

Agitating addictions

SPECIFIC OUTCOMES

Identify and communicate values and beliefs that affect healthy choices

Analyze influences on decision-making

Identify and develop strategies to overcome possible challenges related to goal fulfillment

- review information about drugs and gambling (definitions, reasons for gambling and drug use, drug categories)
- learn about dependence, tolerance and withdrawal in relation to addiction
- understand that addiction involves physical and/or psychological dependence
- consider the complexity of an addiction for an individual and his or her family members

CONTENT AND TIME (45-MINUTE LESSON)

1.1 Opening activity: Understanding the lessons (5 minutes)

1.2 Fact or fiction? (15 minutes)

1.3 Dependency deadlock (20 minutes)

1.4 Review and homework assignment (5 minutes)

REQUIRED MATERIALS

HANDOUT 1.1: Understanding the lessons

HANDOUT 1.2A: Fact or fiction?

HANDOUT 1.2B: Fact or fiction answer key

HANDOUT 1.3: Dependency deadlock

Two envelopes (to be posted on the bulletin board)

Small paper strips (to go in one bulletin board envelope)

Chart paper



1.1 Opening activity: Understanding the lessons (5 minutes)

Show the class HANDOUT 1.1: Understanding the lessons. Explain that the lessons cover concepts such as addiction, self-esteem, stress management, refusal skills and goal setting, which are directly related to alcohol, other drug and gambling prevention. The focus of the lessons is to provide the students with accurate information and to help them acquire life skills, while emphasizing the importance of healthy lifestyle choices.

Tell the students that you will provide an ongoing opportunity for them to ask questions about gambling and alcohol or other drug use. Post two envelopes on the classroom bulletin board. One envelope will hold blank slips of paper, on which the students can record their questions. The other envelope will store the questions generated by the students. Tell the class that you will check the envelope for questions at the end of each lesson. Together, you will uncover the answers, many of which will be explored in activities throughout these lessons. Emphasize that you will also be available to help the students address personal concerns they may have and that this will be done on an individual basis.

1.2 Fact or fiction? (15 minutes)

To gain a better understanding of the knowledge the students will bring to these lessons, have them take a quiz about alcohol, drugs and gambling. Distribute HANDOUT 1.2A: Fact or fiction? Give the students enough time to complete the questions and then correct the quiz as a large group. Discuss the information provided on HANDOUT 1.2B: Fact or fiction answer key. This serves as a good review of concepts the students may have learned in previous grades.

Have the students take the quiz home to test their parents. Remind them to return their work next class, to put in their notebooks for future reference.



1.3 Dependency deadlock

(20 minutes)

Distribute HANDOUT 1.3: Dependency deadlock. Discuss the definitions provided for addiction, tolerance and withdrawal. Explain that addiction is a difficult concept to understand, especially when you have not experienced problems, or have not known someone experiencing a problem with substance use or gambling. When we consider the negative consequences of an addiction, we might ask:

- Why would people start in the first place?
- Why don't they just quit?
- Can't they see the harm they're doing to themselves?
- Don't they realize they're hurting others?

When a person starts using substances or gambling, he or she cannot predict how complicated the situation might become. For example, someone experimenting with smoking may think, "I'll quit when I want to, no problem." Or a person who drinks alcohol to feel more confident at a party may say, "It's not a problem for me because I don't need a drink everyday." This next activity illustrates that experiencing an addiction can be much more troublesome than it may first appear.

Have the students cut along the dotted line on HANDOUT 1.3. Ask them to write about a task that they find challenging and tell them that you will do the same. Explain that their responses will be different, as everybody has individual strengths and weaknesses. You may wish to discuss some examples, such as:

- I am nervous speaking in front of a large group
- I have trouble with fractions in math
- Sometimes I lose my temper and it's hard for me to calm down

Once the students have completed this, ask them to bring their slips of paper and gather around for a demonstration. Place your own slip of paper at your feet. You should have the short end of the paper closest to your toes, as follows:



Challenge volunteers to try jumping over their slips of paper while touching their toes. The students are allowed to bend their knees as they do this. Demonstrate this for everyone by bending your knees slightly, touching your toes and getting ready to jump forward, over your slip of paper. This will appear to be easy. Invite individual volunteers to attempt this feat, one challenger at a time. After several efforts, ask everyone to find a personal space and give this a try.

