



Kindergarten-6th Grade
Substance Abuse Prevention Program
Teacher's Guides
Sample Lesson

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Lesson 16

LESSON 16

In this lesson, students will interpret the reasons people turn to drugs and will propose positive ways a person can respond when confronted with those situations.

Materials Needed: Whiteboard

Note: Because the information and the students' conclusions are so important, you may want to use more than one class period to sufficiently cover this lesson. Familiarize yourself with the explanations below **before** you present each reason to the class for discussion. This will give your explanations more meaning than if you simply read them aloud.

Activity 1 Have students work in groups of three to formulate a hypothesis that even with the strong evidence against substance abuse, there are many people who still experiment with drugs.

Have each group generate arguments for why people use drugs (including alcohol). Below is a list of possible reasons that the students should mention. You will want to include any reasons the students suggest that might **not** be listed below as long as they can defend their reasoning.

For emphasis and reference, list these reasons on the board.

1. To rebel, to go against parents or other authority figures
2. To feel good
3. To forget about problems
4. To feel older and more sophisticated
5. To feel that you belong, to be "in" with a group, to keep from being bored and lonely
6. To be able to do things without feeling guilt that a person would not usually do
7. To satisfy a dependence on the substance

As you review each reason, have students evaluate the weakness in each and defend the **positive** ways to handle the problems behind the reasons. Guide the class to develop ways to withstand the **negative peer pressure** that could be exerted on a person to use illegal drugs and/or harmful substances.

1. To rebel, to go against parents or other authority figures

Discuss suggestions of **positive** ways to cope with this feeling. Explain that **everyone** wants to rebel at one time or another, but acting from such selfish motives usually results in frustration and embarrassment. Have students evaluate the practice of taking a sheet of paper and writing down everything that you want to say or everything that is troubling you. Doing this helps the person get it “off the chest,” focus on the exact problem, and think more clearly about formulating a solution.

2. To feel good

Help students recognize that using drugs to feel good, either mentally or physically, cannot be sustained unless the drug is used **repeatedly**; therefore, the “highs” that a person seeks are better found through involvement with other people or projects, the sense of achievement that comes with doing a job well, or an exercise such as daily running or walking. Have students help you create a list of such activities. Write them on the board or chart paper.

3. To forget about problems

Have each student write a problem they have on a piece of paper. They should not let anyone else see it—this is private! Now have them imagine themselves in a very exciting, fun situation (at a water park, camping with their family, playing outside). Have them look at their piece of paper, and ask students to determine if their problem would still be there even after the fun time they had. Explain that drugs may sometimes offer a temporary escape from one’s problems, but when the person has stopped taking the drug, there will be a letdown, depression, or hangover, all of which will become intensified because the person will feel some guilt—and the problem will still be there, waiting to be solved.

4. To feel older and more sophisticated

Ask students to interpret the phrase “older, more sophisticated.” Examine the fact that not all adults use drugs and that those adults who do use drugs are not acting responsibly or maturely but actually behaving childishly. A **mature** person is one who is able to accept responsibility and do his or her best every day.

5. To feel that you belong, to be “in” with a group, to keep from being bored and lonely

Have students define “bored” and “lonely.” Explain that boredom and loneliness are two difficult feelings to handle, even for adults, but no one who becomes actively interested in other people or has a hobby or project can remain bored or boring to others. Ask students to “turn and talk” to their neighbor about a hobby they have or a project on which they are working. Learning to **listen to another person** never fails to make that person feel more important and, in turn, that person will feel friendlier to the person who is listening. If a person has to use drugs to be “in” with a group, it is possible, and most likely, that person will discover the group is not worth the effort if the only means of acceptance by others is based on taking drugs.

Real friendship should not be based on an “I’ll like you only if you do this” basis.

6. To be able to do things without feeling guilt that a person would not usually do

Create a class list of things that your students would not ever think of doing. Discuss their suggestions. Explain that taking drugs only allows a person to **think** it is all right to do something that he or she would not usually do. Compare and contrast this kind of thinking with an “If I think I can do something, I can” attitude. That attitude is usually based on conclusions that have been reached after considering all of the consequences of such a decision. The “thinking it’s all right” feeling that comes as a result of taking a drug is based on a false sense of security. Have students interpret the consequences of acting on such a feeling. Guide them to understand their choices may result in an even deeper sense of guilt and depression once the drug has worn off. Without the fear of consequences, a person may take risks that he or she would not normally take, which can lead to getting in trouble.

7. To satisfy a dependence on the substance

It should be emphasized that a person can stop taking drugs of any kind if he or she is sincere in wanting to quit and is willing to seek help from others.

