

Lesson:
Alcohol and Drugs

Length of lesson:
45 Minutes

Materials:

- **Fact sheets about alcohol and drugs**
- **Photos, videos, and other visuals showing the effects of alcohol and drugs**
- **Role playing scenarios**

Discussion Summary:

According to several studies, young people begin experimenting with drugs at ages 12 to 17; considering this reality, drug and alcohol prevention efforts must target younger children to prevent them from ever using drugs in the first place. "A number of findings have shown that adolescent females display unique vulnerabilities that can lead to substance abuse. Furthermore, research reveals that drug abuse has a profound impact on teen girls, both physically and psychologically". Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) reports that key risk factors for substance abuse, such as stress, depression, anxiety, physical or sexual abuse, and excessive concerns about weight and appearance, are also key elements by which girls and young women are affected (Girls and Drugs 4). Drug prevention strategies that are effective include education about the harmful physiological, emotional, and social effects of drugs, engaging young people in school and positive extra-curricular activities, teaching young people healthy coping skills, how to resist peer pressure, to care for their bodies, to value their safety, and to make healthy choices for their future.

Discussion Questions:

- **How do alcohol and drugs affect our bodies?**
- **How can you keep your mind body and safe from alcohol and drugs?**

- 1. Prepare fact sheets about the effects of alcohol and drugs. These fact sheets should include specific effects of specific drugs (examples: alcohol depresses the central nervous system and affects memory ability; tobacco turns the lungs black and causes cancerous cells to grow). Facts and statistics on various drugs are available from many sources and websites.**
- 2. Prepare photos, videos, and other visuals showing the effects of alcohol and drugs. This can include "The Downward Spiral," photos of lungs before and after tobacco use, and videos describing the consequences of drug use. These visual aids are available from many sources and websites. You may want to show a bottle of alcohol, a package of cigarettes, and some prescription drugs.**
- 3. Explain to participants that there are many different kinds of drugs and they can hurt their mind and body. Pass out the fact sheets about the drugs. Lead a discussion about the physical and emotional effects of each drug. Tell participants that both short-term use (trying a drug one time) and long-term use (using a drug a lot of times or becoming addicted) are harmful. Show visuals as aids.**

Remind participants that their bodies are the only one they get and it is their job to take special care of them.

4. After discussing the negative physiological effects of alcohol and drugs, discuss some social effects. Remind participants that most drugs are illegal and therefore using them, selling them, or making them will lead them to jail or prison. Tell them that even drugs that are not illegal, like tobacco, alcohol, or prescription drugs, have harmful effects. Using and abusing any kind of substance that alters your mind or your bodily functions can change your behavior so you don't have control over yourself and your body, you don't care about things you used to care about (ex: family, friends, school, sports), and you may do regretful things you know you would not do if you were not on drugs (ex: hit someone, hurt yourself, hang out with people you know are dangerous, lose friends, stop doing your homework).

5. Now explain that even though they know these negative effects of drugs, some people will try to get them to try drugs or get hooked on drugs. Tell participants that when your friends try to persuade you to do something, even something you feel uncomfortable with, it is called peer pressure. Ask participants to share a time when they have been peer pressured.

6. Tell them that sometimes it is hard to say "no," even when you know doing drugs will hurt you or get you in trouble. Some reasons it is difficult to say "no": you want to "be cool" like your friends, your parents, siblings, or cousins do drugs so it must be okay, you feel sad or mad and you want to cover up those feelings, or you think it will be fun. Tell them that today they will practice resisting peer pressure so they won't be as likely to fall into the traps, especially now that they know how harmful drugs are to their health.

7. Explain the role playing activity. For every scenario (see sample scenarios below, or come up with your own) have some people peer pressuring someone and others being pressured. Have the whole group brainstorm ideas about what choices can be made and the consequences of those choices. Step in as needed to give suggestions. Have the participants actually say the words to resist the peer pressure to practice. Explain every choice has a consequence (something that happens because of something else), which means that something good could happen or something bad could happen depending on what choice you choose. Ask if there are any questions.

8. Ask for volunteers or choose participants to be the actors.

9. After role-playing, have participants brainstorm alternative activities to doing drugs. Ideas include: play sports, write a story, read a book, listen to music, make music, dance, talk on the phone, talk on the internet, learn a new hobby, spend time with your family, do your homework, play a board game, take a walk, do work in your community, draw or do an art

project, go see a movie, clean your room, learn how to cook your favorite meal, and tons more! Record participants' ideas as they brainstorm.

Scenarios with scripting:

Scenario #1: "be cool"—Joseph and Sam offer you a cigarette. They tell you it will make you look cool and it will make Jeremy, the boy you have a crush on, like you. (Choices: take the cigarette→you feel sick, you feel scared, you get in trouble because it is illegal to smoke if you are under 18 years old, your friends get in trouble, you forget to do your homework OR you say "no thank you, I know cigarettes will make me smell bad and will give me a bad cough. If Jeremy doesn't like me because I don't smoke then I don't want to hang out with himanyways"

→you go hang with different friends and have a good time, you finish your homework and get a good grade, you eat dinner with your family, you feel healthy and you don't get in trouble)

Scenario #2: "it will help you forget"—Your sister offers you a beer and tells you it will help you forget how sad you feel that dad called you a mean name. (Choices: drink the beer→you feel sick, you don't forget how sad you feel, you get in trouble because it is illegal to drink if you are under 21, you forget to do your homework, you get in a fight with your sister because you are both not thinking straight OR you say "no thank you, I know alcohol will not help me feel better"→you write in your journal about your feelings, you go for a walk outside, you talk to someone about how you feel, you don't feel sick, you don't get in trouble, you and your sister hang out together)

Scenario #3: "it will be fun"—You are hanging out with your soccer team after a game. The team captain offers everyone in the group some pills that will help the team relax after the big game. The team captain says that everyone should take the pill so they can all have fun together. (Choices: take the pill→you feel sick, you fall asleep and forget to call your parents to pick you up, you get in trouble because the pills were stolen from someone's parent's medicine cabinet, you don't have fun OR you say "no thank you, I don't know what that pill will do to me, maybe we can all get some ice cream or watch a movie to relax as a team"→you feel proud of how you played in the game, you call your parents to pick you up and you have a delicious family meal, you don't feel sick, you don't get in trouble)