

## **TEACHER PREPARATION**

### **KEY CONCEPTS**

1. There are several risk factors that increase the likelihood that a person who consumes alcohol will become an alcoholic.
2. The most serious of those risk factors is blindness to the possibility of alcoholism.

### **OBJECTIVES**

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

1. Discover and name the risk factors involved in susceptibility to alcoholism.
2. Identify his or her personal risks for alcoholism.

### **MATERIALS / PREPARATION**

**In the Box:** *The Grandmothers' Letter and an eye patch.*

**CASE STUDIES:** Later in this lesson, your students will be analyzing three case studies that illustrate three different levels of risk for alcoholism. Read through the case studies (under the heading “Rating Three Case Studies” and decide whether you will be able to reproduce copies of the studies for each student (Preferred Method) or whether you will take the time in class to read each case study aloud (Alternate Method). If you are able to make copies of the studies, be sure you have a separate copy for each student.

### **SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCES**

- National Institute on Drug Abuse.  
<https://easyread.drugabuse.gov/content/alcohol-facts>
- Teen Challenge.  
<https://teenchallenge.cc/blog/>
- Foundation for a Drug-Free World.  
<http://www.drugfreeworld.org/drugfacts/alcohol/international-statistics.html>

# LESSON

## BEGINNING THE LESSON



### REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

In this unit on alcohol, we've already looked at how it affects our bodies. We've also looked at some of the problems that alcohol abuse can cause. However, I imagine some of you have sat through these lessons and have been thinking, "This really doesn't have anything to do with me. There's no chance I'll ever get drunk or abuse alcohol." In this lesson, you will get a chance to find out whether that's true.

*[Read the following statements aloud as students record their answers and evaluate their risks for alcoholism. Students should respond to each statement with a number from 1 (agree strongly) to 5 (disagree strongly). When they finish, have them add up their responses to assess their risks of alcoholism.]*



### RISK ASSESSMENT ABOUT 5 MINUTES

#### Statements on Risk of Alcoholism

1. **My parents and other authority figures in my life disapprove of alcohol.**  
1—agree strongly; 2—agree; 3—no opinion;  
4—disagree; 5—disagree strongly
2. **My home life is stable. I live with both my parents, and I have a good relationship with them.**  
1—agree strongly; 2—agree; 3—no opinion;  
4—disagree; 5—disagree strongly
3. **I have a generally positive outlook on life, and I am optimistic about my future.**  
1—agree strongly; 2—agree; 3—no opinion; 4—disagree;  
5—disagree strongly
4. **There is little or no history of alcoholism in my family.**  
1—agree strongly; 2—agree; 3—no opinion; 4—disagree;  
5—disagree strongly
5. **I have not yet started to drink alcohol.**  
1—agree strongly; 2—agree; 3—no opinion; 4—disagree;  
5—disagree strongly

#### Scoring:

5 - 10 points total:     **low risk**

11 - 15 point total:    **medium risk**

16 - 25 points total: high risk

Remember your vulnerability score. You will need it at the end of the lesson.

 = 5 minutes



**STORY AND  
DISCUSSION**  
ABOUT 7 MINUTES

[Read the following story.]

The small pillow seemed out of place in the classroom. Dima hadn't noticed it before, and he wondered whether Tatyana Alexandrovna had become tired enough to use it right there in the school. Of course, he didn't say anything because the teacher was seated right there. Just the two of them were waiting for Natasha and Sasha to show up.

He hadn't realized how much he depended on his friends' presence. It was downright uncomfortable having to face his teacher alone. Perhaps that's why he'd noticed the pillow, and his eyes explored every inch of the classroom as he waited in his chair.

"About time you two showed up!" said Dima. "I was beginning to wonder if you'd come at all!"

"We're not that late!" said Natasha.

"But we do apologize," added Sasha quickly to Tatyana Alexandrovna.

To Dima's great surprise, she reached over and picked up the pillow he had been thinking about and placed it on the desk in front of them.

"This wouldn't fit in the box, but it belongs to your grandmothers. Just the same, I've been keeping it out of sight until the right time," she explained.

"A pillow? What could it mean?" asked Sasha. "We've had a torn book that represents a short life, a rope with knots that represents our troubles, door knobs that represent choices, and now a pillow! Let's see – it could represent something to do with sleep, or maybe it has to do with cushioning something."

"You're in a creative mood!" laughed their teacher. "And you are not far from the mark. The pillow has something to do with comfort."

