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I spent an hour listening to a teacher/researcher/physician/psychiatrist share his findings on the adolescent brain, and my life changed.

Armed with the facts that Dr. Amir Levine, of the Columbia University Medical Center, gave me, I can no longer look the other way on marijuana.

Dr. Levine's message is simple: Marijuana is toxic for adolescents whose brains are still forming and developing. It's a potent and dangerous substance to the growing, emergent, magnificent engine of imagination and creation that is your child's brain.

If I could, I would wrap the brains of our adolescents in yellow police tape with the warning: Do not cross this barrier with any toxins that will interrupt the growth and development process.

Data suggests that those individuals who initiated cannabis use earlier in life performed more poorly in tests of executive function. Or they had to work harder at each task to perform at the same level as those who didn't use marijuana earlier in life. It also puts them at a higher risk for addiction and suicide.

Please parents, listen. You are the first line of defense we have for our children against the perception that marijuana is organic, safe and harmless. I urge you to watch Dr. Levine's video. It will open your eyes to the potential harm marijuana can render on your child's developing brain.

*Kathleen M. Klug*

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