Now That You Have Your Medical Card

things you need to know before you go to the dispensary

Congratulations on your choice to try medical cannabis!

The reasons people use cannabis are as varied as the people using it. We all need some guidance around using this potent and beautiful plant. Please use this guide as a starting point in your cannabis journey, you will learn a lot about the plant and yourself as you move into cannabis use.
For many of us it is hard to think of cannabis as anything other than an illegal drug. The fear of ‘drug’ use is very powerful for people and the social/political demonization of cannabis has been going on since the 1930’s in this country. For more info on the history of cannabis check out the book Brave New Weed by Joe Dolce.

There has been 50 years of research on cannabis and over 20,000 published studies with more and more being done every day all over the world.

What attracts me to cannabis is that it is a plant, it grows in most parts of the world and has been known to be used as medicine for about 5000 years. As a powerful and spiritual plant it is best used with caution and guidance. Using it to get “high” can be seen as a negative or positive aspect of the plant depending on your age, health, culture and place in the world.

For most of us in the US we have access to cannabis only with a medical card and this card is given only for specific health issues and those vary from state to state.

Medical dispensaries are staffed by dedicated cannabis workers who are very knowledgeable and can give you lots of information about the products they have in stock. This guide is to assist you in asking questions so you spend your money on the type of cannabis that will help you the most.

What to think about before you go to the dispensary:
• What is your primary reason for using cannabis?

• Do you need immediate relief of symptoms?

• Do you have specific health issues? Acute or chronic?

• How long do you want effects to last?

• Are you looking for something to use daily, at night, or for occasional use for symptom management?

• What is available in your area? (most dispensaries have a website with lists of what they have in stock and they are updated everyday).

How do you envision using cannabis? Otherwise known as methods of ingestion, often this is first thing you are asked at the dispensary.

• Inhalation-smoking or vaping

• Edibles - food, often candy or cookies

• Tinctures - usually alcohol based but could be glycerin

• Oils - usually coconut oil or MCT oil

• Topicals

• Capsules - specific amounts of powdered cannabis put in capsule form

• Suppositories - rectal or vaginal - for different reasons

• Transdermal applications - usually prescribed amounts

Choosing a variety of cannabis to use can be intimidating and overwhelming because there are so many choices!

Choose a variety that meets your specific needs. Go back to “what to think about…”

Try not to worry too much about indica vs. sativa vs. hybrid cannabis cultivars. Ask to see lab reports and note what the THC, CBD, and terpene content of the plant or product is and ask for guidance around what each cultivar is used for, (sleep, anxiety, energy, pain, etc.)
If you can smell, look and touch plant material then do it!

“Good” cannabis *looks* green, dark purple or dark red. It *smells* strong - sweet, floral, fruity, grassy, skunky. A strong *smell* indicates freshness. When you *touch* fresh cannabis flower buds it has a sticky or resinous feeling and that is good.

“Bad” cannabis is brown, may have little smell, and will be dry and crumbly. There may be a lot of loose pieces of plant material in the container. It will have a bad taste - like dirty socks smell or an old musty taste.

Terpenes are what create smell in plants and the smells themselves offer healing qualities, so choose the smells that appeal to you - you will enjoy it more.

Hope this helps you on your first visit to the dispensary!