

TEACHER PREPARATION

KEY CONCEPTS

1. The first decision about drugs – whether or not to begin – is the crucial point at which someone has the greatest control of his or her destiny.
2. Once someone has begun to use drugs, he or she begins to lose options and opportunities.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

1. Understand the vital nature of the first decision about drugs – whether or not to begin.
2. Understand that once a person has begun to use drugs, options and opportunities become limited.

MATERIALS / PREPARATION

In the Box: The Grandmothers' Letter and a torn paperback book.

- The torn paperback book is used in the grandmothers' story only.
- Each student must have one coin, a pen or pencil, and some paper.

LESSON

BEGINNING THE LESSON



INTRODUCTION

In the last lesson, we looked at the stages of addiction and how we can tell which stage someone is in. Today, you will have a chance to make some decisions of your own about drugs. But first, let's listen to more of the grandmothers' story.



STORY ABOUT 5 MINUTES

[Read the following story: "Torn Paperback — Torn Lives"]

"Brrrr!" said Natasha.

"No fooling!" said Sasha.

"And the heat won't be turned on for weeks!" said Dima.

The three students were huddled outside their classroom. Today was Grandmothers Day, Mysterious Box Day, a new lesson in the fine art of rites of passage. Maybe today's lesson would warm them on this cold morning.

"Invigorating day, isn't it?" exclaimed Tatyana Alexandrovna as she unlocked the door.

The three students silently looked at each other as Tatyana Alexandrovna made her way to her desk.

"I guess what is cold to some people is 'invigorating' to others," mumbled Sasha.

The three settled into their chairs as Tatyana Alexandrovna pulled out a torn paperback book. The cover promised an interesting read. However, it was obvious that only half the book was still intact. The last 100 or so pages had been ripped out.

"Did that come out of our grandmothers' box?" asked Natasha.

"Yes," smiled Tatyana Alexandrovna.

Dima picked up the broken book and turned it over in his hand, "Where's the other half of the book?"

"Can't say," replied Tatyana Alexandrovna.

"But why? What good is half a book?" asked Natasha.

"Yeah, who'd want to read half a book? Just about the time you're full of expectations and involved in the plot or the characters, you're left hanging," added Dima.

"What have our grandmothers got to say about this?" asked Sasha as he took the book from Dima.

Tatyana Alexandrovna's smile slipped just slightly around the corners of her mouth as she pulled a letter from the box.

Dear Ones,

They say everyone has a story – a beginning, middle, and an end. We've been telling you our story, and there's a lot more story to be told! But today we wanted to caution you about the utter waste of not

sticking around until the end of the tale! It is often in the last chapter that the true purpose of the story is known. Stop too soon and you'll never know whether you were living out a tragedy or a triumph. Stop too soon and something is left undone.

A story can take all sorts of twists and turns. The hero can be repeatedly defeated and disgraced right up to the final chapter – and still win the day and get the girl. The thing is, from inside the story he doesn't know whether it will end one way or the other. If he could, you probably wouldn't care to read it. You don't want him to coast through the adventure certain of the outcome. There is something special about the struggle that makes it all worthwhile.

Sasha, you never knew your Uncle Igor. He died shortly before you were born. I think he loved books more than people. He could stay in our apartment all weekend just devouring one novel after another. Olga and Yelena loved to make him blush. They would tease him with their attention and then pretend to be offended when he showed any interest in them; it was a game they played with the boys. He was a year older than we were, but his social skills were years behind. He blushed so easily. None of us knew just how fragile he truly was.

It's hard to say what combination of things and events ultimately led to his suicide. In our family, you didn't disclose your feelings. We were taught not to confide in anyone. You never knew what might happen if the wrong people found out something; the fear of Stalin and his lieutenants always played in the background in those days. I guess he was scared or maybe he just got tired in his soul after he was drafted and deployed to Kaliningrad. The army was a brutal experience for some; I guess it proved too much for him. We never found out where he got the pills. Those kinds of drugs were not as easily acquired as they are these days. I don't even know whether he intended to kill himself or just take a break from the pain in his heart. I don't know what kind of man he might have become. That's the thing . . . I don't know. I guess I never will.

*Your Grandmother,
Ludmilla*

Sasha stared at the floor. No one had ever spoken of his Uncle Igor – he was just a face in an old photograph on grandmother's dresser. And now he was to be an unfinished chapter in his own story.

EXPLORING THE LESSON



SIMULATION GAME

ABOUT 20 MINUTES

Before your students come into class, make a copy on the board of the list shown to the right and the chart from the next page:

[Today, your students will play a simulation game that reinforces many of the ideas they have studied so far.]

