH FRIENDS

LESS
STRESS

to cope

feeling good

relaxed

to feel
normal

What do you like about cannabis?

They also looked at some of the *not so good* things for them about using cannabis...

money

hassles from
family & school

SLEEPING
PROBLEMS

PARANOIA

forgetting
things

anxiety

strange
thoughts

What don't you like so much
about cannabis?

Longer term:

Getting
Busted

money
problem\$

dropping
out of school

losing friends

DEPENDENCE

harder to
achieve goals

HEALTH
PROBLEMS



Tara



Samir



Kiah



Alex

Tara, Samir, Kiah and Alex began to see that their cannabis use was affecting them in many ways that they hadn't even thought about. They decided to go and see the workers again...

They wrote down a list of things that could be good about making a change.

You can do this too...

They also wrote down a list of things that make it harder for them to make a change.

Tara isn't sure she can cope with the cravings and how she is going to handle the stress of not smoking cannabis all the time.

Samir is really worried that he may lose his mates and they will pay out on him, calling him a loser.

Kiah doesn't want to miss any more TAFE classes because of smoking cannabis. If she does she may end up dropping out of TAFE.

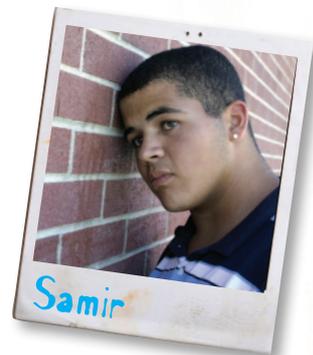
Alex still wants to hang out with his friends but he could lose his girlfriend because of smoking cannabis.

How do I start to change?

So now it's time to work out how and what you are going to change. Do you want to quit using cannabis or just cut down?



Alex and Kiah both decided that they wanted to quit. Together with their workers, they make a plan to help with their decision to make a change.



Tara has decided that she wants to cut down to start with, and Samir is thinking about making changes.

The next step was for them to set a date to quit or change. Together with their workers, they made a plan of what to do to help them with their big change.

Record your quit or change date here.

..... / /

When Tara, Samir, Kiah and Alex spoke with the workers they talked about things they could do to help them with their big change. They came up with a list... *Things like:*

- 1 Ask a friend or relative to help - tell them about your plans and ask for their support
- 2 Take things a little easier the first couple of weeks
- 3 If you start to crave, go through your list of reasons for change again
- 4 Remind yourself why you want to change
- 5 Plan ahead - work out what you will do instead of smoking
- 6 Reward yourself with something special just for you
- 7 Hang out with friends that don't smoke or join a new group
- 8 Do fun things like going to the movies, beach, football game
- 9 Avoid your 'danger zones' and people who smoke
- 10 Deal with cravings, don't give in - remember they will pass
- 11 You'll feel lots of things but it can be managed.

Why planning ahead is so important.

Identifying your **DANGER ZONES...**



Tara, Samir, Kiah and Alex also spoke with the workers about how to know when they were in the **DANGER ZONE** and what to do to avoid this.

The workers explained that **DANGER ZONES** are situations where you usually smoke cannabis. When you hang out with certain people or go to certain places this can cause you to crave. They also talked with Tara, Samir, Kiah and Alex about managing cravings and withdrawals and came up with a few ideas on how they could do this.

They also found out that holding smoke in your lungs for a long time, especially when using bongs, increases your cancer risk. Also they might think about what could have been added to the bag to make it heavier or the cannabis look fresh, as well as what might have been used in growing it.

Things you can do to deal with a **DANGER ZONE**

- Try and delay cravings by waiting for 15 minutes. The craving will pass and you will find it easier each time just like surfers ride over waves (urge surfing)
- YOU CAN LIVE WITHOUT CANNABIS – It's not a need like air, water and food
- Do something different every time you feel like smoking cannabis eg. swim/skate/ride, listen to your iPod, play XBOX, movies, watch a DVD
- Remind yourself every day of your success. Treat yourself to a reward. Remember the hard work you have put in
- If things are getting really hard and you want to use, call some of your friends that are helping you get through this. "I will call Dave who is supportive of my trying to change"
- Avoid friends that smoke
- Clean your room, wash clothes and remove anything that reminds you of cannabis

Let's look at how Tara, Samir, Kiah and Alex handled their **DANGER ZONES...**

Dealing with **DANGER ZONES**

*Tara really enjoys dancing so she joined a dance group that meets twice a week in the evenings at the youth centre. Her **DANGER ZONE** was when she was bored and dancing gave her something to do.*

