



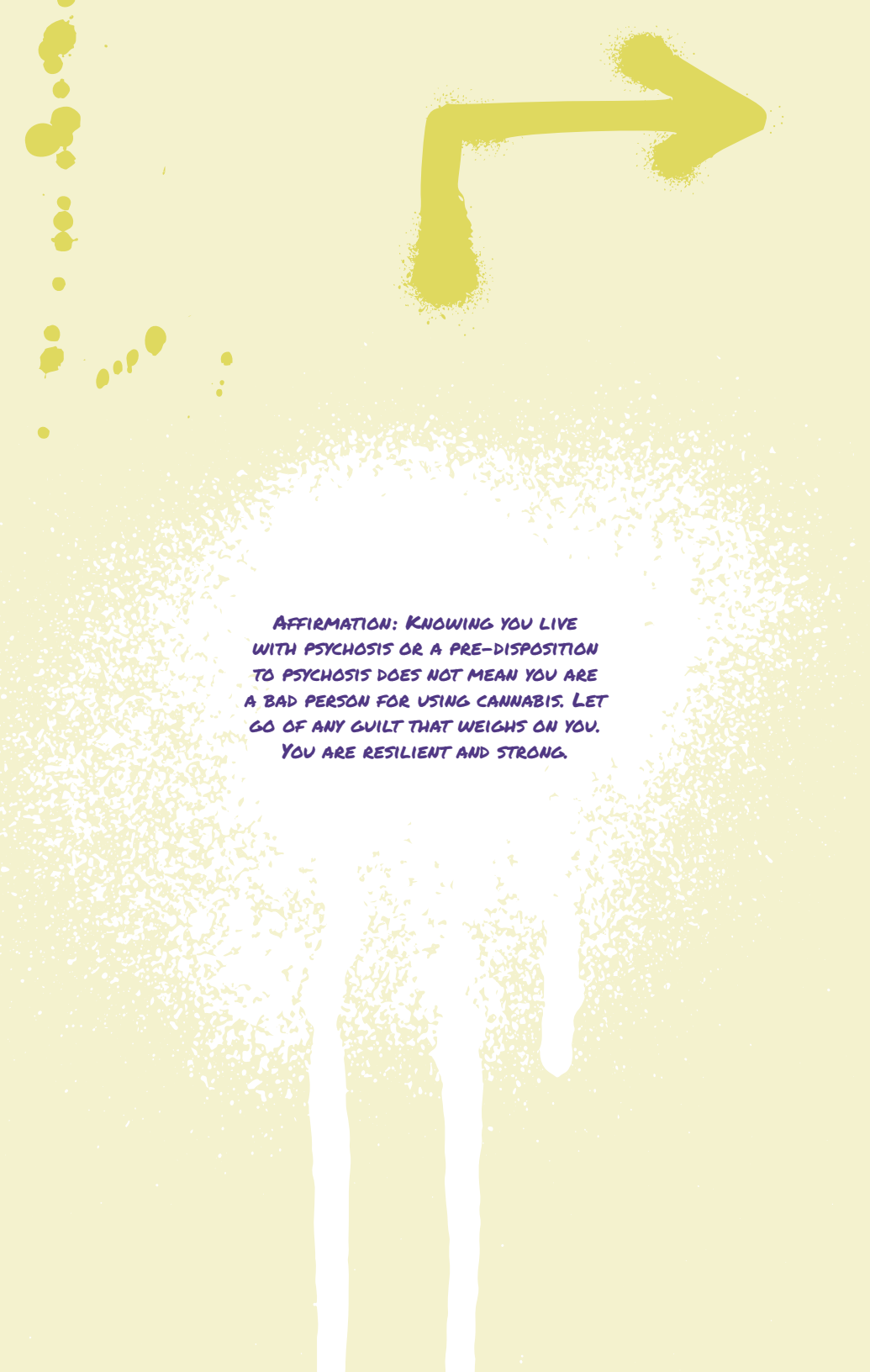
Cannabis & Psychosis

MY REFLECTION JOURNAL

CECTC Centre d'expertise
et de collaboration
en troubles concomitants

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de Montréal



**AFFIRMATION: KNOWING YOU LIVE
WITH PSYCHOSIS OR A PRE-DISPOSITION
TO PSYCHOSIS DOES NOT MEAN YOU ARE
A BAD PERSON FOR USING CANNABIS. LET
GO OF ANY GUILT THAT WEIGHS ON YOU.
YOU ARE RESILIENT AND STRONG.**

About *THIS* JOURNAL

Did you know that how you use cannabis can impact your risk for psychosis? It can be overwhelming to know where to start or how to change your cannabis use.

