Positive Choices — Drug and Alcohol Information
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Quick activity

Influences and Reasons for Drug Use: Class Activity



Evidence ratings:

This resource has undergone expert review. See our Help/Q&A section for more details.

Year: Year 9–10

Targeted Drugs: Drugs (General)

Tags: OurFutures

Time Allocated: 1 lesson

Links to National Curriculum:
ACPPS092 (Yr 9–10), ACPPS095 (Yr 9–10), ACPPS098 (Yr 9–10)

Origin: Australian

Cost:
Free

Attachments

Worksheet: Influences and reasons for drug use

Developers

Previously known as Climate Schools, **OurFutures** was developed by researchers based at the Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use at the University of Sydney, Australia. See the OurFutures website for more information.

Format

Small group work, followed by class discussion.

Preparation

Print or electronically share the attached class worksheet "Influences and reasons for drug use" for each group.

Activity

The aim is to encourage students to consider some of the reasons why young people use drugs and some of the alternatives to drug use. A second aim is to reinforce the low prevalence of cannabis use in 14-17 year olds.

Students complete the worksheet in groups of 4-5 students. It is important that students are divided into groups with other students who are not part of their usual friendship group.

This worksheet examines the reasons why some teenagers choose to use drugs and the reasons why some choose not to use drugs. It also asks students to develop a list of drug free activities which may alternatively help to satisfy some of the reasons young people choose to use drugs. For example, if they have listed 'thrill seeking', an alternative activity may be 'abseiling'. The final questions on the sheet aim to reinforce the low prevalence of cannabis use among 14-17 years.

Once students have completed the worksheet, facilitate a class discussion in which students share their responses and discuss alternatives to drug use.

Background Information

Some of the reasons why some teenagers use drugs:

- To try something new
- To experiment
- To have fun
- To escape from bad feelings
- To fit in with their friends
- To relax
- To experience a ‘high’.

Some of the reasons why some teenagers do not use drugs include:

- It is illegal
- Some people do not like the feeling it produces
- Concern about the negative effects of drugs
- To avoid the potential for addiction
- Financial reasons
- Health reasons
- Religious reasons.

What percentage of 14-17 year-olds have ever tried cannabis?

Many young people report initially trying cannabis because they believe everyone is doing it. However, the 2022-2023 National Drug Strategy Household Survey found that 87% of 14-17 year olds have never used cannabis. That means the vast majority have not used cannabis. It is important to reinforce to young people that they do not have to use cannabis to fit in; as the majority do not use cannabis. Importantly, cannabis is also becoming less common within this age group over time.

Many drug-free activities exist which can satisfy the same motive/s that may exist for drug use. A number of examples are listed below.

To escape from bad feelings:

- Talk to a friend
- Listen to music
- Talk to the school counsellor
- Call the kids helpline
- Talk to your parents or a relative
- Exercise
- Do something you enjoy and haven’t done in a while
- Plan something you would like to do on the weekend.

For social concerns such as fitting in:

- Plan and have a party
- Suggest going to the movies
- Do something you enjoy with your friends, anything from shopping to sport or bush walking
- Go somewhere interesting together with friends.

For relaxation:

- Listen to music
- Talk with friends or family
- Do some exercise
- See a movie
- Read a good book
- Practice slow breathing or meditation.

To experiment:

Begin something new you have been curious about, such as:

- Adventure sport (e.g., abseiling, white water rafting)
- Belly dancing
- Hiking
- Crafting jewellery
- Climbing
- Cycling.

Benefits

- Students gain an understanding of some reasons that teenagers use cannabis, and consider alternative options.

Evidence Base

Secondary teachers reviewed this and other activities from the OurFutures: Psychostimulant & Cannabis Module, with 80% rating these activities as good or very good. This particular activity was among the most popular activities selected for implementation by teachers.

The benefits of implementing individual activities from OurFutures has not been examined. The benefits of implementing the entire 6 session OurFutures program has been supported by multiple research studies, see OurFutures: Cannabis & Psychostimulant Module.

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