"Ha!" said Sasha as he plopped his head down on the pillow, "Coming up with a brilliant answer is so tiring!"

"I think she said you got it mostly right," corrected Dima, pulling the pillow out from under Sasha's head.

Tatyana Alexandrovna raised an eyebrow and said, "Perhaps we ought to look a bit deeper into the subject." Her gaze slowly settled on the pillow in Dima's hands.

They looked at the pillow, not sure of what to do next. Finally, Natasha took the pillow, flipped it over in her hands and began to squeeze it as if she might feel something buried inside. Finally, she looked inside the pillowcase. She pulled out a slip of paper with the following words printed on it:

*"Where do you go for comfort?"*

“What kind of question is that?” demanded Sasha. “Where do you go for comfort? Now I’m confused.”

“You were confused before; you just didn’t know it,” observed Dima.

“So what do you think?” encouraged the teacher. “Where do you go for comfort? For example, when you’re upset or hurt?”

“I think I’d have to say my friends,” said Dima, suddenly very serious.

“Well, when I was little, it would have been my mom,” said Sasha.

“Sometimes, I’d say it’s books, listening to music, or a movie,” said Natasha.

“Do you think there are any illegitimate places people go for comfort?” asked the teacher.

“Sure. Isn’t that what we’ve been talking about for the past few weeks? Drugs and alcohol are a source of comfort for some. Maybe it’s a false comfort, but it’s probably all they’ve got,” said Dima.

“I think you’ll find another question buried inside the pillow,” said Tatyana Alexandrovna.

“Our grandmothers!” laughed Sasha, as he found yet another slip of paper buried even deeper inside the pillowcase:

“Why would someone seek comfort from something that could harm them?”

“Either they’ve been taught to do it – remember Mystyck, the mouse, and how it was trained to go to the mousetrap for its food – or the places where they ought to be able to get comfort aren’t safe,” stated Natasha.

“I think I get it,” said Sasha. “Say you’re a little kid and you fall and hurt yourself. You go to your mother because she is supposed to say, ‘That really hurts. Here, let me make it feel better.’”

“But what if she yells at you instead, ‘You’re not hurt! Don’t let me catch you crying over something so minor again!’ Think you’ll go to your mom for comfort next time? No way!” said Natasha.

“So an alcoholic is someone who tries to find comfort from a bottle?” said Dima. “And a drug addict seeks comfort from drugs.”

“Do you think it’s really that simple?” asked Natasha.

“Probably not, but it sort of makes sense,” added Sasha.

“Have we missed anything the grandmothers wanted us to learn?” asked Dima.

“I do have a letter from them, but you’re doing very well,” smiled Tatyana Alexandrovna, as she opened the box to retrieve the letter.

*Dear Ones,*

*A teacher of ours used to say, “There is no right answer to a wrong question.” He was right; finding the right questions can take you a long way toward finding the truth. Hopefully, our two pillow questions have guided you in the right direction. It’s always risky to ask questions; they have a way of making you uncomfortable. Perhaps that’s why many people never bother to ask the hard questions of life – they just let it happen to them with varied results.*

*You were made to want and need comfort. Oh, how we wish we’d been better at it with your parents! If only we could have learned early to acknowledge their hurts, give them comfort, and offer them hope, they might have learned to do the same with you. But it is hard to pass on what you don’t possess, and real comfort has been a long time coming in our lives.*

*Life can get very uncomfortable and where you go for comfort is one of the most important choices you will ever make. Choose well, and you will be one of those people who can live from their heart because they aren't afraid of getting hurt. They know that comfort is real and available. Choose poorly and a very different life awaits you.*

*Your Grandmothers*

Involve the class in the story by asking your students where they see people looking for comfort. Some ways people look for comfort is in drugs, alcohol, or sex, but they also look for comfort in things like food, sleep, solitude, and distractions like television, music, or movies, shopping, or making something.

**At the beginning of class, you took a quiz that helps predict the risk of becoming an alcoholic. Now we want to talk a little more about risk factors. While there are several, the most serious risk factor is blindness to the risks. This next activity will help you see what it is like to have a “blind spot”.**

 = 12 minutes

## EXPLORING THE LESSON



### SIMULATION GAME

ABOUT 5 MINUTES

As participants fall out, the erasers are set at opposite sides of the circle, and the game resumes. If the last few students prove to be especially proficient, send one object counterclockwise to create an even more complex game situation.

