



Kindergarten-6th Grade

Substance Abuse Prevention Program

Teacher's Guides

Sample Lesson

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Lesson 13

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In this lesson, students will examine the many reasons people turn to drugs and will formulate 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 session to cover this lesson sufficiently. Become familiar with the explanation given below **before** you present each reason to the class for discussion. In this way, the explanation will have more meaning than if you simply read it aloud.

Activity 1 Tell students that even with the strong evidence against drug abuse, there are many people who still experiment with drugs and eventually become dependent on them.

Have students formulate reasons why people use drugs (including alcohol). Below is a list of reasons that the students should mention. Include any reasons the students suggest that might **not** be listed below if the students can defend them.

List the students' responses, including these reasons, on the board.

1. To rebel, to go against parents or other authority
2. To feel good, to get high
3. To relax, to forget about problems
4. To be better than others, 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

To review each reason, have two to three students act out the following scenarios for the corresponding reasons:

1. Your parents have told you that you can't go out tonight because they are going out and need you to watch your little brother. After your brother goes to sleep, you decide to invite some friends over. They bring some pot and you get high.
2. You are at a friend's house and you are both bored. The friend gives you one of his Xanax and tells you that it will make you feel "good."

3. You have a big test next week, your mom is upset with you because you didn't water the plants, and the teacher sent you into the hall for being disrespectful. You have so many problems. Your best friend offers you some pills that will "take all your worries away."
4. Your big sister is having a party while your parents are gone. She tells you to stay in your room, but you come out and start talking with some of her friends. The next thing you know you are taking a white pill that someone gave you and gulping it down with a beer.
5. After a few weeks at your new school, someone finally asks you to sit with him at lunch. During lunch, he asks if you would like to take some Valium. Other kids readily accept the offer.
6. You are at a friend's birthday party. A boy you like offers you a pill and tells you it will help you enjoy the party even more.

Have the students evaluate the "weakness" after each scenario is acted out and think of **positive** ways to handle the problems instead. Have the students formulate ways to withstand the **negative peer pressure** that could be exerted on a person to use illegal drugs or harmful substances.

After students have interpreted each scenario, debate the reasons for using the substances discussed earlier:

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

Elicit students' suggestions of **positive** ways to cope with this feeling. Explain that **everyone** wants to rebel at one time or another, but acting from such a motive usually results in frustration and, frequently, embarrassment. Suggest that one way to deal with hostile feelings is to take a sheet of paper and write down everything that the person wants 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 them, and think more clearly about formulating a solution. Examine students' thoughts about this technique for confronting the need to rebel.

2. To feel good, to get high

Explain that using drugs to make one "feel good" either mentally or physically cannot be sustained unless the drug is used **repeatedly**; therefore the "highs" that a person seeks can be found through involvement with other people and/or projects, the sense of achievement that comes with doing a job well, or exercise, such as daily running or walking. People who have tried these techniques report that they do help.

3. To relax, to forget about problems

Have students communicate suggestions for positive ways to cope with this feeling. Explain that drugs 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, which will become intensified because the person will feel some guilt—and the problem will still be waiting to be solved.

4. To be better than others, to feel older and more sophisticated

Have students defend their suggestions. Have them interpret what people really feel when they feel the need to be better than others. Guide them to determine that others feel that need because they feel inadequate about themselves; they lack self-respect and/or the respect of others. Feelings of superiority are only temporary and cannot compare with self-respect and/or the respect that comes from others. Feeling older and more sophisticated is only another way of saying that a person wants to appear more grown-up and adult; therefore, it should be noted 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

Discuss students’ suggestions. 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 for long or appear boring to others. 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 that person will discover the group is not worth the effort if the only means of acceptance by others is based on taking drugs.

Have students pair-share the following: **Real friendship** should not be based on an “I’ll like you only if you do this” basis. Ask students, who are willing, to share what they discussed with their partner.

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

Discuss students’ suggestions. Explain that taking drugs only allows a person to **think** it is all right to do something that he or she would not do usually. This kind of thinking should not be confused with an “If I think I can do something, I can” attitude. That attitude usually is based on conclusions that have been reached after considering consequences of acting on a decision. The “thinking it’s all right” feeling that comes as a result of taking a drug is not based on critical thinking but on a false sense of security. Have students express their thoughts on how they might feel about their actions once the drug has worn off. Without the fear of consequences, a person may take risks that he or she would not normally take and may also get hurt or in trouble.

