

DISCUSSION GUIDE

To support the Weed Whacked film for youth ages 12-17

OVERVIEW

Weed Whacked is 19 min film for youth ages 12-17 filmed in Tahoe-Truckee, finished in 2021 as a collaboration between Gateway Mountain Center and The Future Without Drug Dependence Coalition. It features young adults age 18-23 telling their personal stories of cannabis use, what attracted them to using, what they noticed about their use and how they ultimately quit with the help of friends, family, community resources and focusing on their "natural highs" as an alternative.

KNOW BEFORE VIEWING

The short film was designed to be shown within a class period in order to stimulate deeper exploration and discussion on the topic of cannabis, use and misuse.

Over 253 local youth previewed the film and offered feedback in focus groups to help finalize the messages believed to be most useful to teens. UC Davis and the National Institute of Drug Abuse provided content on the science which was weaved in with stories.

Community resources on recovery and addiction are provided at the end of the film and in this guide.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Before Showing

Review the vocabulary and definitions used in the film with students.

Consider: Will you use in classrooms, assemblies, small team meetings, peer support groups? Will you have large or small group discussion, or written assignments? Do you have trusted youth leaders who could facilitate small groups and help facilitate honest dialogue? Is this best used during Red Ribbon Week(Oct), Substance Abuse Recovery Month(Sept), Drug Facts Week(Feb)with local panelists or part of regular curriculum?

How will you prepare students for the fact that this topic may be triggering and who is the appropriate person to refer them to at your site for additional support?



Contents

- Definitions prior to showing
- Group Questions Guide (middle school and up)
- Living Room Conversation Style Discussion Guide (high school or advanced)
- Further Resources

Film English Version:

<https://vimeo.com/543236903>

Film Spanish Subtitle Version:

<https://vimeo.com/638053123/ebdd02e39e>



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DEFINITIONS

Review vocabulary prior to viewing

NEUROTRANSMITTER:

Neurotransmitters are endogenous (naturally occurring) chemicals in the body that allow brain cells (neurons) to communicate with each other throughout the body. (National Institutes of Health NIH).

THC:

The nickname for Delta 9-tetrahydrocannabinol. THC is the chemical responsible for most of marijuana's psychological effects. It produces the high sensation. THC is one of many compounds found in the resin secreted by glands of the cannabis(marijuana)plant. THC closely resembles the human bodies natural endocannabinoids such as anandamide and 2-Ag, which work as neurotransmitters in the brain. (Livescience May 18, 2017)

ENDOCANNABINOID SYSTEM:

An important body system that regulates or modulates the function of the brain, endocrine (hormone), and immune tissues in the body. It also plays a very important regulatory role in the secretion of hormones related to reproductive functions and response to stress. (Pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)

DOPAMINE:

A type of neurotransmitter. Your body makes it, and your nervous system uses it to send messages between nerve cells (a chemical messenger). Dopamine plays a role in how we feel pleasure. It's a big part of our unique human ability to think and plan. It helps us strive, focus, and find things interesting.



GABA RECEPTORS:

Receptors in the brain for the neurotransmitter GABA. The role of GABA is to inhibit or reduce the activity of the neurons or nerve cells. Research suggests that GABA helps to control fear and anxiety when neurons become overexcited. Lower-than-normal levels of GABA in the brain have been linked to schizophrenia, depression, anxiety, and sleep disorders.

12 STEP PROGRAMS:

Free peer support programs to assist people in recovery from addiction.

Examples include: NA (Narcotics anonymous), AA(Alcoholics Anonymous), MA(Marijuana Anonymous). Involves going to regular group meetings; being with and talking to other addicts, getting peer support to stay sober, using the tools of the program such as meeting attendance, reading, writing, service, calling friends. This is known as "working the steps". 12-Step uses a spiritual framework and fellowship with others in recovery to understand causes and possible solutions to addiction.

GROUP QUESTIONS

Suggested questions after viewing the film (Middle school and up).

1

In your interpretation, how did the youth end up using cannabis?

2

What role do you think relationships play in using drugs or alcohol?

3

Why does Professor Lin say that cannabis is not advised for young people?

4

According to the personal stories of people in the film, or other people you have known, can cannabis be addictive for some? What makes you say that?

5

What other ways have you seen cannabis or other drugs and alcohol get in the way of teens/peers living their best lives?

6

What were the signs in the film that cannabis use had become a problem? What are other signs someone might see or experience?

7

What are the reasons people in the film gave for quitting marijuana? Did they want to give it up? What makes you say that? What are some other reasons for giving up an unhealthy habit?



8

What are some of the strategies the young people used to quit cannabis or deal with their urges or cravings?

9

Share some ways youth can support their friends in staying sober or in avoiding use of cannabis, drugs or alcohol?

10

What are natural ways to feel good or relieve stress that people in the film talked about? Can you share some of your favorite "natural highs"?

11

If a friend shared that they needed help to stop a drug or alcohol habit, what are the resources in your community that you could suggest might help? What would you be willing to do to help a friend?



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LIVING ROOM CONVERSATIONS STYLE DISCUSSION

Format for using small groups of 4-6 youth to communicate across differences while building understanding and relationships. To be used after watching the film. (60 min-90 min) adapted from livingroomconversations.org



I INTRODUCTIONS: WHY WE ARE HERE (5 MIN)

I. Facilitator shares what we are about to do. Breaks youth into small groups of 4-6 and hands out copies of this to each table.

II CONVERSATION AGREEMENTS: HOW WE'LL ENGAGE (5MIN)

These will set the tone of our conversation; participants may volunteer to take turns reading them aloud.

