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Examining What the Use of Cannabis in the NFL Means For Parents, Teachers, and Our Youth #2

March 14, 2017



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Continued on from **Part 1:** **Examining the Use of Cannabis in the NFL**

It is no secret that drug abuse, especially heroin, is at an epidemic level in America. According to the [American Society of Addiction Medication](#),

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deaths related to prescription pain relievers, and 12,990 overdose deaths related to heroin in 2015.” This means that our youth are living in environments where parents and family members are addicted to drugs. In fact, according to Drug Rehab, a drug rehabilitation website, “More than 8 million children live with at least one parent who’s addicted to alcohol or drugs. This number includes 14 percent of children younger than 2, 12 percent aged 6 to 11 years old, and 10 percent of youth between the ages of 12 and 17.”

Not only is drug use an epidemic in America, but our youth are regularly exposed to it. Setting no example has led our youth and teens to addiction themselves. The organization [Do Something](#), which is an initiative to get kids off drugs, list the following statistics.

at state services and conferences. Moreover, he has written curriculum from scratch and published information specific to physical education in-state and nationally recognized publications and websites. He has also developed and teaches online physical education related courses at [NewPhysicalEducator.com](#) and teaches two online courses, [Integrating Literacy into Physical Education](#) and [Teaching PE in a Limited Space](#).



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1. More teens die from prescription drugs than heroin/cocaine combined.
2. In 2013, more high school seniors regularly used marijuana than cigarettes as 22.7 percent smoked pot in the last month, compared to 16.3% who smoked cigarettes.
3. Sixty percent of high school seniors don't see regular marijuana use as harmful, but THC (the active ingredient in the drug that causes addiction) is nearly five times stronger than it was 20 years ago.
4. One-third of teenagers who live in states with medical marijuana laws get their pot

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drugs taken. 60% of teens who abuse prescription drugs get them free from friends and relatives.

6. Adderall use (often prescribed to treat ADHD) has increased among high school seniors from 5.4% in 2009 to 7.5% this year.
7. Among high school seniors surveyed, 54% do not think regular steroid use is harmful, the lowest number since 1980 when the National Institute on Drug Abuse started asking about perception on steroids.
8. By the eighth grade, 28% of adolescents have consumed alcohol, 15% have smoked cigarettes, and 16.5% have used marijuana.
9. Teens who consistently learn about the risks of drugs from their parents are up to 50% less likely to use drugs than those who don't.
10. Six point five percent of high school seniors smoke pot daily, up from 5.1% five years ago. Meanwhile, less than 20% of 12th graders think occasional use is harmful, while less than 40% see regular use as harmful (lowest numbers since 1983).
11. About 50% of high school seniors do not think it's harmful to try crack or cocaine once or twice, and 40% believe it's not harmful to use heroin once or twice.

A Natural Consequence?

With football being one of the most popular professional sports in the world, especially in America, one could argue that the drug epidemic we face is not a direct fault of, but a natural consequence of the rampant use of opioids in the NFL. There is no hard evidence to back up this claim. This is a working theory that makes

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set a precedent for many American norms in society. The NFL has, for example, albeit slowly, shined a light on the dangers to the brain of playing football. This has become a heated debate with many NFL players [saying](#) they do not want their own children to play football. If we view the NFL as a trendsetter, then one can see how drug use in the NFL seeps into or popularizes drug use among Americans, especially youth who look up to these players. There are a lot of youth who look up to NFL athletes because of the numbers who play football themselves.

How Many Young People Think It's Okay to Do Drugs Because Their NFL Idol is Doing So?

Youth football is very popular. According to [Forbes](#), "There are an estimated 3 million or so children ages 6 to 18 playing football." As many young people look up to NFL players, how many think it is okay to do drugs because their NFL idol is doing so?

While this is not a question that can be answered with stats, it is a question that is worth considering and is not a far stretch to be a real possibility or at least a contributing factor in the drug epidemic among youth. That leads to a bigger question.

What Can Parents and Teachers Do to Help Youths Avoid Becoming a Drug Statistic?

The answer to this is simpler than you would imagine. We have to have meaningful dialogue, and it has to start early!

KidsHealth, a leading provider of health information for kids and parents, states, "A warm, open family environment—where kids



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When censored in their own homes, kids go elsewhere to find support and answers to their most important questions.” Talking to your children early and making it okay to come to you will make it easier to do so when the hard issues arise like drugs.”

This message holds true for teachers as well. There are some standard ways to talk to students and youth about drugs. KidsHealth gives a very informative article [here](#) on what to say to age group. You can also use this guide from [Drug Free](#). The bottom line is **to talk, educate, and make your classroom or home a place where your child will feel comfortable discussing drugs with you.**

Drugs Pose a Serious Threat to Our Youth

Through exposure from parents and family on drugs to the glorification or use of it in the NFL, we cannot ignore this issue. It is our jobs as parents and educators to make it okay to discuss and educate our youth on the dangers of drugs. This means making an environment where that hard conversation or series of teachable moments can occur with a positive effect. Making this difference in your one child or entire classrooms of children can save lives now and down the road. We must take action, as we are at a pivotal point in this epidemic where if we do not do something, we will suffer tremendously as a collective.

Feature image courtesy of, [Southern Arkansas University](#).

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