You might be asking yourself:

- ➔ **Do I start using a different product?**
- ➔ **Should I stop smoking or switch to edibles?**
- ➔ **Or should I stop using all together?**

There are a lot of options to consider!

The good news is, you're not alone. Many people have been in your shoes. People with experience of psychosis have said that the most important step in changing their cannabis use was realizing and reflecting on their motivations for change. This process helped them to understand why they use cannabis, consider their options and determine the best course of action.

This tool is designed to help you do just that: to explore how and why you use cannabis the way that you do and determine the best path forward for you based on your unique goals and preferences.

QUICK TIPS

- ★ You don't have to complete the entire tool in one go. Decisions can take time. Work through it at your own pace.
- ★ This tool is like a journal. The responses you share here can be kept private and are meant to support your decision making. If you find it helpful, you may choose to share or discuss your responses with a trusted friend or health care provider.
- ★ No decision is final! You can change your mind or make other changes as you go. Use this tool to reassess where you're at with your cannabis use and if you want or need to adapt how you're using weed over time.

LET'S GET STARTED!

CANNABIS Log

In this section you will explore how you currently use cannabis. This is a really important step! Just like planning a trip, you need to know where you're starting from to figure out where you want to go. Try to get as detailed as you can and be honest with yourself. You can keep your responses to yourself, or you can work through it with a trusted person such as your doctor, friend, counsellor, or family member.

How often do you use cannabis?

(E.g., a couple times a week; 5 days a week; all day – morning, afternoon, evening.)

What is the typical amount you use?

(E.g., A vape capsule lasts me about 2 weeks; 1 gram a day; a bowl in the morning; 2 joints; another bowl in the evening – I do this every day.)

How do you usually consume cannabis?

(E.g., edibles, drinks, ingestible oils, bong, joints, spliffs, dabs, vape etc.)

How strong is the cannabis you typically use? How much THC vs. CBD is in it?

(E.g., I usually use hybrid products, The container says <15mg/g THC, I only have products with THC.)

When, and where do you usually use cannabis? Who do you use cannabis with?

(E.g., before and after work; with friends; when I'm alone before bed etc.)

About how much do you spend on cannabis?

(E.g., weekly/monthly etc.)

Where do you get it from?

- ☐ Regulated store (online or in-person)
- ☐ Trusted friend or supplier (non-regulated)
- ☐ Online (non-regulated)
- ☐ Grow it myself
- ☐ Other:

** If you're not sure and you purchase your cannabis through a regulated channel, you can check the packaging. See "How to read a cannabis label" from *Get Sensible* for more guidance. You can also bring your packaging to your next appointment and discuss with your clinician.

Exploring the IMPACTS

Now that you have a good understanding of how you use cannabis, let's dig a little deeper into why you use it and how it impacts you. This can help you determine 1) your reasons for using cannabis in general; 2) how it's affecting you in your day-to-day life and 3) changes that might make sense for you.

What are some of the reasons you use cannabis?

(E.g., social/socializing, pleasure, experimentation, peer network, family/parental network, boredom, coping, social norms, pressure, to relax, etc.)

What have you noticed about the effects of cannabis on your psychotic symptoms?

(E.g., What are your symptoms like when you are high? After you get high? What do your thoughts, feelings, emotions look like when it first sets in vs. after 30 min, a few hours, or the next day.)

TIP: BREATHWORK SUCH AS SQUARE BREATHING (INHALE FOR 4 SECONDS, HOLD FOR 4 SECONDS, EXHALE FOR 4 SECONDS, PAUSE FOR 4 SECONDS) CAN HELP YOU FEEL LESS RUSHED TO SATISFY A CANNABIS CRAVING BY CALMING THE MIND AND BRINGING YOU BACK TO CENTRE.

What positive effects does using cannabis have?

(E.g., makes me more social, helps my mind stop racing, makes me more creative, etc.)

AFFIRMATION: BEING OPEN AND VULNERABLE ABOUT YOUR CANNABIS USE IS A SOURCE OF STRENGTH. YOU DESERVE THE COMPASSION AND SUPPORT OF OTHERS IN YOUR JOURNEY. YOU ARE NOT ALONE. YOU ARE LOVED AND CHERISHED.

What negative effects does using cannabis have?

