

healthy living

workbook

CANNABIS



MAKING CHOICES

ABOUT CANNABIS

PART ONE

Thinking about cannabis

Using cannabis comes with some risks to different areas of your health, even if you never become addicted to it.

This brief workbook is easy to understand and provides a way to assess your own cannabis use patterns, so you can get a better idea of your risk level.

If you then decide you want to change your cannabis consumption to a lower risk level, the workbook has some steps and tips to help you do that.





You may find this workbook helpful by using it on your own. You can also use it with the guidance of a health care professional.

Keep in mind that this workbook is only a self-help resource. It is not a tool for identifying medical problems. Nor is it a form of treatment for medical disorders.

If you ever feel that you need more help than this workbook offers, don't hesitate to reach out for support from your health care provider.

What is risky cannabis use?

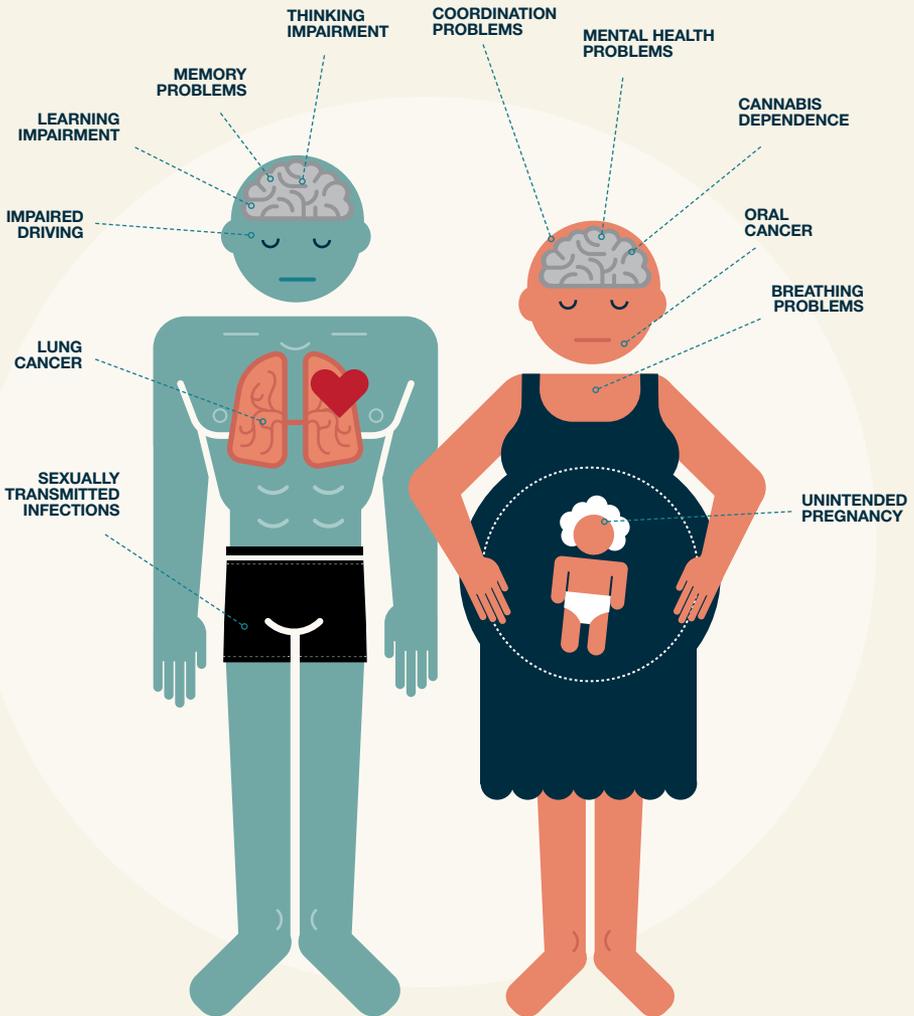
Most people at significant risk for health and social harms from cannabis are NOT addicted to it. Addiction (dependence) can certainly occur, particularly if first used before late adolescence or if used very often.