- Be curious and listen to understand. Conversation is as much about listening as it is about talking. You might enjoy exploring how others' experiences have shaped their values and perspectives.
- Show respect and suspend judgment. People tend to judge one another. Setting judgement aside opens you up to learning from others and makes them feel respected and appreciated. Try to truly listen, without interruption or crosstalk.
- Note any common ground as well as any differences. Look for areas of agreement or shared values that may arise and take an interest in the differing beliefs and opinions of others.
- Be authentic and welcome that from others. Share what's important to you. Speak from your experience. Be considerate of others who are doing the same.
- Be purposeful and to the point. Do your best to keep your comments concise and relevant to the question you are answering. Be conscious of sharing airtime with other participants.
- Own and guide the conversation. Take responsibility for the quality of your participation and the conversation as a whole. Be proactive in getting yourself and others back on track if needed. Use an agreed upon signal like the "time out" sign if you feel the agreements are not being honored.

III QUESTION ROUNDS- WHAT WE WILL TALK ABOUT

ROUND 1 GETTING TO KNOW YOU (10 MIN)

EACH PARTICIPANT CAN TAKE 1-2 MINUTES TO SHARE NAME AND ANSWER ONE OF THESE QUESTIONS:

- What are your hopes and concerns for your family, school, community and/or the country?
- What would your best friend say about who you are?
- What sense of purpose/mission/duty guides you in your life?



ROUND II EXPLORE THE TOPIC: DRUG AND ALCOHOL ADDICTION(40MIN)

One participant can volunteer to read this paragraph:

Reflect on stories from the film "Weed Whacked". It appears some youth start using cannabis, for connection, alleviating stress, coping, and feeling safe to be themselves. Young people in the film developed problems from their use, including addiction. What causes addiction? Is it a compulsion and/or a choice? What problems might it lead to it and what is the most helpful response?

DIRECTIONS

Each person takes ~2 minutes to answer ONE of the questions below (of their choice) without interruption or crosstalk. After everyone has answered, the group may take a few minutes for clarifying or follow up questions/responses. After everyone has a chance, continue taking turns, exploring additional questions as time allows.

- What family, cultural, religious, and social norms related to cannabis did you grow up with?
- What guides your decision to use or abstain from cannabis or vaping? Share something from your life experience that informs your position on cannabis and/or other drugs or alcohol.
- It's understandable that people may turn to substances to seek relief and comfort from painful lives. In your experience, when has that kind of usage been healthy and when has it been a problem?
- Do you have experience with addiction in your life? Talk about that if you feel comfortable.
- Is cannabis addiction a problem for some? How is it different or similar from other addictions? In what ways is it a problem for you, your community?
- What steps would you take to address cannabis abuse? What is the government's role (if any) in helping end youth drug addiction?
- What do you see as the primary cause of addiction? And how can we address this cause?
- Do you have opportunities for social occasions that are cannabis or alcohol-free in your community? If so, what is that like for you? If not, what could cannabis or alcohol-free occasions look and feel like for you?

ROUND III REFLECTING ON THE CONVERSATION(15 MIN)

TAKE 2 MINUTES TO ANSWER ONE OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

- What was most meaningful/valuable to you in this Living Room Conversation?
- What learning, new understanding or common ground was found on the topic?
- How has this conversation changed your perception of anyone in this group, including yourself?
- Is there a next step you would like to take based upon the conversation you just had?

CLOSING-5MIN THANKS AND SHARE RESOURCES FOR SUPPORT

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Share with Students for Referral

GATEWAY MOUNTAIN CENTER

Provides many programs for youth including 4 Roots Wellness Center, Mindfulness Based Substance Use Treatment, Mindful Awareness Self Knowledge, and Peaceful Warriors Circle.

Also provides Free Narcan Kits to reverse an opioid overdose.

Contact:

(530) 426-2110 sierraexperience.org

10038 Meadowood Way Unit D,

Truckee Ca. 96161

Hours 9-5pm Monday-Friday

@gatewaymountaincenter

TAHOE FOREST HEALTH SYSTEM MEDICATION ASSISTED TREATMENT(MAT) PROGRAM

Tahoe Forest's Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) program stops the use of the problem drug. It combats the effects of withdrawal and eases cravings. Additionally, MAT addresses the underlying issues that trigger inappropriate drug use and helps people move into healthy, addiction-free lifestyles, or recovery. Also hands out free Narcan Kits at the ER to reverse an opioid overdose.

For MAT Contact:

(530) 582-1212

<https://www.tfhd.com/medication-assisted-treatment-mat-clinic>

Behavioral Health Clinic-Old Gateway Center

10978 Donner Pass Road

Truckee Ca. 96161

Hours 9-5pm Monday-Friday



NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

12-step peer support program. To find a meeting near you text or call (888) 850-2205 or visit Sierra Sage Region of Narcotics Anonymous www.na.org/meetingsearch/

ATHLETE COMMITTED

A school-based healthy lifestyle and athlete leadership program. Ask your coach or school AC advisor for more information.

PLACER AND NEVADA COUNTY HELP LINE:

Call 211

GRANITE WELLNESS CENTER

Provides multiple programs for youth including Student Intervention Program, Student Assistance Program, and Family Recovery Education Series. Also provides Free Narcan Kits to reverse an opioid overdose and Fentanyl Test Strips
Contact: (530) 587-8194

<https://www.granitewellness.org>

10015 Palisades Dr. Suite 1

Truckee Ca. 96161

Hours: Monday, Thurs. Friday 8-5pm,
and Tues. & Wed. 9-8pm.