(E.g., any impacts on your responsibilities, goals, relationships, etc.?)


TIP: BEFORE YOU USE WEED, TAKE A MOMENT TO NOTICE AND JOT DOWN HOW YOU FEEL (EMOTIONS, PHYSICAL SENSATIONS OR THOUGHTS). DO THE SAME THING AFTER YOU USE. KEEPING TRACK WILL HELP YOU INCREASE AWARENESS OF HOW CANNABIS MAKES YOU FEEL.



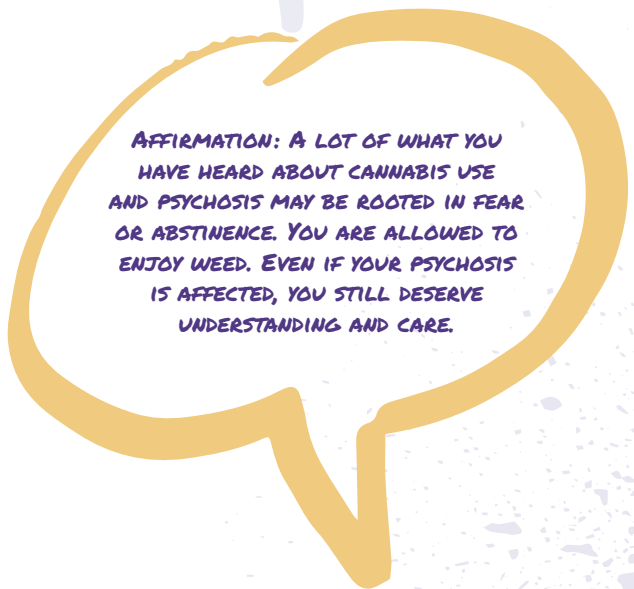
Cannabis + PSYCHOSIS

There has been a lot of research done on the relationship between cannabis use and psychotic disorders and symptoms. Before you make any decisions, it can be helpful to learn about this relationship. This can also help you determine, based on research:

- ➔ If you are using cannabis in ways that may harm you and/or;
- ➔ Safer ways to use cannabis that can help reduce your risks of psychosis and psychotic symptoms.



To learn about the relationship between cannabis use and psychosis, see the **Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines for Psychosis** brochure available at www.labo-jutras-aswad.ca/boite-a-outils.



AFFIRMATION: A LOT OF WHAT YOU HAVE HEARD ABOUT CANNABIS USE AND PSYCHOSIS MAY BE ROOTED IN FEAR OR ABSTINENCE. YOU ARE ALLOWED TO ENJOY WEED. EVEN IF YOUR PSYCHOSIS IS AFFECTED, YOU STILL DESERVE UNDERSTANDING AND CARE.



Weighing YOUR OPTIONS

Now that you have a good sense of how you are using cannabis and how it is impacting you, you can start exploring some of your options. If you feel concerned about some of the negative effects of weed, it's okay to think about changing **how** or **when** you use it, whether you might want to cut down or even take a break! There are a lot of ways you can change your cannabis use without stopping completely.

The following section shows some of the common changes people make, such as cutting down on THC intake or choosing safer methods of cannabis consumption.

Consider how each of these areas apply to you (if at all). Then, jot down your ideas around **why you use cannabis in this way**. This will help you to start thinking about your reasons for use, and the things you are and are not ready to change.

WEIGHING YOUR OPTIONS
- POTENCY -
(i.e., amount of THC and CBD)

What drives your desire or preference to use high THC products?
Jot down your thoughts below.

(E.g., prefer the way it makes me feel, I need a lot of THC to get a buzz/high, availability etc.)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

- 💡 THC is the main player in cannabis that negatively contributes to psychosis. If you're open to it, try using products with lower amounts of THC (less than 15%), or products that have more CBD than THC.
- 💡 Most websites and stores allow you to filter products by what it is in them (e.g., high CBD vs. high THC or % of CBD/THC).
- 💡 Changing your THC consumption doesn't mean you have to lose out on the effects from weed. There are a lot of products (cannabis based and not) that can still help you achieve the desired feeling you're looking for (e.g., relaxation). Talk to your doctor about your options!

TIP: EXPLORE OTHER TYPES OF RELAXING PRODUCTS OR TREATS TO ACHIEVE A SIMILAR EFFECT TO CANNABIS (E.G., CALMING HERB TEAS, COFFEE OR ENERGY DRINKS FOR A RUSH, OR CANDIES/DESSERT/SALTY SNACKS).