But even with less frequent use, cannabis may contribute to the impairment of memory, learning, alertness and coordination. It may also increase risks for onset or worsening of breathing disorders and mental health problems as well as some forms of cancer.

The likelihood and severity of these problems largely depends on four factors:

- **the method** you use to ingest the cannabis
vaporizing and edibles are less risky than smoking it
- **the strength** (THC level) of the cannabis used
lower levels of THC are less risky than higher
- **how frequently** you engage in cannabis use
less frequent use is less risky than more
- **the circumstances** of your cannabis use
situations not requiring alertness are safer

Cannabis and your health.



Here are six questions to help you review your cannabis use:

Circle the number for each question that fits your experience, then enter it in the box to the right.

	Never	Once or Twice	Monthly	Weekly	Daily or Almost Daily	TOTAL
During the past 3 months, how often have you used cannabis?	0	2	3	4	6	<input type="text"/>
During the past 3 months, how often have you felt a strong need to use cannabis?	0	3	4	5	6	<input type="text"/>
During the past 3 months, how often has your cannabis use caused problems for you or others?	0	4	5	6	7	<input type="text"/>
During the past 3 months, how often has your cannabis use made it harder to do important things?	0	5	6	7	8	<input type="text"/>

	No, Never	Yes, but not in the past 3 months	Yes, in the past 3 months	TOTAL
Has someone said that you should use cannabis less?	0	3	6	<input type="text"/>
Have you found it hard to use cannabis less?	0	3	6	<input type="text"/>

To get your **TOTAL SCORE** just add up the numbers in your six boxes.

TOTAL SCORE

Making sense of your total score

TOTAL score	Risk for health harms	Recommendation for non-pregnant adults
0 to 3	Low	If your risk level is low , you're less likely to experience health or social problems from your current pattern of cannabis use. This workbook may help you, your family or friends to avoid higher risk levels.
4 to 13	Marginal	If your risk level is marginal , there's a good chance you will experience some health or social problems in the near future unless you reduce your cannabis use. This workbook may help you better manage your use.
14 to 26	Medium	If your risk level is medium , you are likely starting to experience some health or social harms from your cannabis use. There's also a good chance that you will experience more problems in the near future. This workbook is designed to help you change your use pattern to a lower risk level.
27 to 39	High	<p>If your risk level is high, you are likely experiencing fairly severe health or social harms because of your cannabis use. Moreover, you face a chance of becoming addicted. That would make it even harder for you to avoid health and social harms down the road.</p> <p>You are strongly encouraged to seek immediate advice and support from a healthcare provider or addiction treatment professional. They will understand and guide you to the help you need. You can still use this workbook to focus on change and stay motivated.</p>

Let's look at your cannabis likes and dislikes

What do you **LIKE** about cannabis?

1. _____

2. _____

In what ways has cannabis been **HELPFUL** for you?

1. _____

2. _____

What do you **DISLIKE** about cannabis?

1. _____

2. _____

In what ways has cannabis been **HARMFUL** or **NOT HELPFUL** for you?

1. _____

2. _____

Reasons and challenges

What are some reasons you might want to reduce your use of cannabis?

- to avoid memory problems
- to avoid injuries
- to reduce health risks
- to spend less money
- to have better relationships
- to do better at work or school
- _____
- _____

What are some challenges to reducing how much you use cannabis?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Canada's lower-risk cannabis use guidelines*

The most effective way to avoid any risks of cannabis use is to abstain from use.

Early initiation of cannabis use should be avoided due to increased risk for a variety of adverse health outcomes.

Know the nature of the cannabis products you consume and avoid those with high THC-content levels.

Avoid synthetic forms of cannabis.

Avoid methods that involve smoking combusted cannabis material. Instead, use vaporizers or edibles.

Remember that vaporizers and edibles take longer to feel in your system. Be careful not to use too much.

Avoid practices such as deep-inhalation or breath-holding as these greatly increase the intake of toxic material.

