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December 1, 2025

## Straight Talk

**Welcome to the latest edition of the Steered Straight Newsletter! We are thrilled to bring you updates on the impactful work that Michael DeLeon and the Steered Straight team are doing to support communities, young people, and families nationwide. Our mission is to inform, educate, and empower young people to make positive choices. Thank you for joining us on this journey to make a difference.**



### **Think today's teens have it easier? Think again.**

The latest blog post @ [www.michaeldeleonblog.org](http://www.michaeldeleonblog.org) dives deep into the generational divide between parents and their kids. Exposing how modern teens face unprecedented pressures, risks, and expectations that didn't exist 20 years ago. From academic overload and social media stress to the alarming rise of fentanyl-laced pills and high-potency vapes, this article reveals why growing up today is a whole different reality.

You'll read about:

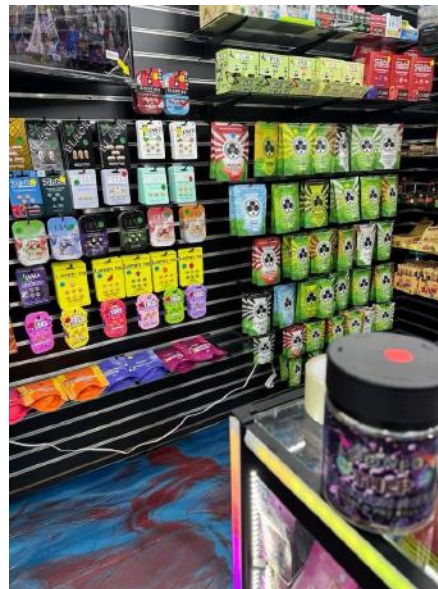
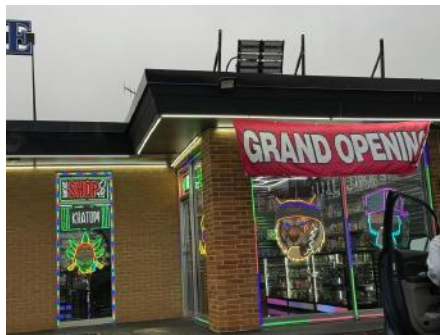
- How technology and social media fuel anxiety and comparison
- Why teens are expected to grow up faster and achieve more
- The deadly shift in substance risks — from casual experimentation to life-or-death stakes
- The mental health crisis and lack of emotional support in schools
- What adults can do to truly help — with practical, compassionate strategies

**This isn't just a wake-up call — it's a roadmap for prevention, connection, and change.**

Click the link [www.michaeldeleonblog.org](http://www.michaeldeleonblog.org) to read the full article on Michael's blog and understand what today's teens are really up against. You'll never look at adolescence the same way again.

**Michael DeLeon**

## Road Warrior



## How the Miles Make a Difference

Here is a bit different take this week on How the Miles Make a Difference. Michael travels all over the country speaking, but he is also keeping his eye out for the next biggest problems and issues that we face in prevention and keeping our kids safe. The following are Michael's own thoughts and words shared via his Facebook page. He is out on the front lines and out there daily, maybe it is worth a read! Also, go check out his Facebook page to see what else he is concerned about that we are facing as a country. We need to be a united front in prevention.

"When you allow foreign nationals to open up retail DRUG operations with the mask of "vape shops", and then simply allow them cart blanch ability to sell anything they want despite the addictive nature and the untested, unregulated guidelines, with ZERO enforcement of what IS illegal, they'll keep throwing up grand opening signs and they'll keep taking your money while poisoning your

community!!! I asked the shop owner, "what are ya gonna do if they ban all this stuff?" He replied, "we have time to tweak it a little bit and sell the same stuff with a different name but similar results". WOW! JUST WOW! Smartest drug dealers are the ones who do it in plain sight with neon signs"!!!!

Steered Straight

## In The News

Megan Feller arranges bouquets for a Halloween party at her apartment in Edina, Minn. on Saturday, Oct. 25, 2025.  
Mark Vancleave/AP

# More people are addicted to marijuana, but fewer of them are seeking help, experts say

By **LAURA UNGAR**, *AP Science Writer*  
Updated Nov 25, 2025 6:18 a.m.

Megan Feller smoked pot several times a day and couldn't eat, sleep or function without it. But at the time, she didn't see the need to reach out for help.