WEIGHING YOUR OPTIONS
- ROUTE OF ADMINISTRATION -

Why do you ingest weed in the way you do [vapes vs edibles/drinkables vs dabs vs bong vs joints, etc.]? Jot down your thoughts below.

(E.g., the high/the hit, convenience, ritual, dose, cost etc.)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

- 💡 While vaping can be considered a safer alternative to smoking cannabis, it can be harder to determine how much you're using. It can also become riskier when using unregulated vape cartridges that may contain additives. Know the substance you are using and your dose.
- 💡 Some products have more THC than others. For example, concentrates or dabs (e.g., wax, shatter, rosin) have highly concentrated amounts of THC, sometimes 70-90% THC. This can be more harmful and increase the likelihood of developing psychosis. Try consuming in ways that have less THC.
- 💡 Eating or drinking your weed reduces some of the harms of smoking and typically contains less THC than other products. However, sometimes it's more difficult to control how high you're getting. It's important to pay attention to the dose and potency to manage the effects. Start slow and wait a bit (~ 3 hours) before consuming more.



WEIGHING YOUR OPTIONS - FREQUENCY/QUANTITY -

Why do you think you use cannabis as often as you do? Jot down your thoughts below.

(E.g., coping, socializing, the feeling, cravings etc.)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

- 💡 If you use cannabis several times a day and want to cut back, try reducing your use by one time of day to start (e.g., not using at lunch).
- 💡 If you vape, try keeping it in a specific location instead of on you and only use it at specific times. If you can, try to notice how much you are inhaling and try to be consistent with inhaling lower doses.
- 💡 If you use cannabis several times a week and want to cut back, try reducing the number of days starting with one day per week.
- 💡 Another way to reduce the amount of cannabis you use is by using less weed each time you get high (e.g., rolling a joint with less flower in it, 3 pulls vs. 5 from the vape).
- 💡 Consider taking a tolerance break. This means taking a break from cannabis for a specified period (for example, 3 weeks) to reduce the levels of cannabis in your body allowing your tolerance to lower. Then you won't need to use as much cannabis to get high or achieve the same desired effect.

WEIGHING YOUR OPTIONS - SUPPLIER -

Do you purchase cannabis through regulated channels? If not, what are some of the reasons that you get your cannabis through other channels such as an illicit supplier, friend, homegrown, etc.? Jot down your thoughts below.

(E.g., price, product(s) availability, your age, accessibility, loyalty to supplier etc.)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

- 💡 Regulated channels ensure you know where your cannabis is coming from and what's in it. They also legally must test their products for contaminants.
- 💡 Unregulated cannabis doesn't have to be tested and can contain micro toxins or fungal pathogens that are harmful for your health!
- 💡 If you can, buy your cannabis from a reliable source so you can confidently know what is in it. Consider asking your supplier:
 - Where is the cannabis from?
 - How much THC/CBD does it contain?
 - What are the expected effects?
 - Has it been tested for contaminants (e.g., micro toxins, pathogens etc.)

If you aren't comfortable asking your supplier these questions or if they cannot answer these questions, consider: why is that? Is it worth continuing to buy from them?

TIP: ALLOW YOURSELF SPECIFIC TIMES THAT YOU CAN USE CANNABIS AS A REWARD FOR THE TIMES YOU DID NOT USE. YOU CAN ALSO REWARD YOURSELF IN OTHER WAYS (E.G., ORDERING TAKEOUT, GOING TO THE MOVIES, OR PLAYING VIDEO GAMES).

WEIGHING YOUR OPTIONS

- CONTEXT -

How does 'when and where' you use cannabis contribute to your use?
Jot down your thoughts below.

(E.g., helps me sleep, get through the day, habit to unwind post work/school, in, social situations, around stressors, etc.)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

- 💡 Cannabis can impact you differently throughout the day and it may be more appropriate to use it at certain times over others. Be mindful of appropriate times and places to use cannabis. Avoid using it where and when it could impede responsibilities like school, work, relationships or extracurricular activities.
- ⚠️ Don't drive high – have a plan for transportation before using cannabis!
- 💡 If you use cannabis when you're bored, try pairing it with or substituting it with another activity (e.g., going for a walk, reading a book, listening to music, drawing etc.).
- 💡 Coping is a common reason for using cannabis - especially around people or in places that we anticipate will be stressful or that cause stress. Be mindful of the strategies you use to manage stress and explore adaptive coping strategies such as reaching out to others for support or positively reframing of stressors.