Strive to limit your own cannabis use—and that of friends, peers or fellow users—to no more than occasional use.

Users should never drive (or operate other machinery) until at least 6 hours have passed after using cannabis.

Don't use if there's a history of psychosis in your family, if you have alcohol or other drug problems, or if you're pregnant.

Avoid combining the risk factors mentioned above and avoid mixing cannabis with the use of alcohol or other drugs.

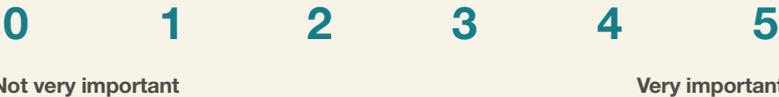
* Fischer, B., Russell, C., Sabioni, P., van den Brink, W., Le Foll, B., Hall, W., Rehm, J. & Room, R. (2017). *Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines (LRCUG): An evidence-based update*. *American Journal of Public Health*, 107(8).

Thinking about change

We've looked at what you like and dislike about using cannabis.

And we've talked about health and other problems that can arise from using cannabis in risky levels or ways.

From your perspective, how **important** is it for you to reduce how much you use cannabis?



How **ready** are you to begin reducing how much you use cannabis?



It's your choice

You have a wide range of options to choose from.

For example, you could...

- Option 1** - Stop using cannabis altogether
- Option 2** - Take a break from cannabis for a month
- Option 3** - Cut back on your cannabis use
- Option 4** - Follow the Lower Risk Cannabis Guidelines
- Option 5** - Carry on with using cannabis the way you do now

Which of these feels like the best choice for you?

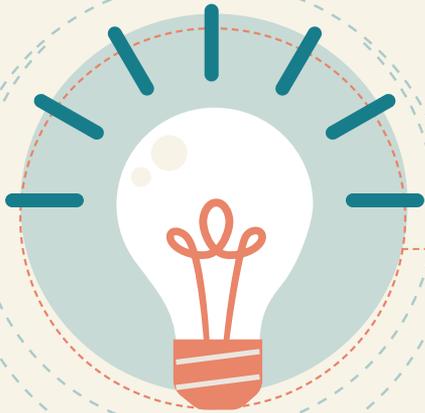
Record your choice below and on the top of page 17.

If you're thinking about cutting back (option 3), say by how much. *(Example: reduce use to no more than 1-2 days per week)*

I'm going to...

1. _____
2. _____

Tips for using cannabis less



PLAN AHEAD

If certain people or places lead you to use cannabis more than you want to, then avoid them. If using at home is a problem, don't have cannabis in the house. When an urge to use hits, accept that it will crest like a wave and pass. Remind yourself of your reasons for changing, and focus on healthier ways to spend your time.



FIND FUN

Fill free time with healthy hobbies and positive people. Find better ways to feel comfortable in social situations, manage your moods, and cope with your problems. Get involved with an activity that doesn't involve cannabis.



DON'T MIX

If you do use, don't use with alcohol or other drugs. Also, avoid using cannabis if you're taking prescription medications. The combination of cannabis with these other substances may lead to dangerous side effects.



PACE YOURSELF

If you do use on one day, skip using for at least the next day. An important part of reducing your use is to break the pattern of daily use. Stay in control of the cannabis by using it no more than every other day.

Things to **REMEMBER**

- 1** For the next two weeks keep track of how often you're using cannabis with the tracking tool on the next page.
- 2** Notice how using less affects your mood and relationships.
- 3** Deal with things that may be getting in the way of changing.
- 4** Accept support from your doctor, nurse, friend, or someone else you trust.

Personal tracker

Keep track of your cannabis use for the next two weeks. Check (✓) whether you used or didn't use for each day.

		WEEK 1							
		MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	DAYS:
I DIDN'T USE									
I DID USE									

		WEEK 2							
		MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	DAYS:
I DIDN'T USE									
I DID USE									

Totals for Week 1 plus Week 2... I didn't use

	DAYS
--	------

I did use

	DAYS
--	------

(Tear along dotted line)

(Tear along dotted line)

Record what you learn

As you work on changing your cannabis use, keep track of the things you learn below.