“I didn’t think cannabis was a big deal,” the 24-year-old said. “It was really socially accepted.”

This attitude is common. As more states legalize marijuana, use has become more normalized, and products have become more potent. But fewer of those who are addicted seek help for it.

Pot use among young adults reached historic levels in recent years, according to a federally supported survey. Daily use even outpaced daily drinking, with nearly 18 million Americans reporting in 2022 that they use marijuana every day or nearly every day, up from less than 1 million three decades earlier.

Studies show a corresponding increase in cannabis use disorder — when people crave marijuana and spend lots of time using it even though it causes problems at home, school, work or in relationships. It’s a condition that researchers estimate affects about 3 in 10 pot users and can be mild, moderate or severe.

And it's an addiction — despite the common misconception that that's not possible with marijuana, said Dr. Smita Das, an addiction psychiatrist at Stanford University.

Meanwhile, the drug’s widespread acceptance has fueled a stigma about seeking treatment, said Dr. Jennifer Exo of the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation in Minnesota. “There’s this pervasive belief that you can’t become addicted, it can’t actually be a problem,” she said. “It has to do with this myth that cannabis is safe, natural and benign.”

## **Stronger weed, bigger problems**

While pot isn’t as harmful as harder drugs, frequent or heavy use has been linked to problems with learning, memory and attention as well as chronic nausea, vomiting and lung problems among those who smoke it. Some evidence has also linked it to earlier onset of psychosis in people with genetic risk factors for psychotic disorders like schizophrenia.

And today’s pot is not the same as that of the past.

Many people recall older relatives who “smoked a few doobies and ate some food and fell asleep,” Exo said. “But it’s absolutely different.”

In the 1960s, most pot that people smoked contained less than 5% THC, the ingredient that causes a high. Today, the THC potency in cannabis flower and concentrates sold in dispensaries can reach 40% or more, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Teens are often vaping potent marijuana concentrates, Exo said, rather than eating brownies made with cannabis flower or taking a hit from a bong.

## More access to marijuana, rising ER visits

Pot is also increasingly available. Though it's still a federal crime to possess it, 24 states allow recreational use by adults and 40 allow medical use as of late June, the National Conference of State Legislatures said. Dispensaries abound and more people are able to keep pot at home.

Research links the legalization of recreational marijuana with rising emergency room visits for "acute cannabis intoxication," in which patients may experience a rapid heartbeat or feel dizzy, confused or paranoid.

A study last year focused on Michigan found that legalization was associated with an immediate increase in the rate of ER visits for this condition among people of all ages, especially middle-aged adults.

Das said increased access to cannabis, along with a growing number of cannabis products and with higher potency all contribute to rising ER visits. Edibles such as gummies can pose a particular problem because they take a little while to kick in so people may keep taking more because they don't yet feel the drug's effects.

"Then, suddenly, they're suffering from cannabis toxicity," she said.

## Why treatment is often overlooked

Feller first tried pot at 16 and quickly went from smoking the plant to using vape cartridges that were easy to hide in her pocket. Soon, she could barely get by without it.

"I would wake up every morning for years, and until I smoked weed, I would throw up," she said. Instead of trying to get high, she used it "to make these other symptoms go away."

Feller was also drinking a lot and her parents sent her to a treatment center when she was around 18. It didn't help because she wasn't ready to get well. After her mother died, her substance use worsened.

At 22, Feller entered Hazelden on her own — but only to get sober from alcohol, which she did.

She kept using pot on and off, then finally sought treatment for cannabis use disorder and has been sober from marijuana for almost a year.

"I'm so much happier now," she said. "I don't feel, like, shackled to a substance." Such treatment is often overlooked, said Brian Graves, a researcher at Florida Atlantic University.

He and his colleagues published a study this year showing that the share of people who got treatment for cannabis use disorder from their nationally representative sample dropped from 19% in 2003 to 13% in 2019. An earlier study also found a marked decline and pointed to reasons that include "expanding cannabis legalization and more tolerant attitudes."

Experts said people need to be educated that pot, like alcohol, can be misused and can cause real harm.

"Another important piece is helping people understand the risk before they start," Exo said, "and then to feel safe enough to say, 'Hey, I need help managing this.'"

