



Kindergarten-6th Grade

Substance Abuse Prevention Program

Teacher's Guides

Sample Lesson

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Lesson 12

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In this lesson, students analyze their reasons for doing something and explore the weaknesses inherent in the reasons people do drugs.

Materials Needed: Chart paper

Note: Because the information presented in this lesson as well as the students' conclusions are so important, you may want to use several class periods to cover this material. Familiarize yourself with the explanation given below before you present each reason to the students. By doing this, the explanation will have more meaning than if you simply read it to the class.

Activity 1 Tell students that even with the vast evidence of the dangers of drug abuse, many people still experiment with drugs and eventually become dependent on them. To understand why people use illegal drugs, review the reasons listed below that were first identified in Lesson 2. Include any additional reasons the students give that might not be listed.

Say:

*As we review why people use harmful substances, anticipate the **weakness** of each reason and propose a positive way to handle the problem **behind** the reason. Formulate suggestions that could help a person resist the need for using harmful substances.*

Write each reason below on a separate piece of chart paper. Discuss each reason with the whole class.

1. To forget problems

Have students generate suggestions for positive ways to cope with this feeling. Point out that drugs may appear to offer a temporary escape from a person's problems, but when that person stops taking the drug, there will be a letdown or depression that will become intensified because the person will feel some guilt—and the problem will still be waiting to be solved.

2. To relax, feel good ("get kicks"; seek thrills)

Have students debate whether using drugs to make one "feel good" either mentally or physically can be sustained for an indefinite period of time. Have the class develop a list of alternative "highs" that a person may seek. Suggestions can include: involvement with other people and/or projects, the sense of achievement that comes with doing a job well, or daily exercise such as running or walking.

3. To rebel against parents or other authority figures

Have students construct a list of **positive** ways to cope with this feeling. Communicate that **everyone** wants to rebel at one time or another, but acting from such a motive usually results in frustration and, frequently, embarrassment. Have students “turn and talk” about ways to deal with hostile feelings. As they share their ideas with the class, elaborate on writing down everything that the person may want to say or that is troubling her or him. Doing this in private helps the individual “get it off the chest,” focus on the exact problem that is bothering him or her, and think more clearly about formulating a solution.

4. To feel more mature, adult-like, or sophisticated.

Have students examine behaviors that illustrate maturity. Explain that when people feel that they need to be more mature, it is usually because they feel inadequate about themselves and they lack self-respect. Behaving a certain way to feel more mature is only temporary and cannot compare with self-respect and / or the respect that others give to you. Feeling more sophisticated is just another way of saying that a person wants to appear more “grown-up” and adult. It should be discussed that not all adults use drugs and that those adults who **do** use drugs are not acting in a responsible or mature manner. A mature person accepts responsibility and does his or her best every day.

5. To “fit in” with a desired group, or to avoid boredom or loneliness

Have students develop definitions for the words “boredom” and “loneliness.” Ask students to illustrate some activities that a person can do to beat boredom. Establish with the class that no one who becomes actively interested in other people or has a hobby or project can remain bored or appear boring to others. Learning to listen to other people never fails to make them feel more important and, in turn, they will feel friendlier to you. If a person has to use drugs to be included in the group, it is possible, and most likely, that the group is not worth the effort if the only means of acceptance by them is based on you taking drugs. Help students recognize that real friendship should not be based on an “I’ll like you only if you do this” basis.

6. To maintain a dependence on drugs

Have students review and assess what they learned in Lesson 3 about how strong the physical and psychological *dependence* can be.

7. To release inhibitions, to do things without feeling guilty

Have students work with a partner to evaluate this point. Students should develop an understanding that taking drugs only allows a person to **think** it is all right to do something that he or she would not usually do. Have students debate how this kind of “thinking” differs from an attitude of “If I think I can do something, I can.” Their arguments should include: considering consequences of acting on a decision, the “thinking it’s all right” feeling that comes as a result of taking a drug, and a false sense of security. Acting on such feelings 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 even more problems.

8. To reward themselves

Have students “pair-share” rewards they have received and the consequences that led to those rewards. Explain that people often reward themselves for accomplishing certain tasks, and that users often reward themselves with drugs.

9. To intentionally do something illegal (the “forbidden fruit” syndrome).

Have students interpret this statement. Explain that be it on a dare, a bet, or some other reason, some people will commit an illegal act (including drug use) simply because it is illegal. Have students debate this point. Choose a small group to debate why doing something illegal should never be an option, while another group argues its case for actually doing something they know is against the law.

Activity 2 Emphasize 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. Have students assess this statement.

