**Let’s Talk Pot**

**Topic**

Cannabis 101 (decision making, health impacts, laws and recommendations)

**Audience**

Gr. 8-10 (can be easily adapted for other grades too)

**Time**

1 hour

**Physical and Health Education Leaning Standards**

Grades 4 and 5: managing problems related to mental well-being and substance use, understanding the potential effects and harms of psychoactive substances such as cannabis and strategies for preventing personal harms.

Grade 6: responding to emergencies and strategies for managing personal and social risks related to psychoactive substances and potentially addictive behaviours.

Grade 7: strategies to protect themselves and others from potential abuse, exploitation and harm in a variety of settings.

Grades 8 to 12: healthy choices and their influence on physical, emotional and mental well-being, managing problems related to mental well-being and substance use and how advocating for mental health and well-being of others connects students to the community.

**Objective or Intention**

* Students will be aware of the chemical components of cannabis and methods of consumption
* Students will be able to identify the health impacts of marijuana
* Students will have practice with, and identify factors affecting decision-making

**Materials**

* Whiteboard and markers
* Pretzels and write ups for this activity (see appendix)
* Scenario cards and optional worksheets (see appendix)
* Optional powerpoint presentation that corresponds to this lesson plan (available online-----------)

**Ice Breaker and intro**

Welcome to the class and introductions (if necessary).

**Explain:**

* Today’s lesson is about cannabis. It became legal fall 2018 and yet there might be a lot we don’t know. It’s important to understand what cannabis is, the health impacts it may have, and the laws around it.
* The intentions of this lesson is simply to give you some facts and tools to make your own decisions. (Can use statements such as “it’s your life, your body, your decision.”)

**Activity 1: Temperature Test**

Read the questions below and ask students to go to one side of the classroom according to how strongly they agree or disagree with the statements. Strongly agree (left side of classroom); neutral (middle of classroom) disagree (right side of classroom).

Suggested questions:

* Chocolate ice cream is better than vanilla ice cream
* Legalizing pot is a good idea
* I deal with stress in a healthy way
* Winter is the best season in the Yukon
* Pot has medicinal properties
* In the Yukon, you have to be 19 to buy alcohol and weed
* Driving high is safer than driving drunk
* Tim Hortons is better than Starbucks
* If weed is getting legalized, it must be safe

**Speaking points:**

Not everyone agreed on each question. We are all going to have different values, opinions and beliefs. It is important to be respectful of other people even when you feel differently about something. Especially important when we are talking about topics such as cannabis.

**Cannabis 101** (corresponds with slides 1-6)

Ask students “What words come to mind when you hear the word cannabis?”

Write their ideas on the board.

Circle the key points that you will focus on in this lesson. Validate what knowledge they already have as a class.

**Speaking points:**

* Marijuana comes from the cannabis plant; an annual flowering plant
* There are 100 chemical compounds known as cannabinoids within the plant. The two most common cannabinoids are THC and CBD.
* THC is what makes people feel ‘high’, it can affect your 5 senses and how you think.
* CBD is often linked to the medical benefits of the plant. For example, it is sometimes used to assist with nausea. A high level of CBD and little to no THC would not make someone feel high.
* There are different ways of consuming cannabis, examples are:
  + Joints- crushed up buds/flowers rolled into what looks similar to a cigarette and smoked.
  + Vaping – different from vaping flavoured ’e-juice’ or nicotine because this has cannabis. The product is heated to release the chemicals instead of burning like in a joint.
  + Edibles – cannabis is cooked into foods such as brownies, cookies, chocolate, gummies…etc.
  + Tinctures – oils infused with cannabis are consumed by putting it in the mouth or under the tongue.
  + Shatter, hash, wax – produced by extracting the THC from the plant and creates a very strong concentrate.
* It affects people differently, can be positive, negative, medicinal.
* Brainstorm with the students the potential health risks associated with each:
  + Joints- smoke is bad for airways and lungs.
  + Vaping – we don’t know the long term effects, it’s still inhaling so bad for respiratory tract and lungs.
  + Edibles – we might not know there is pot in it, we don’t know how much is needed to feel high (is different between people based on tolerance, metabolism…etc.), can lead to overconsumption/poisoning, can last longer than anticipated.
  + Concentrated products – higher risks because it’s stronger, dangers in the production of these products (not legally for sale yet so made at home usually with solvents).
* Fact or False: Pot potency has been steadily increasing over the years.
  + Fact. THC levels can be up to 30% in bud form now. Back in the 80’s and prior it had levels closer to 4-12%. Shatter and other concentrates contain up to 90% THC. These high concentrations may be linked to increased tolerance and dependence.
  + see appendix for more Fact or False examples.

**Social expectations, pressures and norms** (corresponds with slides 6-9)

**Speaking points:**

* Yukon statistics show that among Yukon students in Gr.9&10, that an average of 15% smoke pot. That’s ~75% who don’t. (Note: stat to be updated when 2018 HBSC results are in).
* Often people believe that more students use cannabis often. Ask students “why might they think that?”
  + Show slide 8 and/or discuss all the areas of media where pot is present. Have the students give feedback of what songs, books, movies, magazines…etc., have reference to cannabis.
* Explain that it’s present in all sorts of media, so it’s easy to think that lots more kids smoke pot than the actual stats.
* Regardless of the stats, at some point you’ll need to decide for yourself (which is an ongoing decision).