1. **Financial security**
2. **Professional success**
3. **Stable and supportive family**
4. **Close and loyal friends**
5. **Health and physical well-being**
6. **Hopeful, confident attitude**
7. **Long-life expectancy**
8. **Good reputation in the community**

Go over the following directions with your class:

To help your students keep track of their tosses, have them number a paper 1 to 15 and fill in the results of each toss.

If you think this game might be too complex at first, number 1 to 15 on the board and walk through one game with the class together. Once everyone understands how to play, students can play on their own, using their own coin and paper.

 = 25 minutes

[When your students come in, have them select four of the life dreams from the list and take out a coin. They are now ready to play the simulation game.]

The object of this game is to make good choices about drugs so you can keep the four goals you start with and possibly also achieve some or all of the other four goals.

The number in parentheses in each square on the board (example: (-1), (+1)) indicates whether you get to add a goal or lose one of the goals with which you chose to start the game. However, at each point where a decision must be made – the triangles – the player must make his or her choice by the flip of the coin.

Some choices have been weighted; the less likely choice is shown by a number/letter combination (such as 2H, meaning the player must toss two consecutive heads to make that choice). In such a weighted triangle, if the player tosses one head followed by one tail, the player immediately moves out of the triangle in the “tails” direction.

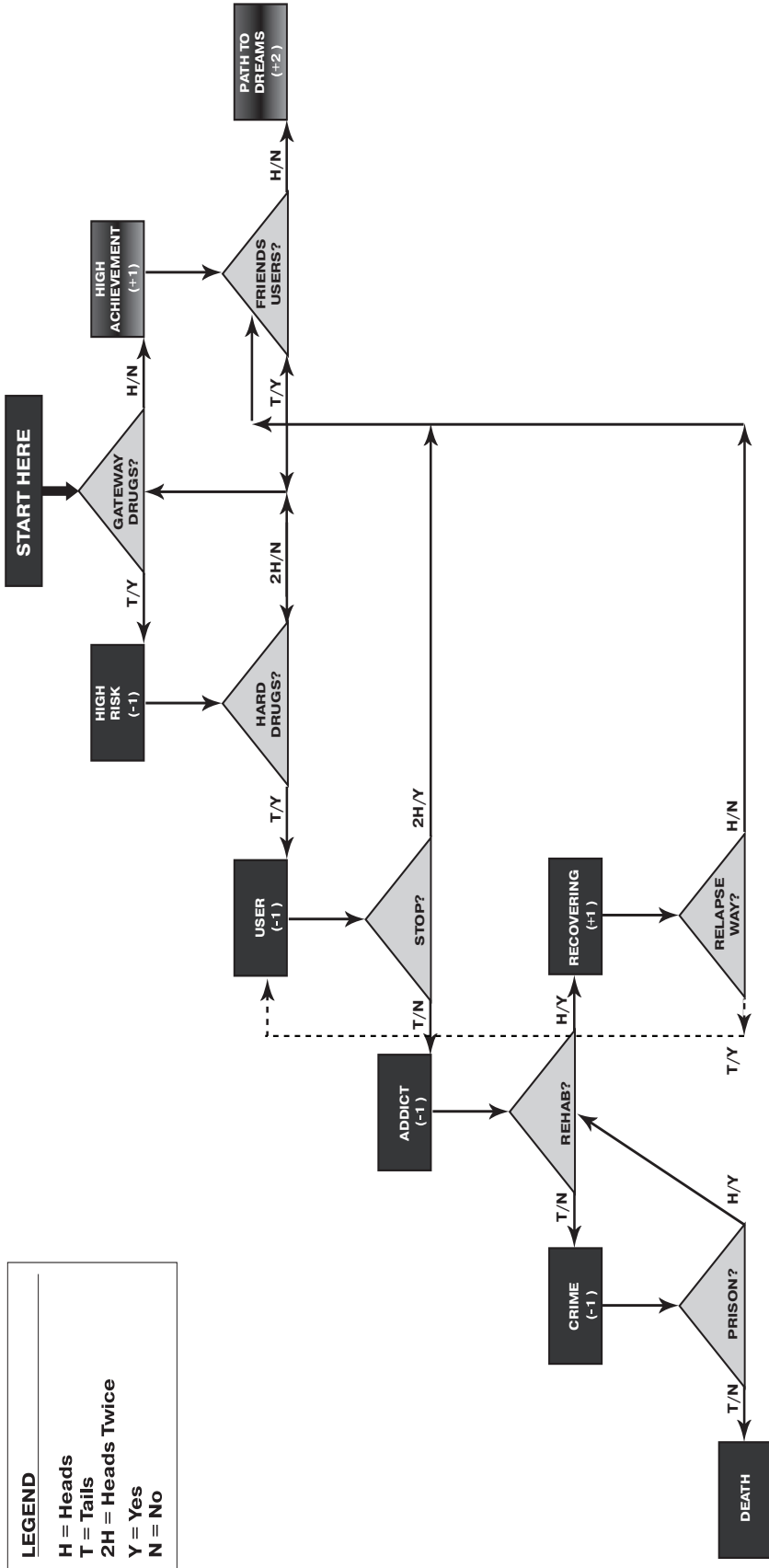
The game ends when any one of three things happens:

1. A player reaches the box labeled “Path to Dreams”.
2. A player reaches the box labeled “Death”.
3. A player has tossed the coin 15 times.