*Samir found that when he was hanging out with his friends at the park he smoked cannabis. So he decided that this was a **DANGER ZONE** for him. He thought that starting to go to the local gym would help him get fit and hang around a different group of people.*

*Kiah knew that her **DANGER ZONE** was her friends at TAFE. She decided that she would talk to her TAFE Counsellor and see what she could do.*

*Alex started playing football again. He found that this kept him busy at training on weeknights and during the weekends. This kept his mind off smoking cannabis and away from his **DANGER ZONE** of hanging out with his friends on the weekend. His girlfriend and his parents came to watch him play and cheer him on.*

*For this to work for YOU, you need to choose an activity that you like, is important to you and that you find fun.
Remember this is YOUR PLAN!!*



The 5Ds will help you cut down or quit using cannabis:

- *Distracting - Think about something else or do something else that will take your mind off your cravings*
- *Delaying - If you have an urge to smoke, wait for a while before you act on it. You will usually feel better after about 15 minutes*
- *Don't math*

What positive changes did they make?



Tara cut down on her energy drinks and started making her own fresh juice every morning.



Samir started sleeping regular hours and eating healthy meals.



Kiah made sure she didn't have too many cigarettes before she went to sleep.



Alex focussed on his football and never missed his training nights.

Acting on your decision & making the effort to change

So, Samir, Tara, Kiah and Alex have spent time talking with the workers over the last few weeks, they have listed their reasons for change and worked out a plan. They understand about their **DANGER ZONES** and how to avoid them and what to do to handle their changes and feelings & cravings.

What about you?????

Are you ready to put all your hard work into action now... Just do it! Don't put it off again.

- Remember, if you follow the ideas in this booklet you are headed for success in your choice to change!
- Sometimes you may say things like, "I will have just one cone", or "It's a special occasion".....Keep strong in your decision to quit and change. It's normal to struggle with your change, but don't worry, it gets easier as time goes on.
- You may feel like you have you have lost a friend because your drug use has been a part of your life for so long but this will pass and you will start to experience many new opportunities as you change.
- Give yourself a reward!!!! Plan to do something special with the money you have saved by not smoking.
- At the end of each week, think of the good things and be proud of the hard work and effort you have made.

Just before we finish...

Keeping on the right track

If you do happen to use cannabis again, don't beat yourself up about it. This doesn't mean you have failed. Take a look at where things went wrong and see if you can do something differently next time so the same thing doesn't happen again.

Tara's dance group finished for the term and she was bored one night so she went to hang out with her old friends and smoked some cannabis with them.

Samir bumped into some of his old friends a few weeks after he stopped smoking cannabis and they got talking and they were all going for a session. They asked him to come along and Samir went with them and had a cone.

Remember you can...

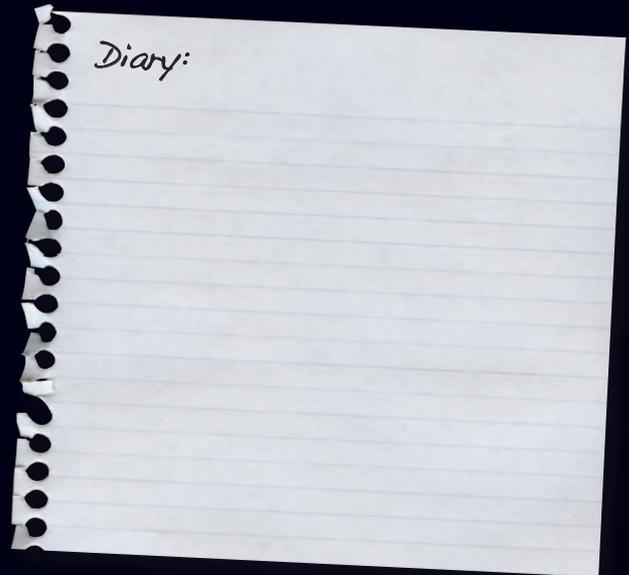
- Avoid those friends
- Think about why you ended up hanging out with them when you know they smoke cannabis
- Practice delaying and distracting if you do see your friends again
- Have really good and supportive friends

Remind yourself what your goals are and the reasons you want

to change.

Consider all the things you have to look forward to:

- More money and what you will do with it
- More time to do the stuff you used to do before you started using
- Getting more done, having more energy
- Moving on with your life
- More time to do the things you have always wanted to do



How about you?

What do you need to do now to keep on the right track?
Make a list of all the things you may need to do to get there.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.



change is: desire + effort
+ commitment + persistence
= **REWARD**

YOU CAN DO IT!!!

...and you don't have to
do it alone.

My support people are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.