*[Arrange the students in a circle, spaced evenly apart – ideally about one meter. Give one student a board eraser (or some other object that can be safely and easily tossed and caught). Give another student at the other side of the circle another eraser.]*

**The object of this game is to keep the erasers moving clockwise around the circle as quickly as possible without letting them hit the floor.**

**Sounds simple so far, but here's the catch: Each of you must participate with one hand over your right eye.**

**This means that all of you will be “blind” on the side where the toss is coming from. If an eraser hits the floor, the one who tossed it and the intended receiver are out of the game. Also, if one of you takes your hand away from your eye, you are out of the game.**

*[How does the game end? It doesn't. At some point well before there is a winner, declare that the game is over. When your students complain that there is no winner, point out that no one who is blind to the risks of alcoholism can ever be a winner.]*

 = 17 minutes



## AGREE / DISAGREE

ABOUT 8 MINUTES

After re-reading Statement 1, ask all who agreed with the statement to raise a hand. Then, ask all who disagreed with the statement to raise a hand. If there is not a clear majority, ask students on each side of the issue to state why they agreed or disagreed. After about two minutes of discussion per question, tell your class the correct answer and go to the next question.

*[Read the seven statements below aloud, one at a time, to inform your students about risk factors for alcoholism. For each statement, have the students respond “agree” or “disagree”. The correct answer is given in parentheses after the statement.]*

1. **The higher a person’s level of education, the less likely he or she is to become an alcoholic.** *(Disagree)*
2. **The earlier one begins to drink, the more likely he or she is to become an alcoholic.** *(Agree)*
3. **A history of alcoholism in a person’s family background makes it more likely he or she will become an alcoholic.** *(Agree)*
4. **The lower one’s level of income, the more likely he or she is to become an alcoholic.** *(Disagree)*
5. **The fact that a person’s family environment is unstable (divorce, abuse, etc.) increases his or her likelihood of becoming an alcoholic.** *(Agree)*
6. **If a person’s parents have a disapproving attitude about alcohol, it is less likely he or she will become an alcoholic.** *(Agree)*
7. **If a person is frequently depressed or anxious, he or she is more likely to become an alcoholic.** *(Agree)*

The reason for the answers to many of the above questions is that the greater the pain, the greater a person’s desire for comfort and escape.

 = 25 minutes



## REVIEW

ABOUT 5 MINUTES

Be sure students make written notes on these points.

*[When you have finished with this part of the lesson, review the five risk factors for the likelihood of alcoholism:]*

1. **Early onset of drinking.**
2. **History of alcoholism in the family.**
3. **Unstable family background.**
4. **A permissive attitude about alcohol in family background.**
5. **Being frequently depressed or anxious.**

*[Remind your students that the most serious risk factor for alcoholism was not listed above; it is blindness to the risks.]*

 = 30 minutes



## RATING THREE CASE STUDIES

ABOUT 5 MINUTES

**ALTERNATE METHOD** (If you have not made printed copies for your students):

Read aloud the descriptions of the three young men, each representing a different level of risk for alcoholism. Before you begin reading, tell the students that they will assign a rating between 1 (lowest risk) and 5 (highest risk) to each person you describe by writing the number in their notebooks.

### Description 1

To make sure each student understands what he or she is doing, allow a brief time for discussion after you have read this first description. After students hear what other students have observed, they may want to change their rating of the first description.

### Description 2

Read the second description. This time, give students time to think about the description and write down their number, but don't take time for discussion.

### Description 3

Finally, read the third description, again giving time only to think and write down the number, with no time for discussion.

Now we're going to look at three case studies, and each person will try to decide how much he or she is at risk of becoming an alcoholic.

*[This exercise will help your students apply what they have learned about the risks of alcoholism. Distribute the copies of the case studies. Have students assign a risk rating to each of the young men described by writing a number between 1 (lowest risk) and 5 (highest risk) on their copies next to the descriptions.]*

### Description 1:

Peter is 15 years old. His parents are divorced, and his father is an alcoholic, as are both his grandfathers and several of his uncles. Peter experimented with alcohol with his friends a couple of times when he was younger. But he knows his family history makes him a high risk for alcoholism, so he drinks only at family meals when his parents allow him to. He wants to be a teacher, and he knows that alcohol could kill his dream.