**Activity 2: Pretzel Pusher**

Pair up students, hand out pretzels and student instruction cards (see appendix). Based on the instruction card, students will eat or avoid eating the pretzels.

Discussion questions: Did your partner eat the pretzels? Was it difficult to say no? What made it difficult? What strategies worked well for saying no? What was it like eating pretzels if you didn’t want to? What about if you were hungry? Other factors that made saying no difficult?

Speaking points:

* The reality is that saying no is tough. And it’s not just pretzels, it gets harder when it comes to things like pot, alcohol, going out, sex…etc. and how you will respond is an important skill to practice.   
  \*Note: remind students we aren’t here to teach “say no to drugs”, we are giving them the information to make their own decisions and practice how to be clear about their decisions.
* Explain: Take time to consider your values (e.g. family, peer group, faith, religion, culture) and how they might help you make a decision before you get asked.

**Health Impacts** (corresponds with slides 10-16)

**Speaking points:**

* Fact or False: You can’t overdose on pot.
  + Hmmmm…. Generally speaking the term overdose means someone’s heart rate and breathing slow down so much that they could die. Nobody has died from pot *alone* but “greening out” or poisoning is when someone feels so sick and panicked, that they think they are going to die. Many people end up going to the hospital.
  + This highlights the importance of safe storage of cannabis away from children and pets, as well as starting with low doses and going slow. Everyone’s tolerance is different.
* Mixing cannabis and other substances increases risks, decreases awareness, can cause increased feelings of panic, paranoia or anxiety. Mixing also increased likelihood of getting too intoxicated, causing vomiting or fainting.
* Effects on the brain: our brains are not fully developed until around 25 years of age. Cannabis use impairs brain development (e.g. memory, decision-making, problem solving).
* Links to mental illness: regular use is associated with psychosis (anxiety, paranoia, hallucinations, delusions, mood changes). We acknowledge that some youth feel pot helps deal with stress and yet it can be tricky because it is not a sustainable coping mechanism. Each time cannabis is used, it could result in these negative effects. It’s important for people to develop healthier coping mechanisms that will work better in the long run.
* Fact or False: People can develop a dependence to cannabis
  + Fact, 1 in 6 individuals who use cannabis during adolescence will experience problematic use, physical dependence and/or withdrawal symptoms.
* Potential for dependence: in young people, daily use of cannabis can develop into an addiction. Estimated 9% will develop dependence and it’s 7X more likely if use begins as a youth.

**Driving and Weed** (corresponds with slides 17-19)

**Activity 3: Hockey Goalie**

Write PREP, PLAY, and DISTRACTIONS on the board.

Ask students to “Imagine you are a hockey goalie. What type of things do you need to do before the game?”

List responses under PREP (e.g. gear, hydration, mental prep).

Ask, “What do you need to protect your goal?” List responses under PROTECT (e.g. fast, responsive/reactive, focus).

Ask, “What types of distractions might occur during the game?” List responses under DISTRACTIONS (e.g. crowd, other players, score, pain).

If someone were to be stoned for this game, what might be impacted? Point out that everything we need to prep, play and handle distractions will be affected by being stoned.   
Discuss the relationship between hockey and driving. We need to be focused, responsive, deal with distractions…and this is much more difficult, even impossible, while under the influence.

**Speaking points:**

* Cannabis increases the risk of a motor vehicle accident by impairing the drivers’ reaction time, coordination, and concentration.
* In Canada, adolescents between 15-19 years old are the most likely to drive after using cannabis.
* It’s not legal, make other arrangements to get to where you need to go.

**Recap and reminders** (corresponds with slides 20-24)

**Speaking points:**

* We’ve discussed what cannabis is, how it affects our health, how to make decisions around it, and now the choice is yours. Here are a few key points to keep in mind moving forward:
  + Consider your values (family, friends group, faith, religion)
  + Keep in mind your age in regards to your health and developing brain
  + Harm reduction recommendations: don’t use, delay use, decrease use, don’t use and drive, don’t smoke it, careful dosing)
  + The law: it is not legal for people under 19 to possess or consume, it’s not legal to share with a minor, or to drive while under the influence.

**Scenarios and refusal skills** (corresponds with slides 29-41)

**Activity 4: Scenario Solvers**

Ask students to work through a scenario (see appendix) as a team or individually. Have them review a few options and consider what the pros and cons of each choice would be. The group does not have to agree on one option.

**Resources and references** (slide 28)

* Resources for more info/support
  + **Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services:** Access to mental wellness and substance use treatment services for youth and families 1-866-456-3838
  + **Youth In BC:** on line support, confidential, available noon-1am. Youthinbc.ca
  + **8-1-1 Health Link BC**: Access to a registered nurse, available 24/7
  + **Kids Help Line**: Counsellors available 24/7. 1-800-668-6868
* Be sure to have resources (ex. school counsellor, community support) listed on the board.