

Recognising warning signs

Problematic use usually develops gradually. Experts use eleven criteria from the DSM-5. In everyday language:

- **Control:** using more or for longer than planned; wanting to cut down but not managing it; a lot of time spent getting hold of it, using and recovering; strong cravings.
- **Everyday life and relationships:** responsibilities are left undone; using despite arguments; hobbies, friendships and sport take a back seat.
- **Risk:** using in dangerous situations, for example before driving; carrying on despite noticeable harm.
- **Body:** needing more for the same effect; feeling bad without cannabis (withdrawal).

If two to three points apply within twelve months, experts speak of a mild disorder, four to five of a moderate one and six or more of a severe one. Only doctors or psychotherapists can make a diagnosis. The list helps you take an honest look.

Signs in others. Performance at school or work suddenly drops, the circle of friends changes, there are more problems at home, hobbies are given up, mood swings and withdrawal, lies or excuses. Such signs can also have other causes. They are a reason for a conversation, not a diagnosis.

Key points: when to get help

- You are worried: raise it at a calm moment, without reproach.
- The problems are growing or attempts to stop fail: bring in counselling, also for family members.
- Crisis or danger to life: TelefonSeelsorge 0800 111 0 111 or 0800 111 0 222, in an emergency 112.

Sources: American Psychiatric Association (2013), DSM-5, criteria for cannabis use disorder; cannabispraevention.de (BIÖG), Smoking weed, risks and addiction; BIÖG (2025), Parent information on cannabis.

More detail: csc.do/en/prevention/knowledge/recognising-warning-signs/ ·
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