How has using cannabis less affected your mood and sense of wellbeing?

How has using cannabis less affected your relationships with other people?

What have you learned that might make it easier for you to use cannabis less in the future?

End of Part One

PART TWO

Building on experience

In Part One (page 11), you said that you'd change your cannabis use in the following way:

What worked and what didn't?

Whether you could make your planned changes or not, you may have had some difficult situations.

When taking steps to use less, what steps didn't work as well as you wanted?

In what situations was it harder to use less?

parties

frustration

weekends

boredom

friends

feeling depressed

family

feeling lonely

celebrations

feeling nervous

feeling happy

anger

with meals

feeling stressed

when drinking

arguments

Building on your strengths

When taking steps to use less what steps worked well for you?

How **much** were you able to reduce your use of cannabis so far?

0

1

2

3

4

5

Less than I planned

As much as I planned

More than I planned

How **important** is it for you to keep working on using cannabis less?

0

1

2

3

4

5

Not very important

Very important

How **ready** are you to keep working on using cannabis less?

0

1

2

3

4

5

Not very ready

Very ready

What cannabis use changes do you want to work on **NOW**?

I want to work toward the same goals as before

I want to work on maintaining the changes I've already succeeded in making.

OR, I want to: _____

What things could you do now to help you reach these goals?

For example, are there any ideas from what you recorded on page 16?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

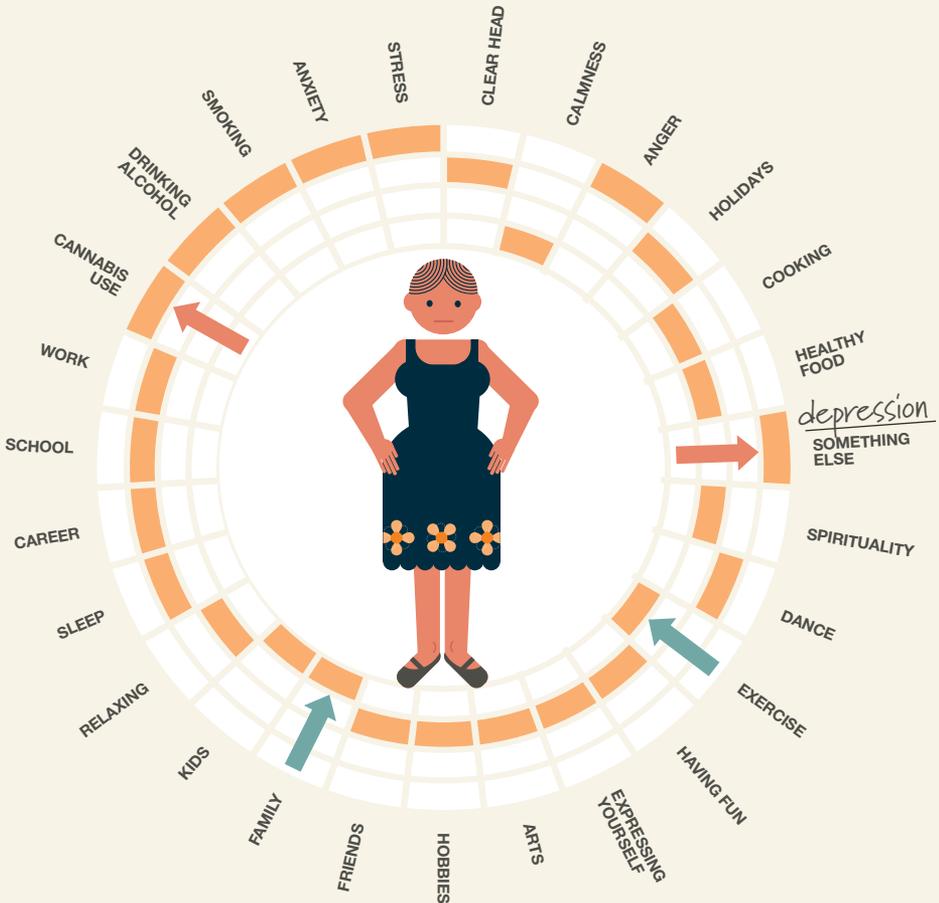
4. _____

5. _____

Change is hard. It takes time and can be slow at first. That's OK.