After 15 coin tosses, the player stops in the box he or she has reached and has achieved however many dreams he or she has left, if any. Once a player has tossed the coin 15 times, he or she must live life as it is at that point, even if that life falls well short of achieving all his or her dreams and even if he or she has forfeited some of the dreams that were in place at the beginning.

[The educational object of this game is to recognize how crucial those first few choices are. Once a player has gotten deep into the drug habit, it is very difficult to recover and get back on the path to his or her dreams.]

DRUG USE GAME



LEGEND
 H = Heads
 T = Tails
 2H = Heads Twice
 Y = Yes
 N = No



DISCUSSION

ABOUT 10 MINUTES

[Once everyone has had at least one opportunity to experience the frustration of trying to break free of a drug habit, use the following questions to discuss the game with your students.]

[Some important observations are shown in bullets.]

What are the most crucial choices, the ones that have the greatest impact on the way the game plays itself out?

- Whether to get involved in gateway drugs.

[Ask the class to tell you which drugs are gateway drugs – correct if needed.]

- Whether to have friends who are users.
- Whether to go on from gateway drugs to hard drugs.

What are the most difficult choices, the places where it is very hard to make the right choice?

- The decision not to go from gateway drugs to hard drugs.
- The decision to stop using hard drugs.

This game makes it easier to get out of drug use than it really is. The game presents some of these difficult choices as much easier than they really are.

For instance, drug-rehab professionals report that the recovery rate from drug dependency is nothing like the 50/50 chance this game portrays. It is more like ten percent. It would be like having to flip three or four heads in a row.

Although a drug user may not always end up in a life of crime ending with early death, what are some of the other risks?

- Losing the opportunity to fulfill important life dreams.
- Spending too much time and energy trying to get free from drugs and wasting years or even decades of your life.

If you have time, you could have the whole class stand, have everyone flip once and all those who get tails, sit down. Repeat three more times. At that point, very few should be standing. Then state, “That is much more like an addict’s chances of staying off drugs once they’ve been through rehab.”



= 35 minutes

ENDING THE LESSON



PERSONAL JOURNAL REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT

ABOUT 10 MINUTES

You may recall from the last lesson that I told you we would be making another decision entry in your Personal Journal. We have come to the end of the unit on drugs in which we have discussed important information about how drug use can negatively affect our lives.

It is time to revisit the list of dreams and any related obstacles that you wrote down several weeks ago on the first page of your

Write these words on the board: “I Assert My Independence From Drugs.”

Provide sufficient time for students to complete the task.

Before dismissing your students, remember to dictate the Parent-Teacher questions to them.

 = 45 minutes

journal under “My Dreams” and the comments you made in the “Stronger Together” section. Take a few minutes to re-read your words and think about how they may have changed since then. If so, feel free to modify them in your journal.

Once you have completed reviewing your dreams and your commitment to community, you are ready to make an entry. On a fresh page in your Personal Journal, write the words, “I Assert My Independence From Drugs.”

Today is an opportunity to make an affirmative statement about how you are working to achieve your goals and the potential impact that abstinence from drugs may have on your dreams.

Think about these ideas as we look forward to our next few lessons. We’re headed off on a great journey! Next time, we’re going to explore the difference between mature freedom and immature freedom.

Take a few minutes to describe specifically how you will avoid the negative consequences of drugs. If you are ready to make this pledge, please sign and date it. Be sure to leave enough room for a couple of signatures. I will explain why after you complete this task.

The next step is for you to share your statement about independence from drugs with at least two people. They can include a parent, grandparent, teacher, sibling, or friend whom you trust and who will be supportive of your decision.

Tell them some of the things you have learned about how drug use can affect one’s dreams and how you plan to avoid such things. Then ask them to sign their names under your entry, “I Assert My Independence From Drugs”, as a witness to your commitment.

If you have the courage to take this step, you will be on your way to realizing your dreams and will have the benefit of some trusted partners along the way – people who may be a source of strength for you when you encounter the challenges and obstacles that lie ahead.