Relationships evolve over time and sometimes what was once supportive stops being helpful.

TIP: SOMETIMES, THERE ARE THINGS WE GET SO USED TO DOING WHILE HIGH, THAT WE FORGET THEY CAN BE JUST AS ENJOYABLE WITHOUT WEED. TRY DOING SOMETHING YOU LIKE WITHOUT WEED TO SEE HOW YOU FEEL (E.G., LISTENING TO MUSIC, WATCHING TV, HANGING OUT WITH FRIENDS).

WEIGHING YOUR OPTIONS

- WHO -

How does 'who' you use cannabis with contribute to your use?
Jot down your thoughts below.

(E.g., in large social gatherings, with specific friends, alone, roommate)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

- 💡 Many people use cannabis to "be more social" and find it can help break down social barriers. Feeling lonely and socially isolated can also contribute to use.

Make time to connect with the important people in your life and enjoy activities together. If you find yourself gravitating to using weed with certain people or loved ones, try pairing it or replacing it with another activity (e.g., preparing a meal, board games, getting outdoors etc.).
- 💡 Family and parents can significantly influence cannabis use in several ways. Disruptive family structures where there is not a lot of bonding and/or low supervision or control can be a large source of stress that can contribute to unstable coping strategies such as cannabis use. Family and parents can also influence cannabis use by modelling related behaviours.
- 💡 Peer networks can also positively or negatively contribute to cannabis use. Often individuals with an interest in cannabis seek friendships that affirm and support their choice to use cannabis (peer preference). It's important to surround yourself with people who make you feel loved and accepted regardless of whether you continue to use cannabis or not.

TIP: INVOLVE A TRUSTED FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER IN YOUR CANNABIS JOURNEY. SOMEONE WHO CAN CHECK UP ON YOU REGULARLY, CHEER YOU ON, AND ENCOURAGE YOU WHEN YOU'RE FEELING LOW.

CHECK-IN

Based on the exercises throughout this journal, are there any changes you're thinking about making?

Right now, how sure do you feel about your decision?

Scale of 7 not at all, somewhat sure to very sure.

☐ Continuing to use cannabis as I have been (no change).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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☐ Changing how I use cannabis:

☐ Choosing products with lower amounts of THC.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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This is how I am going to try to **reduce my intake of THC** by:

☐ Buying from reliable channels more regularly

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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This is how I am going to try to purchase more **reliable cannabis** by:

☐ Changing when in the day I use.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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This is how I'm going to change **when** I use and why:

☐ Changing where I use.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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This is how I'm going to change **where** I use and why:

☐ Changing who I use with.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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This is how I'm going to change **who** I use with and why:

☐ Reducing how much cannabis I use:

☐ Reducing the amount/quantity I use.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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This is how I'm going to change the **quantity** I use and why:

☐ Reducing how often I use.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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This is how I'm going to change **how often** I use and why:

☐ Other:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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☐ Stop using cannabis all together.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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⚠ Make sure to talk to your treatment team about how you can stop using safely and comfortably before cutting it out.

TIP: BE CLEAR AND REALISTIC IN THE GOALS YOU SET FOR YOURSELF AROUND YOUR CANNABIS USE. WRITE THEM DOWN IF IT HELPS. CONGRATULATE YOURSELF FOR YOUR SUCCESSES BUT DON'T PUNISH YOURSELF FOR YOUR SETBACKS. INSTEAD, TAKE IT AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO RE-EVALUATE YOUR GOALS AND YOUR ABILITIES.

What (if anything) do you need to do before you make this decision?

- ☐ I'm ready to act and make a plan!
- ☐ I want to discuss my options with others.
(E.g., family, friends, doctor, counsellor etc.)
- ☐ I want to learn how these options would look in my life and where to start.
- ☐ Other questions, concerns/next steps:



**AFFIRMATION: DECIDING TO CHANGE HOW YOU
USE CANNABIS DOES NOT MEAN YOU HAVE TO BE
PERFECT. RELEASE THE NEED FOR PERFECTION
AND EMBRACE THIS JOURNEY AT YOUR OWN
PACE. YOU ARE LEARNING AND GROWING.**

Acknowledgements

This tool was created using the recommendations from the Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines for Psychosis (LRCUG-PYSCH) and input from people with lived/living experience of cannabis use and psychosis. A public brochure of the LRCUG-PSYCH recommendations and a series of tools for clinical practice are available online at www.labo-jutras-aswad.ca/boite-a-outils.

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