The BIG picture

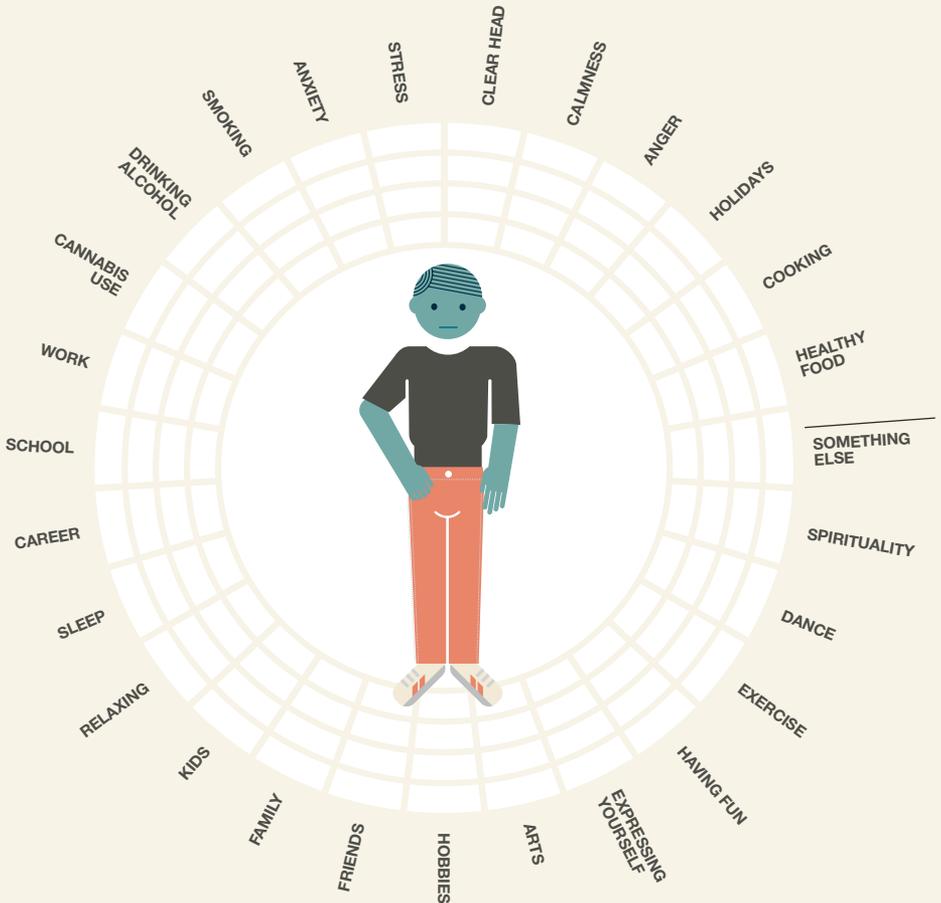
Managing your cannabis use is easier if you work toward healthier living overall. Have a look at this example and then give it a try on the next page. This person wants to push some things away from the centre of her life; such as depression, and cannabis use. She also wants to bring some things closer to the centre of her life, such as family and exercise.



What's important to you?

Fill in the boxes closer to you for the things that you would like to make a greater part of your life.

Fill in the boxes further away from you for the things that you would like to make a smaller part of your life. Keep this BIG picture in mind as you continue to work on reducing your use of cannabis.



Be ready to say “No thanks”

Planning comfortable ways to deal with pressure can help you stay on track. Some reasons you could use include:

- “No thanks, I’m driving.”
- “I told my family I would cut down.”
- “My doctor says I shouldn’t use cannabis while taking medication.”

Think of what you can say if you are offered cannabis.

