

Drug deliberation

SPECIFIC OUTCOMES

Examine and evaluate the impact of caffeine, alcohol and drugs on personal health/wellness

Investigate the effectiveness of various decision-making strategies

- acknowledge the importance of taking medicines properly
- identify different reasons why people use drugs
- gain an understanding that personal characteristics can motivate individuals to experiment with drugs, given certain circumstances

CONTENT AND TIME (45-MINUTE LESSON)

2.1 Opening activity: Dangers of drug use (5 minutes)

2.2 Considering characteristics (20 minutes)

2.3 Why do people draw on drugs? (10 minutes)

2.4 Review: Recognizing risk (10 minutes)

REQUIRED MATERIALS

HANDOUT 2.1: Considering characteristics

HANDOUT 2.2: Considering characteristics

HANDOUT 2.3: Why do people draw on drugs?

Small container (box, basket, tin)

Chart paper

Notebooks

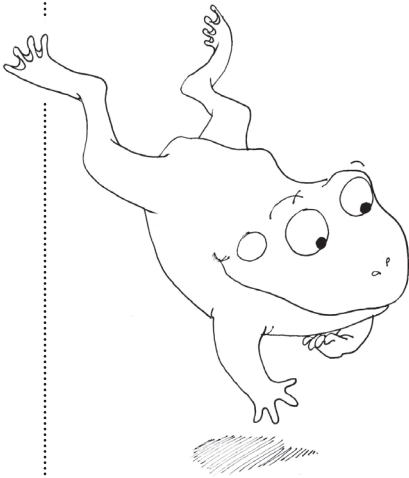
2.1 Opening activity: Dangers of drug use

(5 minutes)

Explain to the class that an important reason for taking drugs is to prevent or treat illness. The drugs contained in medicines are essential for maintaining or restoring health. These drugs can be helpful to many people, when they are used properly and only when necessary. Using medicines inappropriately, however, can be very harmful.

Ask the students to identify situations where using medicines improperly could be dangerous. Record their answers on chart paper. Try to elicit the following ideas from the responses given:

- Drugs can be poisonous if you take too much of them (taking a lot at one time or taking small amounts often)
- It is risky to take a drug for a longer period of time than is needed
- You can become seriously ill if you take a drug that your body does not need
- It can be harmful to mix different kinds of drugs
- Some people are more sensitive or allergic to certain drugs; they can get sick, even if they use small amounts
- Many drugs can cause side-effects, like drowsiness; this makes it dangerous to do certain activities that require alertness
- It is unsafe to take a drug without following proper instructions



2.2 Considering characteristics

(20 minutes)

Some people use drugs for reasons other than illness. This next activity challenges the students to first, consider personal characteristics that most people possess to some degree; and second, to recognize that these characteristics, given certain circumstances, could serve as motivators to experiment with drugs.

Show HANDOUT 2.2: Considering characteristics. Read through the character descriptions, which are as follows:

- Avoiding Alex** I try to avoid dealing with everyday problems and feelings of anger, stress or anxiety
- Curious Cory** I am curious, so I like to try new things and take risks
- Stylish Sam** Being “cool” and feeling grown up are very important to me
- Rebellious Rene** I like being rebellious and going against the crowd
- Gullible Gene** I follow others to fit in with the group, even if it means giving in to peer pressure

These descriptions are also provided on HANDOUT 2.2: Considering characteristics. In preparation for this activity, take one photocopy, cut out the sentence strips and place them in a box. Explain that you will walk around the room and have everyone randomly select one of the characters from the box. The students will then move around the room and interact, role-playing the character they picked. Their task is to determine which characters are being role-played by their classmates. The students are not permitted to simply announce their character, read the description of this person or ask, “Whom did you pick?” Instead, encourage them to remain in character and to ask questions, such as the following:

- Are you a thrill seeker who would like to try skydiving?
- Is being trendy and hip important to you?
- Would you rather follow the lead of others or dare to be different?

The object of the game is for the students to find all five characters through their interactions.