RESOURCES

GOING DEEPER

	<p><i>[Use this story, taken from the first chapter of the book of Daniel, as a case study in the benefits of abstinence.</i></p> <p><i>Read the “Beginning of the Story” to the class.</i></p> <p><i>In groups of four or five, have students create similar quandaries.</i></p> <p><i>Go on and tell “The Rest of the Story”.</i></p> <p><i>Discuss Daniel’s solution. Apply his solution to similar situations that students have suggested.]</i></p>
<p>The Beginning of the Story</p>	<p>Daniel was only about 15 years old when his nation was defeated by foreign invaders from a nation called Babylon. Because he was one of the most gifted and promising young men of his nation, Daniel was among those chosen to be deported to Babylonia, where he was to be specially trained in Babylonian language and culture to prepare him to serve in the court of the Babylonian king.</p> <p>Daniel had started out life as a bright and talented young man. Now he found himself thousands of miles from home, among the very people who had humiliated his nation, and he was expected to learn their language and culture and serve their king.</p> <p>Part of the regimen for the trainees included dining on the king’s cuisine, which was a real problem for Daniel. Having been raised as a carefully observant Jew, Daniel was determined to strictly control what sorts of food went into his body. It went against his conscience to eat much of the food that was set in front of him, even though it was literally food fit for a king.</p> <p>But Daniel didn’t have many options, for he was certainly in no position to negotiate. To refuse to go along with the program was to invite death. To go along with the program was to violate his conscience.</p> <p>At this point Daniel really had only three choices:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. He could ignore his conscience and go along with the program. 2. He could refuse to cooperate and face death. 3. He could try to think of a creative alternative that would get him out of his quandary.



DANIEL'S DILEMMA ACTIVITY

You will want to plan time for several rounds of this activity.

Before we hear what actually happened to Daniel, I would like us to form groups of four or five. In your group, I want you first to appoint someone as the leader and someone else to take notes. Then I want you to think of as many situations as you can where someone your age (or a few years older) might be in a similar quandary to the one Daniel faced. They don't have to be as serious as Daniel's situation. They don't have to involve life-or-death decisions. But they should be situations where a young person is under pressure to do something he or she believes to be wrong. To help you get started, here is one example:

"Fourteen-year-old Maria is invited to go with her friend to a party at another friend's house. Maria asks her parents who say 'no' because it is during the week and there is an important exam scheduled for the next day at school. Her friend suggests that Maria tell her parents she is going over to the friend's house to study for the test. Then they will both sneak out and go to the party. Maria doesn't want to lie to her parents, but she really wants to go to the party."

[Circulate while the groups are discussing. Help any group that is having difficulty. When most of the groups have come up with one or two quandaries, have several read to the whole class. Then bring the class together and tell the rest of Daniel's story.]

The Rest of the Story

Daniel was a virtuous young man, so he couldn't simply ignore his conscience. But he was also too smart to talk back to his supervisor and get himself killed. On behalf of himself and several of his friends, Daniel made a proposal. Let them eat nothing but vegetables and drink nothing but water for 10 days. After 10 days, let Daniel and his friends be compared with the other trainees for mental clarity and overall appearance.

The supervisor agreed to Daniel's proposal. After 10 days of vegetables and water, Daniel and his friends looked better and answered more wisely than any of the other trainees. The supervisor agreed to let them remain on their vegetables and water diet as they prepared to serve in the Babylonian court.

[Stop and discuss Daniel's solution.]

Daniel chose neither Option 1 nor Option 2. Do you like his Option 3?

[Choose one or two of the quandaries the class suggested and have your students brainstorm how an adolescent might try to come up with a creative alternative.]

Examples for Maria's story:

1. *She could ask her teacher to take the exam a day early.*
2. *She could have her parents quiz her the day of the party to see whether she was ready to take the exam.*
3. *She could agree to only stay a short time at the party.]*

FOCUS POINT

Be sure to leave time for discussion at the end of the learning activity so your students can discuss the connection between the learning activity and the lesson. Listen to see whether they seemed to understand the key points listed. If you sense that one or more of these points may have been lost, be sure to guide the discussion to make sure they get these main ideas.

1. **Your students will sometimes find themselves in moral quandaries where they seemingly must choose between maintaining their own ethical standards and fitting in with someone else's program. They may sometimes feel that giving in to this kind of pressure is their only option, especially if others are affected by their decision.**
2. **This story can help your students see two important lessons.**
 - **They can often discover creative alternatives "outside the box."**
 - **They must make up their minds beforehand about pressured decisions.**

PARENT-TEACHER CONNECTION

For Family Discussion:

1. Please share what you learned about the importance of making right choices about drugs. Why is the first decision about drugs so important?
2. How are options and opportunities limited by drug use?

