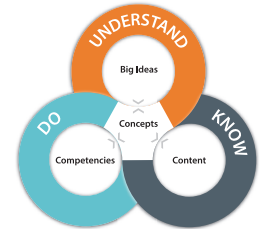


## Cannabis and the need for dialogue

*“Real dialogue depends on us being passionately committed to our own world, and simultaneously, passionately interested in other worlds. It is possible to work for the realization of our values and interests, but to do so in a way that remains continuously open to inquiry and dialogue.”*

~ Margaret McKee



Recent policy changes relative to cannabis are creating debates in Canadian society. When addressing complex issues like drug use, people often find it difficult to have productive conversations. Divergent opinions often lead to endless debate and little new understanding.

Dialogue provides a different approach. Dialogue is a manner of communication that involves two-way conversations where people not only speak to each other but also really listen. The goal is to leave the conversation with a better understanding of each other and the different perspectives that make up a community.

School is a great context for citizens to acquire important dialogic skills. Cannabis legalization provides interesting opportunities to practice and hone these skills. “Turning to One Another” is a insightful poem by Margaret Wheatley about the power of talking with each other and creating social changes. This lesson uses the poem to explore different aspects of dialogue and its significance in the context of shifting policies regarding cannabis.

### Instructional strategies

1. Provide students with a copy of the [handout](#) (provided at the end of this lesson) and have them read Margaret Wheatley’s poem, “Turning to One Another.” Then facilitate a class discussion drawing attention to parts of the poem and use questions like the following to explore the ideas.

*Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters.*

*Talk to people you know.*

*Talk to people you don’t know.*

*Talk to people you never talk to.*

- What conversations take courage? Why?
- Is it hard to talk to people you don’t know or never talk to? Discuss.
- What if the person you talk to disagrees with you? Can we be part of a community even if we disagree with each other about a topic or an idea?



*Be intrigued by the differences you hear.*

*Expect to be surprised.*

*Treasure curiosity more than certainty.*

- What are your thoughts on “*Be intrigued by the differences you hear*”?
- Is there value in being surprised? Explain.
- Is curiosity better than certainty? Why or why not?

*Real listening always brings people closer together.*

- Do you agree with the poet? Share examples to explain.

2. Have students reflect on whether they think cannabis has mostly benefits or mostly harms. Then ask students to place themselves on a continuum where one spot in the room represents the position, “cannabis is mostly beneficial,” and another (distant) spot represents the position, “cannabis is mostly harmful.” When students have placed themselves on the continuum, have them form triads with one person who was nearer each end and a third who was near the middle. Ask the triads to now have a dialogue about cannabis in the spirit of Margaret Wheatley’s poem. Debrief the experience after the groups have had time for the conversation. Focus the debrief on the experience of the dialogue, not on the content.

## Drug literacy

### Big ideas

- ✓ As humans, both individually and as communities, we need to learn how to manage the drugs in our lives
- ✓ We can learn how to control drugs by examining human thinking through time, exploring stories from various cultures and listening to each other

### Competencies

- ✓ Assess the complex ways in which drugs impact the health and wellbeing of individuals, communities and societies
- ✓ Explore and appreciate diversity related to the reasons people use drugs, the impact of drug use and the social attitudes toward various drugs
- ✓ Recognize binary constructs (e.g., good vs bad) and assess their limitation in addressing complex social issues like drug use
- ✓ Develop social and communication skills in addressing discourse and behaviour related to drugs



## Links to curriculum

### English Language Arts 8/9

#### Big ideas

- ✓ Exploring stories and other texts helps us understand ourselves and make connections to others and to the world.
- ✓ People understand text differently depending on their worldviews and perspectives
- ✓ Questioning what we hear, read, and view contributes to our ability to be educated and engaged citizens

#### Competencies

##### ***Comprehend and connect (reading, listening, viewing)***

- ✓ Think critically, creatively, and reflectively to explore ideas within, between, and beyond texts
- ✓ Recognize and identify the role of personal, social, and cultural contexts, values, and perspectives in texts
- ✓ Construct meaningful personal connections between self, text, and world
- ✓ Respond to text in personal, creative, and critical ways

##### ***Create and communicate (writing, speaking, representing)***

- ✓ Exchange ideas and viewpoints to build shared understanding and extend thinking
- ✓ Use and experiment with oral storytelling processes

This resource was developed by the **Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research** with funding provided by the **British Columbia Ministry of Health**. Any views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Ministry or the Institute.



## Turning to One Another

By Margaret Wheatley from her book *Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future*, Berrett-Koehler, 2002

There is no power greater than a community discovering what it cares about.

Ask: "What's possible?" not "What's wrong?" Keep asking.

Notice what you care about.

Assume that many others share your dreams.

Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters.

- Talk to people you know.

- Talk to people you don't know.

- Talk to people you never talk to.

Be intrigued by the differences you hear.

- Expect to be surprised.

- Treasure curiosity more than certainty.

Invite in everybody who cares to work on what's possible.

- Acknowledge that everyone is an expert about something.

- Know that creative solutions come from new connections.

Remember, you don't fear people whose story you know.

Real listening always brings people closer together.

Trust that meaningful conversations can change your world.

Rely on human goodness. Stay together.