When people offer me cannabis, I will say:

**WHEN
OFFERED
CANNABIS YOU
MIGHT SAY**

**“NO THANKS, I’M
DRIVING TONIGHT.”**



Reward yourself

It helps to reward yourself when making hard changes. By using cannabis less, you are saving time and money that could be now used for other things.

For example, you can spend more time with friends and family, exercise, explore a new sport or activity, or volunteer in your community.

How many **hours** each week did you usually spend on getting or using cannabis before starting to use less?

HOURS

What will you do with the **time** you are saving now by using cannabis less?

How many **dollars** each week did you usually spend on cannabis before starting to use less?

DOLLARS

What will you do with the **money** you are saving now by using cannabis less?

Build Connections

Keep in mind the people or groups who can support you as you change your cannabis use habits. Consider spending more time with people who care about your health and well-being.



Again **REMEMBER** *these key things...*

- 1** For the next two weeks keep track of how often you're using cannabis with the tracking tool on the next page.
- 2** Notice how using less affects your mood and relationships.
- 3** Deal with things that may be getting in the way of changing.
- 4** Accept support from your doctor, nurse, friend, or someone else you trust.

Personal tracker

Keep track of your cannabis use for **another** two weeks. Check (✓) whether you used or didn't use for each day.

WEEK 3								
	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	DAYS:
I DIDN'T USE								
I DID USE								

WEEK 4								
	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	DAYS:
I DIDN'T USE								
I DID USE								

Totals for Week 3 plus Week 4...

I didn't use

	DAYS
--	------

I did use

	DAYS
--	------

(Tear along dotted line)

(Tear along dotted line)

Record what you learn

As you work on changing your cannabis use, keep track of the things you learn below.

How has using cannabis less affected your mood and sense of wellbeing?

How has using cannabis less affected your relationships with other people?

What have you learned that might make it easier for you to use cannabis less in the future?

End of Part Two

Going forward

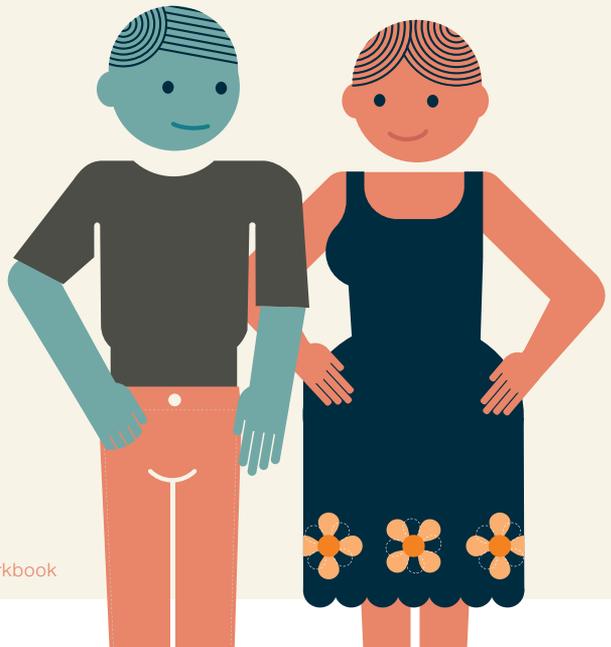
You've arrived at the end of the workbook, but you can keep reaching for your goals. Build on the changes you've already succeeded in making.

Go back and answer the questions on page 5 again. This time the questions can just apply to the past month. You can do this every month to confirm your progress.

If you ever feel that your risk level is not getting as low as you'd like, consider going through the workbook again while also getting advice from your health care provider.

It's all about making healthy choices and getting help when needed.

You can do it.



More information

Changing For Good

by James O Prochaska

Thoughts and Feelings: Taking Control of Your Moods and Your Life

by Matthew McKay, Martha
Davis and Patrick Fanning

The Relaxation & Stress Reduction Workbook

by Martha Davis and Matthew
McKay

Overcoming Insomnia and Sleep Problems

by Colin A Espie

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