Many people wait until their marijuana use causes problems in multiple parts of their lives before they seek treatment — if they ever do.

"If you're changing your life because of weed, there might be an issue," Feller added. "There are resources to get help and you are not alone."

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**LAURA UNGAR**

## On the Road to Recovery

Steered Straight and Recovery Army sat down with Patrick Bowles. Patrick grew up in Jacksonville. His issues with addiction began with constant fighting in middle school. The summer between 6th and 7th grade he started hanging around with a crowd that looked to not be getting a beatdown every day like he was. Drugs and alcohol entered his life at this point, so much so that he was doing powdered cocaine at the young age of 12. At 15 he took his first hit of crack cocaine. He smoked away the love and support of his parents and the relationship with his daughter. Patrick ended up in treatment and was so beat down that he was ready to try something new. Treatment was a place he finally felt like he fit in. He is still dealing with the wreckage of his past but now has his sobriety. Patrick grows a little each and every day and that daily growth has changed his life drastically, for the better. To hear his story, how amazing his life is today, and exactly how he got to where he is at...click the link below and listen to his story in his own words. Keep up the great work Patrick Bowles.

To see more stories of hope and inspiration please visit:

[www.recoveryarmy.com](http://www.recoveryarmy.com)



## STEERED STRAIGHT

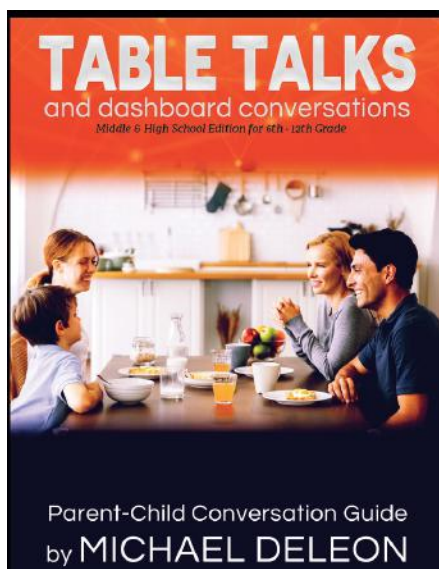
## TABLE TALKS

Michael has created workbooks for parents and children that guide them in managing relationships and discussing difficult topics beyond drug and alcohol abuse. Each month, he focuses on a different subjects and offers many different topics of conversation and activities you can do with your children to help foster that deep connection and communication that is so vital.



Table Talks and Dashboard Conversations is an in-depth Conversation Guide for Parents and Kids. You can order through [Amazon](#) or

the [Steered Straight website](#).



## **The Month of December: Core Values, Peer Assimilations & Peer Pressure**

The focus of December is core values, peer assimilation and peer pressure. December is designated to helping teens develop integrated skills. This month we guide teens on how developing and implementing an effective personal wellness plan contributes to healthy decision-making over one's lifetime. This is done using tools that include our Self-Actualizing Scales. **This week I would like to have a conversation with your children about how leading by example can help others to become better. Encourage your child to display their core values when they aren't at home. To better help you have this conversation together, look up the definition of "core values" with your child. Have them read the definition and put it into their own words. Make a list, both you and them, of the core values you both believe you possess. Then, read and describe each one to each other and LISTEN to each other and discuss.**

Spend the week building your kids up! The more we open up with kids, the more they will open up to the important adults in their lives.

## Headlines We Are Following

[New agreement lets Tennessee hemp businesses temporarily dodge THCA selling ban and regulations | wbir.com](#)

[GOP Congressional Leader Is 'Cautiously Optimistic' Trump Will Reschedule Marijuana—Which He Says Is 'An Alternative To Highly Addictive Opioids' - Marijuana Moment](#)

[More people are addicted to marijuana, but fewer seek help](#)

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## Contact Steered Straight

Michael and his team of professional Steered Straight speakers are eager to meet you in person and make a profound impact on your students, staff, and community. To bring their inspiring message to your next event, contact Steered Straight to schedule.