### Description 2:

Sergei grew up in a strict home where his parents forbade the use of alcohol. But even with that background, Sergei tasted his first drink, vodka, at a friend's house when he was only 10 years old. Since then, he has consumed alcohol only a few more times, mostly when he was feeling depressed. Because he has only had a few drinks, Sergei is not concerned about drinking. Sergei wants to be an electrical engineer.

### Description 3:

Nikita has been drinking since he was 13. He is frequently depressed, and he sometimes uses alcohol to take the edge off his anxiety. He comes from a long line of alcoholics, and he worries that he too might become an alcoholic. He doesn't know what he wants to be when he grows up.



= 35 minutes



## CLASS DISCUSSION

ABOUT 5 MINUTES

*[When you are finished, your students should have three names on their papers, each with a number between 1 and 5. Discuss with the class:]*

**Which of the three men described is at greatest risk of becoming an alcoholic? Why?**

**First, each of these men had several significant risk factors for becoming alcoholics. But studies have shown that the greatest risk factor of all is blindness to the possibility of alcoholism. So the attitude that says, “I don’t have to worry. It will never happen to me,” or just ignorance of the possibility is the most dangerous.**

**So, the answer is Sergei, the young man who doesn’t realize – and is not concerned – that he can become an alcoholic. He is at greatest risk of actually becoming an alcoholic precisely because he is unaware of his risks, even though he doesn’t have many of the risk factors that the other two have. (Another factor that makes Sergei at high risk for alcoholism is that he began drinking when he was so young.)**

 = 40 minutes

## ENDING THE LESSON



### PERSONAL JOURNAL ACTIVITY

5 MINUTES

If you think that your students would be willing to discuss the way they completed that statement, then allow time to share. Make sure no student feels pressured to read what he or she has written if he or she is even slightly reticent.

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

 = 45 minutes

*[To conclude this lesson, have the students write in their Personal Journals their answers to this question:]*

**“I want to be a [life goal] and I now know that I have a [low, medium, high] risk of becoming an alcoholic, so to reduce my risk of becoming an alcoholic, I will \_\_\_\_\_.”**



## RESOURCES

### GOING DEEPER

Today's proverb describes the misery of addiction to a destructive habit such as drinking alcohol: "As a dog returns to its vomit, so a fool repeats his folly" (Proverbs 26:11). We're going to play a game that illustrates this proverb.

#### WRITE STORY WITH TWO ENDINGS

*[Prepare two large containers of drinks in advance. One should be a beverage that all the students would like (Pepsi®, Fanta®, etc.). The second should be a harmless drink that none of the students would drink by choice (vinegar, salt water, etc.)*

*Arrange the class into three to six teams. Each team must provide at least one contestant for this competition. Some students may elect to function only as observers. Don't force anyone to participate against his or her will.*

*This contest should involve several difficult physical challenges, such as tossing a piece of paper into a trash can from the other side of the room, standing on one foot with eyes closed for 30 seconds, or doing some other physical challenge that is sure to result in some failure.*

*Each time a contestant fails, he or she will have to draw a slip of paper out of a container. Written on each slip is (+) or (-), along with a corresponding description taken from the lesson:*

- *Early onset of drinking alcohol (-).*
- *Delayed onset of drinking alcohol (+).*
- *Family history of alcoholism (-).*
- *No family history of alcoholism (+).*
- *Unstable family background (-).*
- *Stable family background (+).*
- *A permissive attitude about alcohol in family background (-).*
- *A strict attitude about alcohol in family background (+).*
- *Being frequently depressed or anxious (-).*
- *A generally balanced and healthy emotional condition (+).*

*If the contestant draws a slip with a (+), he or she will take a mouthful of the good drink. If he or she draws a (-), he or she must*

*sip and swallow a mouthful of the unpleasant beverage. The team that draws the fewest minuses will win.*

*When you finish the game, discuss the mindset of the addict who continues with self-destructive behavior – even though it is vile and contemptible, like a dog returning to consume its own vomit. What makes them do it?]*

## 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. **No one strives to become an alcoholic, and no alcoholic is proud of his or her addiction, but the alcoholic continually returns to his or her self-destructive behavior.**
2. **There are several factors that make it more likely a person will become an alcoholic.**

## PARENT-TEACHER CONNECTION

Give your students permission to not talk about the Family Discussion Questions at home if one or both parents have a problem with alcohol.

### **For Family Discussion:**

1. Discuss your adolescent's experience with alcohol, if any, and his or her exposure to people who drink.
2. Then discuss how your adolescent can overcome the risk of becoming addicted to drink.