Discuss the activity by asking the following questions:

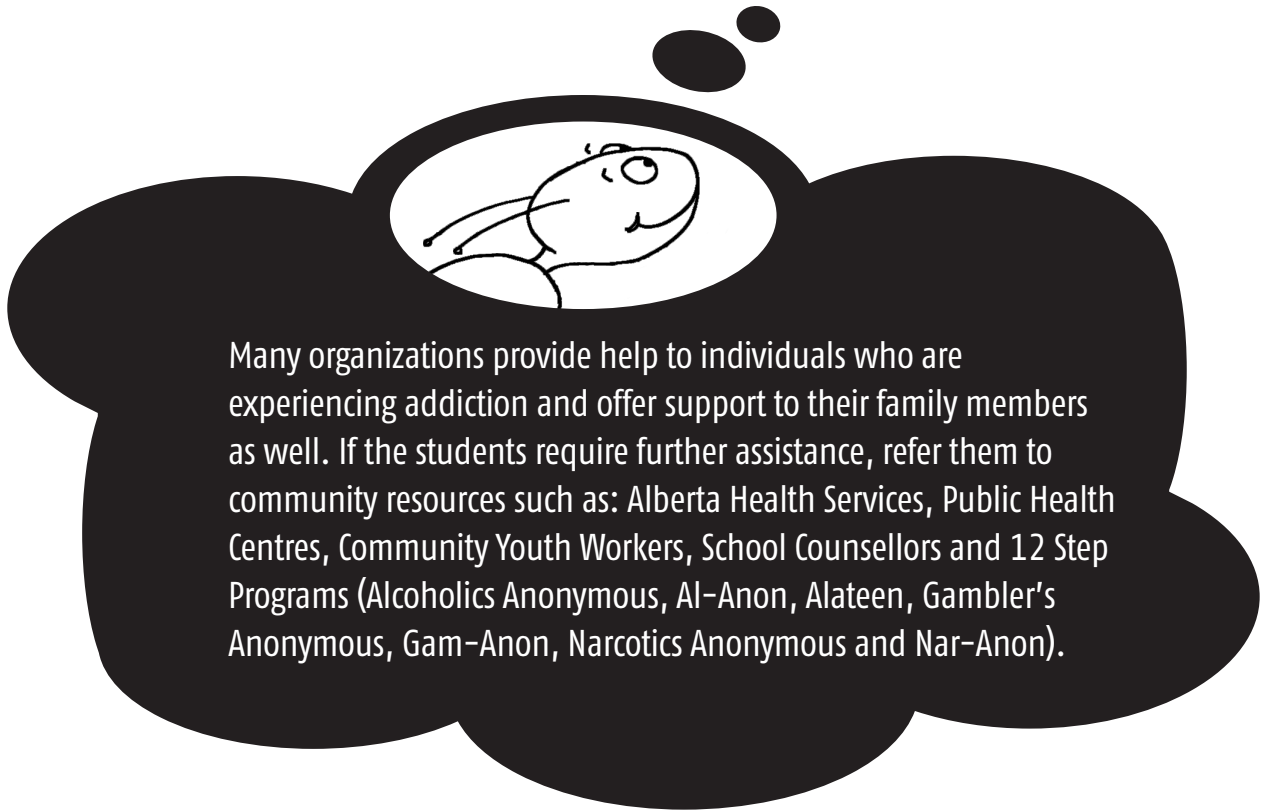
- What seemed easy about this task at first?
- Who thought that they could complete this task with ease? Why?
- Who thought that they could still do this, after seeing others try unsuccessfully? Why?
- Explain why this was difficult for you
- Compare how this activity is similar to other difficult challenges that seem easy at first

Of course this does not imply that overcoming a personal challenge or an addiction is impossible. It is meant to raise awareness that once people become addicted to alcohol, drugs or gambling, it is extremely difficult to stop, even though they realize they are making unhealthy choices.



