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## **Cannabis may reduce depression**

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**15 October, 2005**

## **THE ARTICLE**

### **Cannabis may reduce depression**

Scientists in Canada have published a report that shows cannabis, or marijuana, may reduce depression. A research team from the University of Saskatchewan found that a cannabis-like chemical made new brain cells grow in rats. The same cells affect how worried or sad humans are. The researchers reported the rats were less anxious and depressed. In the study, the animals were injected with high levels of the chemical for a month. The rats were less afraid when they were put in new environments, which usually increases their fear.

Mental health experts have warned that the results from the rats may not happen in humans. A mountain of previous research has linked cannabis to long-term damage to mental health. Scientists also say cannabis increases anxiety and depression in humans. However, other drugs, such as alcohol and nicotine, perhaps carry more dangers than cannabis. Smoking and drinking increases anxiety and depression and leads to many other health problems, some deadly. Cannabis has been shown to reduce pain in many illnesses.

## WARM-UPS

**1. A RAT'S LIFE:** Imagine you are a rat in a research laboratory. Walk around the class and talk to the other "rats" about your life. Is it better in the lab than outside? Are you treated well? What kinds of experiments are you doing? What things make you sad or worried?

**2. DEPRESSION:** Do you ever get depressed? In pairs / groups, talk about how the following things change your feeling or make you depressed. Give examples of how these things make you depressed.

- The weather
- TV news
- Your family
- The earth's environment
- Thinking about your future
- Money
- Your figure / the size of your stomach
- Studying English

**3. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

*Scientists / cannabis / depression / research teams / cells / rats / chemicals / new environments / the brain / mental health / alcohol / cigarettes / pain*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

**4. CANNABIS:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with cannabis or marijuana. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

**5. OPINIONS:** Do you agree with these opinions on cannabis? Talk about them with your partner(s).

- a. It's a dangerous drug. People should go to prison for using it.
- b. It's OK as a medicine if a doctor says so.
- c. It's less dangerous to our bodies than alcohol and less addictive than cigarettes.
- d. Many of the politicians who say cannabis is bad use it themselves.
- e. If Bill Clinton "experimented" with it, it must be OK.
- f. Using cannabis leads to the use of hard drugs like cocaine and heroin.
- g. Cannabis is addictive and leads to mental health problems.
- h. It's the third most popular drug (behind alcohol and nicotine). People should be allowed to decide if they want to use it.
- i. Alcohol makes people violent, cannabis doesn't.
- j. Your opinion \_\_\_\_\_.

## BEFORE READING / LISTENING

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| a. A study has shown that cannabis reduces depression in humans.  | T / F |
| b. A chemical found in cannabis makes new brain cells grow.       | T / F |
| c. Scientists injected rats with the chemical for a month.        | T / F |
| d. Tests on rats increased the rodents' fear of new environments. | T / F |
| e. Mental health experts have warmly welcomed the new findings.   | T / F |
| f. Mountain cannabis is good for our mental health.               | T / F |
| g. Cannabis can be less dangerous than alcohol and nicotine.      | T / F |
| h. Cannabis relieves pain in many illnesses.                      | T / F |

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |                 |              |
|-----------------|--------------|
| a. report       | anxious      |
| b. reduce       | heightens    |
| c. worried      | conclusions  |
| d. sad          | hazards      |
| e. environments | paper        |
| f. results      | surroundings |
| g. linked       | lethal       |
| h. dangers      | depressed    |
| i. increases    | lessen       |
| j. deadly       | connected    |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- |                                   |                             |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a. published                      | other health problems       |
| b. research                       | high levels of the chemical |
| c. brain                          | than cannabis               |
| d. the animals were injected with | team                        |
| e. put in new                     | research                    |
| f. mental health                  | depression in humans        |
| g. a mountain of previous         | a report                    |
| h. cannabis increases anxiety and | environments                |
| i. carry more dangers             | experts                     |
| j. leads to many                  | cells                       |

## WHILE READING / LISTENING

**GAP FILL:** Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

### Cannabis may reduce depression

Scientists in Canada have \_\_\_\_\_ a report that shows cannabis, or marijuana, may \_\_\_\_\_ depression. A research team from the University of Saskatchewan \_\_\_\_\_ that a cannabis-like chemical made new brain \_\_\_\_\_ grow in rats. The same cells affect how worried or \_\_\_\_\_ humans are. The researchers reported the rats were less anxious and depressed. In the study, the animals were \_\_\_\_\_ with high levels of the chemical for a \_\_\_\_\_. The rats were less afraid when they were put in new environments, which \_\_\_\_\_ increases their fear.

