

## **Time for a Weed-Free January?**

### **Persuading Skeptics on the Benefits of a Cannabis Break**

In the article “Time for a Weed-Free January? How cannabis users could benefit from a ‘dry’ month” Mackillop (2024) encourages readers, especially those who regularly use cannabis, to consider taking a month off for health and personal benefits. The author compares it to Dry January, a popular trend where people abstain from alcohol for a month to show how taking a break from cannabis can reset both physical tolerance and mental clarity. The article highlights many positive outcomes from an extended break, including improving lung health, developing healthier habits, and saving money. MacKillop (2024) also states that for some individuals, taking a break can act as a self-assessment for their relationship with cannabis use and possibly help the user realize if they have developed a cannabis use disorder. The article combines evidence from scientific studies and public health data, encouraging readers to take a break from cannabis as a health-promoting action.

James Mackillop, the author of the article, is a very credible source as his primary research is focused on addiction and medical cannabis. Mackillop receives research funding from recognized organizations such as the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Health Canada, and the National Institutes of Health. In addition, MacKillop is the Peter Boris Chair in Addictions Research and a professor at McMaster University, demonstrating further his expertise and credibility on the subject. MacKillop references statistics and research from trustworthy organizations like Health Canada and Harvard Health Publishing providing evidence on the negative effects of cannabis on the brain and body. Research has shown that long-term use of cannabis can impair memory, attention, and decision making. It has also shown an increased risk of mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and in extreme cases, psychosis (Health

Canada, 2018). Additionally, smoking cannabis can damage lung tissue and increase the risk of respiratory issues such as bronchitis (Health Canada, 2024). A month-long break can serve as an opportunity for users to recover from these harmful effects, particularly cognitive fog and lung irritation. Mackillop (2024) references this information, further backing up his claims on the importance of the break.

Mackillop (2024) applies practical appeals in his article. For example, he states “Cannabis is not cheap and adds up quickly if you consume daily. A Weed-Free January could save hundreds of dollars.” This point appeals to readers who might not be concerned with the health benefits of a Weed-Free January but could be convinced by the financial advantages of taking a break. Mackillop reaches a wider audience with this point, making the article more persuasive. Additionally, the author acknowledges the complexity of cannabis use and addiction. Mackillop (2024) recognizes that for some users a break may not be as easy, he suggests that these individuals should consider seeking professional help, showing understanding and compassion towards those who find it difficult to quit, even temporarily. Mackillop is aware of the challenges involved and isn’t trying to oversimplify the issue of cannabis use, rather, he is trying to ensure that the article is relatable towards a broad audience, including those who use cannabis casually and those who might be dealing with more complex issues.

Skeptics might argue that a one-month break from cannabis is insufficient towards cannabis dependence or addiction. They may feel that Mackillop’s solution is too simple, and the article doesn’t dive deeply into how to address these issues in the long term, other than suggesting professional help, which could be seen as a limitation in Mackillop’s article.

However, the article serves as a starting point for those who may be questioning their cannabis habits and haven't considered taking a break before. Additionally, skeptics might argue that the focus on cannabis breaks is not very effective as it is difficult for those who rely on cannabis for medical reasons. Mackillop (2024) addresses this by advising medical cannabis users to consult with their doctors before taking a break, providing a responsible approach that acknowledges the needs of these specific users. Despite these limitations, Mackillop's article provides a thoughtful and well-reasoned argument for why cannabis users should consider taking a break, referencing credible sources and government health organizations. The article is trying to appeal to a wide range of individuals, from casual users to those struggling with cannabis dependence, making his health-promoting argument more accessible to a variety of readers.

**Naysayer Description**

The naysayer believes that taking a month off from cannabis is not an effective solution for those who use it regularly. They may argue that cannabis use is not that harmful and that a brief break won't address issues involving dependency or addiction. They may also argue that the article oversimplifies the issue of cannabis use by not fully recognizing the challenges that medical cannabis users face when considering taking a break.

### References

Mackillop, J. (2024, January 10). *Time for a Weed-Free January? How cannabis users could benefit from a 'dry' month*. The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/time-for-a-weed-free-january-how-cannabis-users-could-benefit-from-a-dry-month-220851>

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