Forming an addiction is a process. It does not happen all of a sudden. When people introduce alcohol, drugs or gambling into their lives, negative consequences may occur, but they are not overwhelming in the beginning. Progressively, the negative consequences increase. More time is spent on the addiction, and this decreases the attention given to Important Life Areas, such as school, work, family, friends, responsibilities and interests. These Important Life Areas begin to deteriorate; and as a result, trying to make changes becomes more difficult. Often, people experiencing addictions feel very badly about what they are doing, but their ability to make healthy decisions is limited, due to their physical and/or psychological dependence. They feel that they have few supports and lack the positive skills to seek change. The process itself becomes half the reason why an addiction is so challenging to overcome.

Explain that an addiction does not only affect the individual, but his or her family as well. Family members are parts of a unit; when part of the unit changes, this alters the functioning of the unit as a whole. A change in one person's behaviour often evokes change in other family members.



Many organizations provide help to individuals who are experiencing addiction and offer support to their family members as well. If the students require further assistance, refer them to community resources such as: Alberta Health Services, Public Health Centres, Community Youth Workers, School Counsellors and 12 Step Programs (Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon, Alateen, Gambler's Anonymous, Gam-Anon, Narcotics Anonymous and Nar-Anon).

1.4 **Review:** **What we have learned** (5 minutes)

As a large group, ask the students to summarize what they learned and define some terms used in today's lesson, such as addiction, tolerance and withdrawal. You may want to have volunteers record these definitions on chart paper, to be posted on the bulletin board. Remind the students to think of questions they may have, to write these down and to add them to the class envelope.

HANDOUT 1.1

Understanding the lessons

Lesson 1: Agitating Addictions – Information about addiction

Lesson 2: Alcohol Use – The difference between social and problem drinking

Lesson 3: Dickey Decisions – Information about problem gambling

Lesson 4: Personal Power – Building on individual strengths

Lesson 5: Facing our Feelings – Stress management techniques

Lesson 6: Refusal Responses – Learning refusal strategies

Lesson 7: Important Life Ingredients – Recognizing the value of life experiences

Lesson 8: Personal Promises – Making a commitment to achieve personal goals



Fact or fiction?

Read through the following questions and circle the best answer:

1. The majority of people who smoke tobacco in Alberta smoked their first whole cigarette between which ages?
 - a) 14 and 17
 - b) 18 and 21
 - c) 22 and 25
2. A common reason people use drugs is to do what?
 - a) Punish themselves
 - b) Form an addiction
 - c) Change the way they feel or think
3. What is the best definition of a drug?
 - a) It is a substance that is very habit forming
 - b) It is a substance that can change the way your body and/or mind function
 - c) It is an illegal substance that can harm you
4. The majority of Alberta students from grades 7–12 do not drink alcohol.
 - a) True
 - b) False
5. Why do people gamble?
 - a) For fun, excitement or challenge
 - b) To win money or escape problems
 - c) Both of the above

6. What percentage of Alberta students from Grade 7–12 have never tried a cigarette?
 - a) Almost 40%
 - b) Almost 60%
 - c) Almost 80%

7. Which is the most effective way to say “no” to alcohol, drugs and gambling?
 - a) Pretend they don’t exist
 - b) Think about risky situations and have a plan of action
 - c) Hang out with people who don’t know anything about these things

8. What percentage of Alberta students from Grade 7–12 have never used cannabis (also known as marijuana)?
 - a) 79%
 - b) 12%
 - c) 40%

9. What is the best definition of gambling?
 - a) Any activity where somebody wins and somebody loses
 - b) An activity that you will win if you are a lucky person
 - c) Risking something of value on an activity with an uncertain outcome

