INSIGHTS INTO ACTION:
MESSAGING MARIJUANA’S IMPACT ON THE DEVELOPING BRAIN

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Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
Public Health in the Rockies 2015 / Vail, Colorado
Objective / Reinforce the reasons not to engage in underage marijuana use and deter youth from trying it.

Audience / Colorado youth ages 12-20
Understand the attitudes, behaviors, perceptions of risk and beliefs of Colorado youth around marijuana.

Understand how friends, parents, siblings, teachers, coaches and other influencers influence their decision to use or abstain from marijuana use.

Understand what prevention messages resonate with this audience, which they reject and why.
PLANNING AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Secondary Research

OMNI
Sukle
The Denver Office of Drug Strategy
Healthy Kids Colorado Survey
In-School Visits

N = 317

Average age = 15.3

Schools Visited:
- Horizon High School
- Legacy High School
- Loveland High School
- McClain High School *

*(average age 19, high risk audience)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friendship Groups</th>
<th>N = 19 Groups, 57 participants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denver, Pueblo and Boulder</td>
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<tr>
<td>Life Stages:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Middle School</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• High School</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Post High School</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Usage:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Not Likely To Try</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Likely to Try</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Tried</td>
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PLANNING AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY /

In-Depth Phone Interviews /

N = 10

Areas:
- Ridgeway
- Norwood
- Telluride
- Ouray
<p>| Middle School | Closely tied to their families. Eager to learn. Talk to and trust their parents as a reliable source. Perception of risk; don’t want to get in trouble at school or with parents. Aren’t planning concretely for their future but know they want to grow up to be happy. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early High School</th>
<th>It’s crucial to fit in.</th>
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<td>Perception of prevalence, feels like everyone is doing it.</td>
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<td>Still some perception of risk that makes them think twice.</td>
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<td>Sports/extra curricular activities and grades becoming more important.</td>
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<td>Late High School</td>
<td>More independent - driving and are making more mature decisions.</td>
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<td>MJ use is no longer seen as scary or risky.</td>
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<td>Skeptical about the health effects that come with use. Don’t trust facts and sources.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sports/extra curricular activities, grades, college and future plans are important. Believe that MJ can negatively impact productivity.</td>
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<td>Assume that most of their peers have used marijuana when most have not.</td>
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<td>AUDIENCE BY LIFE STAGE</td>
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<td>------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post High School</td>
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<tr>
<td>New phase of life; exploring and enjoying independence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Don’t think marijuana use is a big deal. Seen as less dangerous than alcohol or other drugs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skeptical about the health effects that come with use. Don’t trust the current research.</td>
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<tr>
<td>As young adults, they feel old enough to make the right choice for themselves.</td>
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</table>
It’s not just what we say, it’s how we say it that really matters.

Youth rejected any language that was perceived as preachy or presented public health statements* as “someone’s biased point of view.”

* See statements from the Retail Marijuana Public Health Advisory Committee Systematic Literature Review Findings in Appendix A.
Negative health claims stating “may or can” vs. “will” were called out as biased.

Did they agree with anything?
What they found indisputable was that memory loss and loss of productivity are the health consequences of using marijuana.
Of the youth who choose to use marijuana they typically do it to numb some sort of physical or mental pain.

Or they see marijuana as a way to relieve stress or have a laugh with friends.

For users, no matter how frequently they use, marijuana is not seen as a risky substance.
Although youth are less likely to believe there are many negative health effects to marijuana use, they do believe there can be negative life consequences. They agree that marijuana can get in their way of being their best self.
The most compelling reason to not use MJ across all life stages and rates of use was that marijuana can get in the way of achieving goals.
THE #1 DETERRENT /

#outdoors
#puttinginwork
#peace
#selfie
#insidejokes
#football
#welding
#youngchefs
#soccer
#worldhistory
#venting
#bandboys
#mindcraft
CAMPAIGN STRATEGY - EMOTIONAL VS. RATIONAL

Youth

YOUTH PREVENTION

Trusted Adults
**CAMPAIGN STRATEGY - EMOTIONAL VS. RATIONAL**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Youth Centric</th>
<th>Build a platform that is authentic and relatable to youth.</th>
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<td>Create a message that has a positive focus.</td>
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<td>Engage youth by allowing them to own the message.</td>
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<td>Create a message that can be easily shared peer-to-peer.</td>
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</table>
Engage the people that youth trust in their life to deliver the information on the legal consequences and health effects of underage marijuana use.