Mental health \_\_\_\_\_ have warned that the results from the rats may not happen in humans. A \_\_\_\_\_ of previous research has linked cannabis to long-term \_\_\_\_\_ to mental health. Scientists also say cannabis increases anxiety and \_\_\_\_\_ in humans. However, other drugs, such as alcohol and \_\_\_\_\_, perhaps carry more \_\_\_\_\_ than cannabis. Smoking and drinking increases anxiety and depression and \_\_\_\_\_ to many other health problems, some deadly. Cannabis has been shown to \_\_\_\_\_ pain in many illnesses.

*sad*  
*month*  
*reduce*  
*cells*  
*usually*  
*published*  
*injected*  
*found*  
  
*leads*  
*nicotine*  
*mountain*  
*reduce*  
*depression*  
*experts*  
*dangers*  
*damage*

## **LISTENING**

Listen and fill in the spaces.

### **Cannabis may reduce depression**

Scientists in Canada have \_\_\_\_\_ a report that shows cannabis, or marijuana, may reduce \_\_\_\_\_. A research team from the University of Saskatchewan found that a cannabis-like \_\_\_\_\_ made new brain cells grow in rats. The same cells affect how worried or sad humans are. The researchers reported the rats were less \_\_\_\_\_ and depressed. In the study, the animals were \_\_\_\_\_ with high levels of the chemical for a month. The rats were less afraid when they were put in new environments, which usually \_\_\_\_\_ their fear.

Mental health \_\_\_\_\_ have warned that the results from the rats may not happen in humans. A mountain of \_\_\_\_\_ research has linked cannabis to \_\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_\_ damage to mental health. Scientists also say cannabis increases anxiety and depression in humans. However, other drugs, such as alcohol and \_\_\_\_\_, perhaps carry more dangers than cannabis. Smoking and drinking increases anxiety and \_\_\_\_\_ and leads to many other health problems, some deadly. Cannabis has been shown to reduce pain in many \_\_\_\_\_.

## **AFTER READING / LISTENING**

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'health' and 'benefit'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. GAP FILL:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. STUDENT "CANNABIS" SURVEY:** In pairs / groups, write down questions about cannabis / marijuana.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

**6. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- |              |             |
|--------------|-------------|
| • scientists | • experts   |
| • team       | • mountain  |
| • cells      | • humans    |
| • study      | • nicotine  |
| • month      | • deadly    |
| • fear       | • illnesses |

## **DISCUSSION**

### STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. Do you agree with the headline?
- c. What do you think when you hear the words "cannabis" or "marijuana"?
- d. How dangerous is cannabis?
- e. Should patients have cannabis if it relieves their pain?
- f. Why do you think cannabis is illegal but alcohol is legal in many countries?
- g. Would you use cannabis if it was legal?
- h. Some scientists say cannabis is safer than a lot of the food we eat. What do you think of this?
- i. Have you ever tried or would you like to try cannabis?
- j. Have any high profile figures in your country used cannabis?

### STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. What do you know about cannabis?
- d. What is the punishment for using cannabis in your country?
- e. What is the attitude of people in your country towards cannabis?
- f. What do you think of Holland's laws that allow cannabis to be sold and used in "coffee shops"?
- g. What would you do if your son or daughter started smoking cannabis?
- h. Do you think cannabis leads to an increase in crime?
- i. Do you think cannabis should be legalized?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

**AFTER DISCUSSION:** Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?



## **SPEAKING 1**

**CANNABIS ROLE PLAY:** Should cannabis be a legal drug? Team up with classmates who have the same role as you. Develop your roles and discuss ideas and “strategies” before the role play begins. Introduce yourself to the other role players.

