



## **GLOSSARY OF TERMS: “THE DOWNSIDE OF HIGH”**

**Bi-polar Disorder:** Formerly called manic depression, it’s a mood disorder defined by episodes of elevated moods of two polar opposites: mania and depression.

**Cannabidiol:** A chemical in the cannabis plant that reduces or buffers the psychoactive effects of THC.

**Cannabinoids:** A group of compounds appearing in the cannabis plant, but also present naturally in the nervous and immune systems of humans.

**COMT gene:** Catechol-*O*-methyl transferase, a gene on the 22<sup>nd</sup> chromosome that deactivates dopamine. A variant in the gene, involving the amino acids Methionine and Valine, influences the amount of dopamine released, and seems to regulate how cannabis might affect mental health.

**Dopamine:** A neurotransmitter in the brain that affects emotion, perception and movement.

**Methionine:** An amino acid whose presence in the COMT gene seems to reduce the risk of marijuana-induced schizophrenia.

**Neural pruning:** A neurological process occurring during the teen years that reduces the number of the brain’s overproduced or ‘weak’ neurons and reorganizes the synapses’ configurations – somewhat like defragmenting a computer.

**Prodromal:** The earliest symptoms of a disease.

**Psychosis:** A disordered mental state involving a loss of contact with reality, frequently with hallucinations, delusions or altered thought processes.

**Schizophrenia:** A mental illness featuring recurring psychosis and a breakdown in the relation between thoughts, feelings and actions, usually accompanied by a withdrawal from social activity.

**THC:** Tetrahydrocannabinol, the main psychoactive ingredient in the cannabis plant.

**Valine:** An amino acid whose presence in the COMT gene seems to increase the risk of marijuana-induced schizophrenia.