[CONTACT STEERED STRAIGHT](#)



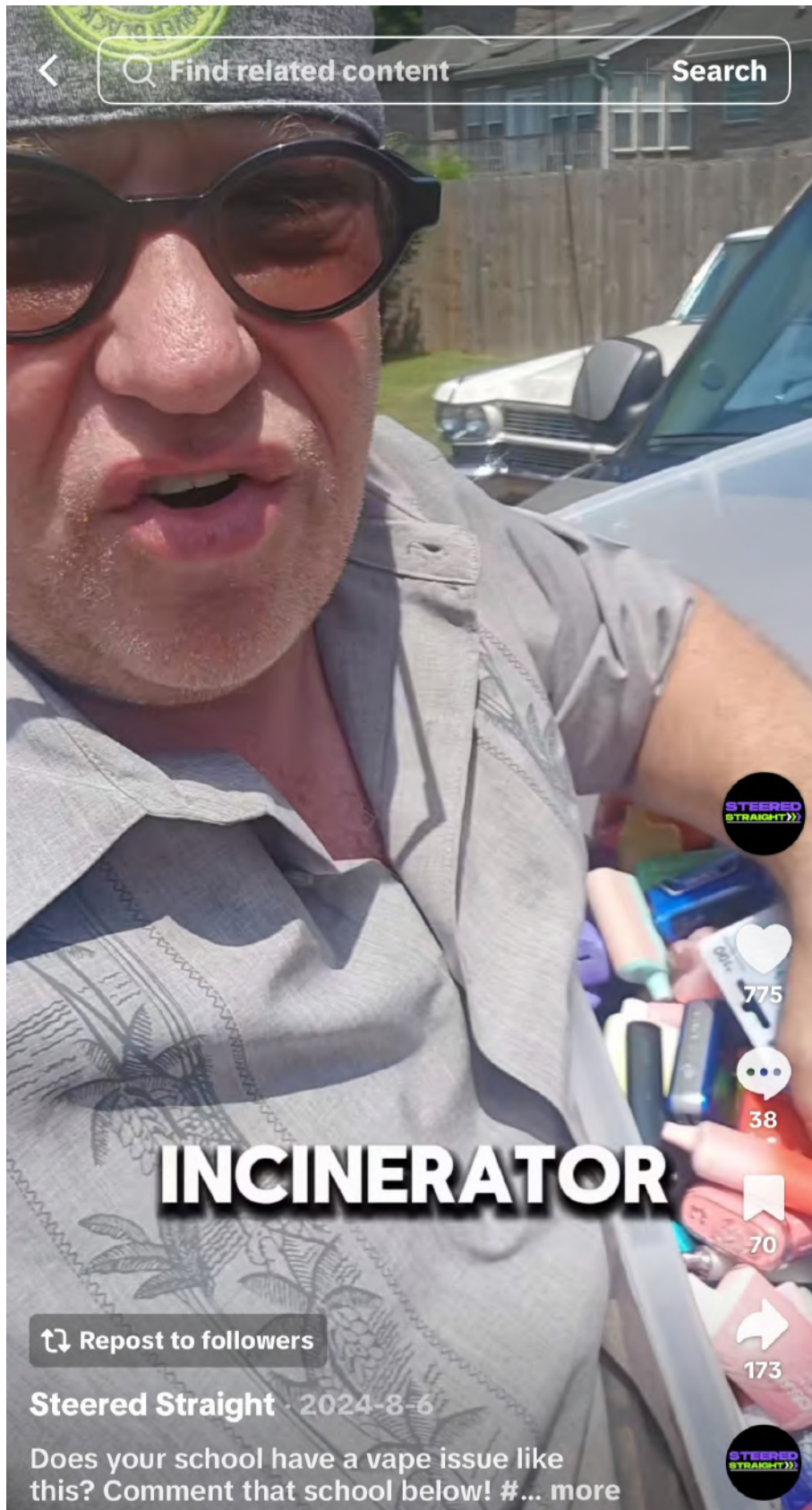
## Follow On Social Media



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18K followers





Watch now on TikTok

@steeredstraight

Check out these awesome posts.

Instagram - This post shows that even Michael and Darla DeLeon need a break and time to recharge sometimes!

TIKTOK - A blast from the warmer past. In June, look how many vapes were collected and taken to the incinerator.

Michael DeLeon and the team at Steered Straight are working hard to ensure this generation gets what they need to change the world. No other program like it and no one delivers the message better. All for the kids! Follow Michael and Steered Straight on social media so you don't miss a beat!

#steeredstraight #motivator #explore #advice #drugfree #antivaping #recovery #quitvaping #stayinyourlane



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