**Role A – GOVERNMENT LEADER**

You think all drugs are bad. Taking drugs is the cause of many social problems. Drugs destroy lives. Drug money supports terrorism. If people want to relax, they can drink alcohol. Cannabis should not be allowed even for medical purposes. Society should encourage healthy lifestyles and healthy drugs.

THINK OF MORE REASONS WHY CANNABIS IS BAD.

**Role B – CANNABIS USER**

You are a normal person. You go to work every day and are never sick. You don't drink or smoke. You think alcohol is more dangerous than cannabis. Alcohol makes people violent and leads to alcoholism. Cannabis makes you relax and have fun. You think it is crazy that doctors say it causes mental health problems. You think cannabis is a great medicine.

THINK OF MORE REASONS WHY CANNABIS SHOULD BE LEGALIZED.

**Role C – HOSPITAL PATIENT**

You use cannabis to relieve the pain caused by your very painful illness. Other medicines had little effect on the pain. Cannabis always takes your pain away and makes your life normal. You think it is terrible other people want to take your medicine away. You know many people who have become seriously ill or have died through smoking cigarettes.

THINK OF REASONS WHY CANNABIS IS A LEGITIMATE DRUG.

**Role D – DOCTOR**

You think cannabis is a dangerous and addictive drug. A lot of research shows it leads to mental health problems. Cannabis damages learning and results in many car crashes and workplace accidents. No health associations accept cannabis as a medicine. You believe real medicine is best.

THINK OF MORE REASONS WHY CANNABIS IS HARMFUL.

Change roles and repeat the role play. Comment in groups about the differences between the two role plays.

Should cannabis be legalized for medical or social reasons?

## **SPEAKING 2**

**DRUGS:** You have the job of making a new drugs policy in your country. Write down the dangers of the drugs below. Decide whether the dangers are big enough to make the drug illegal. Decide on a punishment for people caught using the drug.

DRUG	DANGERS	ILLEGAL?	PUNISHMENT
Cannabis			
Caffeine			
Nicotine			
Alcohol			
Cocaine			
Other			

Change partners and tell each other your decisions. Together, join your policies to make a new one.

Discuss whether or not people in your country would accept your decisions.

## **HOMEWORK**

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find more information on cannabis. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

**3. DRUGS:** Make a poster describing a drug that is illegal in your country. Explain where the drug comes from, its effects on humans and its dangers. Show your posters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

**4. LETTER:** Write a letter to the leader of your country. Explain your thoughts on the use of cannabis for medical and social purposes. Show your letters to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

## ANSWERS

### TRUE / FALSE:

a. F      b. T      c. T      d. F      e. F      f. F      g. T      h. T

### SYNONYM MATCH:

a. report	paper
b. reduce	lessen
c. worried	anxious
d. sad	depressed
e. environments	surroundings
f. results	conclusions
g. linked	connected
h. dangers	hazards
i. increases	heightens
j. deadly	lethal

### PHRASE MATCH:

a. published	a report
b. research	team
c. brain	cells
d. the animals were injected with	high levels of the chemical
e. put in new	environments
f. mental health	experts
g. a mountain of previous	research
h. cannabis increases anxiety and	depression in humans
i. carry more dangers	than cannabis
j. leads to many	other health problems

### GAP FILL:

#### **Cannabis may reduce depression**

Scientists in Canada have **published** a report that shows cannabis, or marijuana, may **reduce** depression. A research team from the University of Saskatchewan **found** that a cannabis-like chemical made new brain **cells** grow in rats. The same cells affect how worried or **sad** humans are. The researchers reported the rats were less anxious and depressed. In the study, the animals were **injected** with high levels of the chemical for a **month**. The rats were less afraid when they were put in new environments, which **usually** increases their fear.

Mental health **experts** have warned that the results from the rats may not happen in humans. A **mountain** of previous research has linked cannabis to long-term **damage** to mental health. Scientists also say cannabis increases anxiety and **depression** in humans. However, other drugs, such as alcohol and **nicotine**, perhaps carry more **dangers** than cannabis. Smoking and drinking increases anxiety and depression and **leads** to many other health problems, some deadly. Cannabis has been shown to **reduce** pain in many illnesses.