Discuss this activity with the class during the last few minutes. Ask questions such as:

- Was it challenging to stay in character? Why?
- What was difficult about determining the characters role-played by others?
- Can anyone identify with one or more of the characters? Why?
- Give an example of how you sometimes demonstrate one or more of these personal characteristics

2.3 Why do people draw on drugs?

(20 minutes)

This part of the lesson explores the connection between personal characteristics and reasons why some people use drugs.

Refer to HANDBOUT 2.3: Why do people draw on drugs? Provide a copy for the students to keep in their notebooks. Explain that some people use drugs for reasons other than illness; they tend to use drugs because:

1. They want to change the way the body or the mind functions to deal with problems and difficult feelings (to relieve pain, anger, stress or anxiety)
2. They are curious to try something new and are interested in the effects they might experience (feeling calm, energetic, free, open, self-confident — whatever they believe to be the effects)
3. They hope to create a personal image (the drug becomes a symbol of looking “cool” or feeling grown up).
4. They are resisting authority (rebellious against what they are told by others and what is accepted as the “norm”)
5. They are influenced by other people (friends, family members, older role models or celebrities who are known to use drugs)

These reasons for using drugs are similar to the personal characteristics in the last activity. Emphasize that this does not imply the students will try drugs because they have some of these personal characteristics. Everybody is curious to an extent, just as everybody wants to avoid pain or anxiety to some degree.

Being able to identify personal characteristics is essential to healthy decision-making. You may have a tendency to rebel, or maybe others easily influence you. Knowing yourself well enables you to acknowledge how you may react in certain situations. You become aware of circumstances that may put you at risk to try drugs, and you prepare yourselves by planning a course of action in advance.

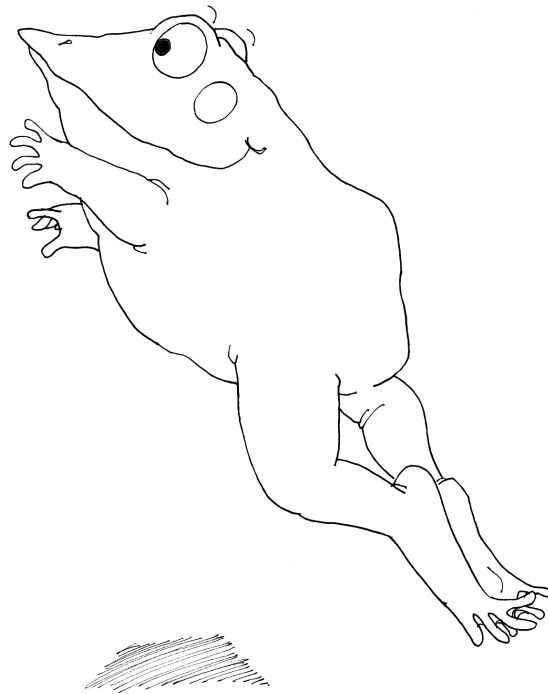
Discuss one or more of the following examples:

- A group of kids value personal image and live in a society where smoking is perceived as “stylish”
- A rebellious teenager is warned by parents and teachers not to do drugs because they are dangerous
- A couple of buddies who like taking risks together have heard that a particular drug can help you experience an unbelievable high
- A young person is surrounded by family members, friends and older role models who drink alcohol on a regular basis
- Someone dealing with stress and grief is searching for a quick escape from daily problems

2.4 Review: Recognizing risk (10 minutes)

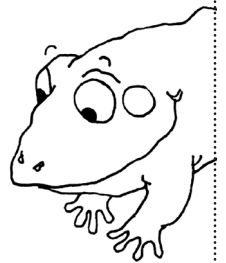
Have the students write about a personal characteristic they recognize in themselves and a situation that might put them at risk to try a drug, like smoking a cigarette or drinking alcohol.

Check the class envelope and respond to any questions asked.



Considering characteristics

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Why do people draw on drugs?

Some people use drugs for reasons other than medical purposes:

1. To deal with problems and feelings – relieve pain, anger, stress or anxiety
2. To satisfy curiosity and try a new experience – feel calm, energetic or free (whatever is believed to be the effects)
3. To create a personal image – look cool or feel grown up
4. To rebel – resist authority and challenge the “norm”
5. To fit in with the group – follow the influence of friends, family members or celebrities