Create a program that supports these trusted adults and helps them deliver consistent, fact-based information.

Build a complementary communication plan between these efforts and the Youth Campaign.
YOUTH MEDIA CONSUMPTION

- CONSTANTLY CONNECTED
- VIDEO FANATICS
- SOCIAL SAVVY
YOUTH MEDIA CONSUMPTION

- 112 Hours Spent Online
- 73% Own Cellphone
- 81% Own Laptop or Tablet

Sources: GfK’s MultiMedia Mentor 2013 and Pew Research 2015
| **Establish** / | Develop a digital campaign ecosystem. Build awareness through video-centric campaign. |
| **Engage** / | Drive audience to digital ecosystem and invite participation. Utilize community management to initiate and maintain conversation and content. |
| **Amplify** / | Push out content through organic and paid channels to maintain conversation. |
CAMPAIGN ECOSYSTEM

SOCIAL
- Facebook
- Instagram
- YouTube

PAID MEDIA
- Cross-Platform Video
- Social Video
- Custom Content

WEBSITE
- Mobile Optimized
DON'T LET
GET IN THE WAY
OF PERSEVERANCE

YOU DON'T NEED TO BE A SCIENTIST TO KNOW
IT DIRECTLY AFFECTS YOUR MIND AND BODY'S ABILITY TO FUNCTION

LEARNING & ADAPTATION
IT'S LIKE THE ORIGINAL SUPERPOWERS.

COOPERATION
BE AS GRACIOUS AS A SKUNK.

FINANCIAL AID
A LITTLE HELP FROM YOUR FRIENDS.

Achieving goals, opportunities, and independence requires perseverance.
The message keeps coming back to the #1 deterrent across all age groups: that MJ get in the way of your goals.

The messages are elastic - features different goals that are relevant to a variety of youth across different life stages.

The messages encourage youth to think about their choices and empowers them to make health decisions for themselves that can lead to happiness today and in the future.

The message focuses on what youth have to gain from choosing not use marijuana rather than lecturing them about what they could lose.
Almost 5,000 website visits in the first three weeks.

Approximately 2.1M video views in the first three weeks - through the pre-roll digital buy, Facebook and YouTube.

Pre-roll is the #1 traffic driver to the site.

Facebook is our most active platform with 383 current followers, 2,679 likes and 223 shares.
THANK YOU

Acknowledgment

The Cactus Planning Team
The AND Group
You’re Gonna Need Your Brain
(Physical Consequences 1)

No matter what you want to do with your future, you’re going to need a brain to do it—but you only have one. Drugs like marijuana can negatively impact your growing and developing brain. Give your amazing brain every chance that it needs to reach its full potential. Research shows that regular marijuana use is linked to trouble learning, remembering, and poor math and reading skills. Your future is in your brain, so why risk it?
It’s Not Meth. It’s Not Heroin.
But It Still Has Consequences.
(Broad Array of Future Consequences)

Yeah, marijuana isn’t as scary as meth or heroin. Marijuana use by adolescents and young adults - even occasional use - is associated with future high-risk use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs like cocaine, ecstasy, opioids and methamphetamine. And just like tobacco, marijuana can be addictive. Youth that begin using marijuana regularly are more likely to become addicted than those who wait until adulthood to use. This can lead to a future that is different from the one you’re envisioning for yourself. Keep control over your future.
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<th>Public Health Statements</th>
<th>Your Choices Matter (Life Impact)</th>
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<td></td>
<td>In the moment it can be hard to say no- it seems like everyone is doing it, and its only just this one time. But know that 4 out of 5 of Colorado High Schoolers don’t use pot. Marijuana use by adolescents may be associated with low achievement, such as not graduating from high school or attaining a university degree, lower income, and more unemployment. Make your own choices. Take your life in a direction that you really want.</td>
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Public Health Statements

You’re Not You When You’re High (Real-Time Changes)

When you’re high, you’re not yourself. You’re a different person; you can’t remember simple things, you do worse in school at math and reading. You could even have mental health problems like depression, anxiety and psychotic symptoms. Marijuana can change you. Don’t let marijuana get in the way of you being you.
Knowledge Is Power

When it comes to marijuana, the more you know, the better. Knowing how marijuana laws and health effects impact you and your future will equip you to make your own decisions about what you want to do with your life. It’s amazing how powerful you can feel when you’re well informed. After all, it’s good to know.