10. Which is the most effective way to stop an addiction before it has a chance to start?
 - a) Hang out with people who have alcohol, drug or gambling problems and promise yourself that you’ll never let that happen
 - b) Think about what you want in life and how alcohol, drugs and gambling might mess with that
 - c) Think about all the bad effects of alcohol, drugs and gambling and swear them off for good



Fact or fiction answer key

1. The majority of people who smoke tobacco in Alberta smoked their first whole cigarette between which ages?

a) 14 and 17 (people who start smoking at an early age are likely to continue)

(Canadian Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs Survey 2017, <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/canadian-tobacco-alcohol-drugs-survey/2017-summary/2017-detailed-tables.html#t11>)

2. A common reason people use drugs is to do what?

c) Change the way they feel or think (for some, drugs provide an easy substitute for taking control of their lives in a stressful world)

3. What is the best definition of a drug?

b) It is a substance that can change the way your body and/or mind function (there are three categories of drugs – medicines, legally available drugs and illegal drugs)

4. The majority of Alberta students from grades 7–12 do not drink alcohol.

a) True. Over half of Alberta students report no alcohol use in the last year (it is a misconception that “everybody is doing it”)

(Canadian Student Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs Survey 2016–17, https://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-student-tobacco-alcohol-drugs-survey/sites/ca.canadian-student-tobacco-alcohol-drugs-survey/files/uploads/files/cst16_ab_profile_combined_for_online.pdf)

5. Why do people gamble?

c) Both of the above (people who gamble to escape problems or focus primarily on winning back money may have a problem with gambling)

(2001 Your Best Bet, When Young People Gamble, AADAC)

6. What percentage of Alberta students from Grade 7–12 have never tried a cigarette?

c) 80% (it is a misconception that most teenagers smoke)

(Canadian Student Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs Survey 2016–17, https://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-student-tobacco-alcohol-drugs-survey/sites/ca.canadian-student-tobacco-alcohol-drugs-survey/files/uploads/files/cst16_ab_profile_combined_for_online.pdf)



7. Which is the most effective way to say “no” to alcohol, drugs and gambling?
- b) Think about risky situations and have a plan of action (knowing your choices and acting in your best interest is more effective than not knowing)
8. What percentage of Alberta students from Grade 7–12 have never used cannabis (also known as marijuana)?
- a) 79% (it is a misconception that most teenagers have used cannabis)

(Canadian Student Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs Survey 2016–17, https://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-student-tobacco-alcohol-drugs-survey/sites/ca.canadian-student-tobacco-alcohol-drugs-survey/files/uploads/files/cst16_ab_profile_combined_for_online.pdf)

9. What is the best definition of gambling?
- c) Risking something of value on an activity with an uncertain outcome (you can win or lose a basketball game, which would depend on the skill of the teams involved; winning and losing in gambling activities are completely random – it has nothing to do with skill or luck)
10. Which is the most effective way to stop an addiction before it has a chance to start?
- b) Think about what you want in life and how alcohol, drugs and gambling might mess with that (it is more effective to think about the benefits of non-use, rather than the ill effects of use)



Dependency deadlock

Addiction:

An addiction is when people **depend so strongly** on a **drug** (such as alcohol) or an **activity** (such as gambling), that they continue the behaviour, even though they may be hurting themselves or others.

Addiction includes:

- Physical dependency – the person's body becomes so used to the drug or activity that it cannot function normally without it
- Psychological dependency – the person believes that thoughts, emotions and activities are less satisfying or even impossible without the drug or activity

Tolerance:

Tolerance is the body getting used to a drug or an activity. As people become addicted to something, they increase their tolerance for it. This means that over time the body changes and needs more and more of the drug or the activity to get the same effect.

Withdrawal:

People who are addicted to a drug or an activity experience withdrawal when they stop. This is a **change in the body and mind** when the person no longer gets the drug or does the activity. It is the body and mind trying to return to normal.

- Physical dependency – the person's body becomes so used to the drug or activity that it cannot function normally without it
- Psychological dependency – the person believes that thoughts, emotions and activities are less satisfying or even impossible without the drug or activity



Something I find very challenging is: