

TEACHER PREPARATION

KEY CONCEPTS

1. Students often use drugs and alcohol and have premarital sex because of deeper problems about which they may be largely unaware.
2. Peer pressure and finding comfort from pain are among the reasons students choose dream breakers.
3. Influencing others is a normal part of communication. When adolescents become aware that their friends and acquaintances can benefit from influencing them, adolescents are more likely to question the nature of their peers' motives and the truth of their promises. Adolescents are often unaware that their friends and acquaintances may have hidden reasons for encouraging drug use and drinking. When adolescents understand these ulterior motives, they are less likely to give in to peer pressure.
4. It is important to consider the sources and the motives of suggestions when one is under pressure to comply.

OBJECTIVES

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

1. List some of the deepest reasons people choose to use drugs or abuse alcohol.
2. Describe some of the selfish reasons people try to influence a young person to use drugs or abuse alcohol.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Why do students choose drugs, alcohol, and premarital sex? This lesson will explore some of the reasons adolescents give in to such dangerous activities. The two main reasons we explore in this lesson are peer pressure and numbing of pain. Your students may also be able to list other reasons people try drugs, abuse alcohol, or engage in premarital sex. In the section titled "Reasons for Drug Use" just before "Ending the Lesson", we have listed some of the reasons. You may want to review the list before teaching the lesson.

MATERIALS / PREPARATION

In the Box: The Grandmothers' Letter, a wristwatch, and a pair of scissors.

Choose approximately one-third of your class. Select those students who are the most popular and influential with the other students. Choose one of the strongest leaders to be the head of this group. As part of the Peer Pressure Activity, these students will do a task for about five minutes during which time you will ask them to step outside of the classroom.

Note: For Lesson 23, "The Lure of Immediate Gratification", you are encouraged to invite a local accomplished skater/gymnast/athlete for an interview. The lesson calls for the interview to take place during the last 20 minutes of that day's lesson. You will ask and encourage your students to ask questions about the sacrifices he or she made early in life to become accomplished in the sport. If no athlete is available, you may want to invite a dancer, musician, etc. Highly skilled people are busy and in demand, so you will probably want to invite your guest as early as possible.

LESSON

BEGINNING THE LESSON



INTRODUCTION

Previously in this class, we've looked at some of your dreams for the future and how you can get ready to achieve them. We've also explored three potential dream breakers that may keep you from fulfilling your dreams. Beginning today, we are going to investigate some life skills that will help protect you from these dream breakers and aid you in achieving your dreams. Today, we'll begin with more of our story about the three students and a new letter from their grandmothers.



STORY

ABOUT 3 MINUTES

[Read the following story including the Grandmothers' Letter, "You Can't Get Something from Nothing".]

Natasha turned her back on Dima when he walked into the classroom.

"What's up with you?" asked Dima.

"Nothing," snapped Natasha.

"Doesn't sound like nothing," said Sasha as he walked into the room.

"Quit picking on me!" returned Natasha.

A long silence met Tatyana Alexandrovna when she joined the students.

"This is different," said the teacher. "Usually you three are full of talk about your weekend and what your grandmothers might have in store for you. Why so quiet?"

"No reason," said Natasha after enduring the stares of Sasha and Dima.

"Ah!" said the teacher. "A miracle! Something has happened without any cause."

"Huh?" said Sasha and Dima.

"Well," continued Tatyana Alexandrovna, "in the world we live in, for something to happen on its own – unconnected to any previous cause or motivation – is indeed a miracle, don't you think? Until now, I'd say everything in life seems to be a response to something that has already happened."

"I still don't get it," prompted Sasha.

"Perhaps your grandmothers can make it a bit clearer. Funny how well they seem to anticipate what you need next from their box." She smiled, opened the box and produced a common wristwatch and a letter.

Dear Ones,

Suppose you were walking along the beach of a deserted island and you chanced upon this watch. What might you conclude from your discovery?

Tatyana Alexandrovna looked up from the letter. After a moment, the three realized that she was waiting for their answer.

“Maybe the island isn’t all that deserted; maybe someone else on the island dropped it,” said Dima.

“Or maybe the watch washed up on shore from a shipwreck,” added Sasha.

“Or . . . well . . . I can’t think of any other possibilities,” said Natasha.

Tatyana Alexandrovna hid a smile behind one hand and resumed reading the letter.

Whatever possibilities you came up with, we’d bet you didn’t say, “How amazing! The sand and wind, and water and waves have randomly mixed together to fashion this watch!” Utter nonsense! Clearly someone made the watch. In other words, a watch requires a watchmaker to create it.

Olga loved to use this illustration as an argument for the existence of God. “You don’t get something from nothing,” she’d say when we weren’t quick to accept her argument. Of course, the cause behind a watch is easier to discover than, say, the cause behind an emotion or a response that seems out of place. Often it is a question of motive, and motives are complex things! To understand why people do what they do, you have to look around the edges – it is often the unseen that is the cause behind the seen.

Your Grandmothers

Tatyana Alexandrovna stopped reading and asked, “Do you understand what your grandmothers are saying?”

“Not really,” admitted Sasha.

“I think they’re trying to get us to examine what motivates us in life,” said Dima.

“So when I said nothing was wrong but acted like something was wrong when Dima walked into the room, my words didn’t fit with my behavior,” said Natasha.

“Yeah, there was some sort of undercurrent between you two,” said Sasha.

“Are you mad at me for some reason?” asked Dima.

“No, not you. There was some trouble at home and I brought it with me to school and you just got a taste of it – sorry,” said Natasha.

“That’s okay. Just glad there’s not a problem between us,” said Dima. “I guess it’s easy to jump to the wrong conclusion. I figured I’d done something to offend you.”

The sound of the pair of scissors snapping open and closed stopped their conversation. Obviously, there was something else in the box for this day’s lesson.

“So, now we’re to conclude that there is a scissors-maker?” laughed Sasha.

“Not quite,” said the teacher. “Your grandmothers have a game for you to make sure you remember the point of their lesson.”

The three students settled into their seats eager to play their grandmothers’ game.

EXPLORING THE LESSON



CROSSED OR UNCROSSED ACTIVITY

ABOUT 8 MINUTES

NOTE:

To save time, you may want to choose a group to come to a central spot of the room to demonstrate this while other classmates watch.

TEACHER NOTE:

The point of the game is for the students to figure out the “secret”. So you need to conceal from them that the key to the activity is whether the participants have their legs or feet crossed or uncrossed. The object is to have the students identify the pattern for when the students say, “crossed” or “uncrossed”.

Explanation of the game.

NOTE:

Be careful not to take most of the class time on this game — it is only an interesting means to arrive at the lesson discussions that follow. You may want to practice the game with another group before class so you will have some idea how to control the timing of the game.

If your students have been playing this game for 10 minutes and no one has discovered the criterion, stop the game and tell them.

[Say the following to your class:]

The story goes on to describe the game and what the three students discovered. But I think we’ll get more out of the story by playing the game for ourselves. Here’s what we’re going to do:

[Hold up a pair of scissors. Snap them open and shut, then announce:]

This game is called “Crossed or Uncrossed”. Please arrange your chairs in a circle and we will begin the game.

[Explain how the game is to be played:]

A pair of scissors is passed around the circle. The scissors may be passed uncrossed (open) or crossed (closed), point first, or handle first, over-handed, or under-handed.

As the scissors are handed to the next participant, the one passing the scissors says, “I am passing these scissors crossed [or uncrossed].”

And the one accepting the scissors says, “I receive these scissors crossed [or uncrossed].”

The leader [or teacher] tells the passer or receiver whether he or she is correct. The game continues with the scissors passing from one participant to the next and each saying how – crossed or uncrossed – he or she receives or passes the scissors.

The object of the game is to figure out why the leader [or teacher] calls some passes correct and others incorrect.

[Remember: The secret is that the position of the scissors has nothing to do with whether they are passed or received “crossed” or “uncrossed.”

The key is found in the position of the participant’s legs as the scissors are being passed or received. If his or her legs are crossed, then the students are passing or receiving the scissors crossed. If the participant’s legs are uncrossed, they receive or pass the scissors uncrossed. As participants begin to figure out the secret, they tend to handle the scissors in a more complicated manner as they cross and uncross their legs. The game continues until a student correctly describes the leader’s (or teacher’s) criteria (crossed or uncrossed) for calling passes and receptions correct or incorrect.]



= 11 minutes

TRANSITION

Much of what happens in life is the result of things going on beneath the surface. That is the point of the game you have just played: You can focus on the obvious situation (the scissors) and miss the deeper or less obvious cause (the position of your legs).

In previous lessons, we have focused on the surface problems that lead to drug and alcohol use, and premarital sex. For some young people, just having clear information is enough. Just knowing the facts and the dangers of these very risky behaviors keeps them from experimenting or becoming addicted. However, this is not the case for many others. They can know exactly what the consequences are and continue to choose to do things that kill their dreams anyway.

In the next seven sessions, we will be exploring some of these deeper, less obvious, reasons some young people give in to drugs, alcohol, and premarital sex – even when they know these things are dangerous. We'll start with some questions that I would like you to answer in your notebooks.



PEER PRESSURE ACTIVITY

ABOUT 12 MINUTES

To this one-third of the class say:

Preference: something one cares about, values highly, or is viewed as important by a person.

A group from this class has been chosen to step out into the hall *[or another room]* for about five minutes. They are going to brainstorm a list that they will present to the rest of us later in this lesson.

[Read the list of student “influencers” you have selected in advance and then take them outside the classroom.]

For the next five minutes or until I come out again, write down as many answers as you can to this question: “Why do you think some young people get involved in drugs, alcohol, or premarital sex, or all of these?”

[Name of student] will lead the group. Before you begin, choose someone else from your group to take notes on the answers you come up with. You *[leader’s name]*, the leader, may decide who will give the report to the class — yourself, the note-taker or someone else.

[Return to the classroom.]

While the group outside is preparing a report that it will give later in this session, the rest of us are going to make a list of six preferences. A preference can be anything you care about, anything that you value highly, anything that is important to you. There are some things, like getting enough to eat, that most people care deeply about. Other things such as traveling, sports, owning a dog, or attending church are preferred by some and not by others.

We're going to assemble a list of things that some students in our school would prefer and others probably would not.

You might think of it this way: What are some things that you care about that other people may or may not care about? Or what are some things that you know others care about that you don't really care about?

Now let's make our list. Can someone suggest a preference that some students at our school care about but others do not?

[After each suggestion, ask the class:]

Do the rest of you agree that this is a preference that some would hold but others would not?

[When you have general agreement on an item, write it on the board. When you have a list of three, add the following:]

This looks like a good list. I'm going to add three more items that also seem to me like preferences some students might have and others might not.

[Choose three from the following list or substitute your own items. Choose ones that you think are likely to split the class.]

- Always telling the truth, no matter what happens.
- Never cheating during a test, no matter how important.
- Having a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- Making participation in sports required for everyone.
- Helping your friends even if it means bending some rules.
- Always keeping your word (never breaking promises).
- Being able to watch whatever movies and TV shows I want.

Now that you've seen the list of seven "preferences", we're going to take a secret tally so we can find out whether these preferences are shared or not.

In a moment, I'm going to ask you to close your eyes. Then, I'll read each of the seven statements out loud. When I read the statement, raise your hand if it is a preference for you. If it is important to you, if you care about it, then raise your hand. However, if you don't really care about the statement, if it's not something that's important to you, then please keep your hand down. You might even think that the statement is true, but if it's not really something you care about, keep your hand down.

Please keep your eyes closed. No one will know when you put your hand up. I'm not even going to try to remember who raised

their hands on each item. I will count how many raised hands there are so I can see which are the shared preferences in this group.

[Now read each statement and ask students to raise their hands if it is a preference for them. Quietly count and write down the number for each statement. When you've finished all six, continue the lesson.]

Now I'm going to erase all but two of the statements from the board.

[Erase four of the statements, leaving the two that most evenly divided the class.]

We'll use these last two statements in just a minute, but first I need to check and see whether the other group has finished its brainstorming.

[Go to the group outside the classroom and tell members it is time to return to the classroom. Before they return, give them these instructions.]

Your spokesperson will give your group's report in a few minutes. But before we do that, I have another job for all of you. When we return to the classroom, the whole class is going to "vote" on two statements I have written on the board. I will tell everyone to stand if the statement is an important value for him or her personally. What I'm really doing is examining how peer pressure works. All of you are going to be my silent "peer-pressure" group. Without making any comment or giving any other indication of why you are doing it, I want all of you to remain seated when I ask people to stand if they think the first statement is a preference for them. Even if you agree with the first statement and it's very important to you, stay seated. Then when I give everyone a chance to change their minds, I want all of you to remain seated.

On the second statement, do the reverse. Stand up when I read the statement, even if it is not really your own personal preference. When I give everybody a chance to change his or her mind, you remain standing. Is that clear? Does anyone have questions about what you're supposed to do?

[Bring all the students back to the classroom and ask everyone to be seated.]

We'll hear the group's report in a few minutes. But now I'm going to ask everyone to indicate whether these remaining two statements are preferences for you or not. When I read each statement, I want you to stand if this statement is an important preference for you. Earlier, you raised your hands to indicate

whether this was something you really care about. It is okay for you to change your mind now and stand if this statement is your preference.

[Read the first remaining statement.]

If this is an important preference for you, if it is something you really care about, please stand up now and remain standing while I count.

Now, I'm going to give you one last chance to change your mind. As you look around and see how many others have the same preference, would any of you like to change your opinion? If so, you can stand up or sit down now.

[Watch to see whether any of the standing students sit down or seated students stand up.]

Repeat the process with the second statement.]

 = 23 minutes



EXPLANATION

ABOUT 3 MINUTES

[Discuss the following:]

1. Ask any students who changed their vote at any point why they changed. If they give a reason that does not have anything to do with peer pressure, ask whether others who were seated (or standing) had any effect on their decision.
2. Ask the students who did not change whether any of them felt any pressure when they saw others responding the opposite way. If any say yes, ask them how they resisted the pressure to switch.
3. Explain that the group that was asked to leave the classroom was "told" how to vote. Ask the group of students who were told to vote a certain way how it felt to have to do the opposite of what they would have freely chosen to do.
4. Ask all the students what they think were the issues going on beneath the surface. Ask all the students what makes something more valuable to one person than another.]

What makes one person easy to persuade, whereas another cannot be persuaded?

[Accept any reasonable answers and add your own if you think the class is missing something important.]

 = 26 minutes



OVERVIEW AND EXPLANATION

ABOUT 2 MINUTES

[Now is the time to explain the objective of the lesson.]

We've seen in this lesson that it's not always easy to see the real reasons people do what they do (like in the scissors game). We've also seen that it can be difficult to go against others' opinions, as we saw when we were voting by standing up or sitting down.

When it comes to making and sticking with our own decisions about things like drugs, alcohol, and premarital sex, it helps whether we can see why people are trying to influence us. One of the criteria for evaluating temptation or persuasion is to consider the source. What will the tempting or persuading person get from me if I comply? Similar questions are, what am I getting, and at what cost?

If you think about it, this is why you can trust parents and teachers over drug dealers, salesmen, and many older teenagers. Parents are not paid to raise you. Even though parents make mistakes (as you will when you become a parent), they are usually motivated by love for you. Teachers are not paid by their students, but by their school system. Drug dealers and salesmen, on the other hand, make their money directly from getting you to buy whatever they are selling. Older friends might have your interests in mind or possibly only their own. We have to learn to be alert.

Why do you think some young people get involved in drugs, alcohol, or premarital sex, or all three? The group that went outside the classroom has prepared a brief report on this question.

Set up the next activity.



= 28 minutes



REASONS FOR DRUG USE ACTIVITY

ABOUT 7 MINUTES

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY:

If time permits do the following. Or this could be assigned as a home task.

1. Have students write their list of reasons in their notebook and put a secret mark beside the ones that they think may be a risk for

[Ask the spokesperson from the group to make the report and write a list of reasons the group came up with on the board.]

Ask the rest of the students whether they can think of any other reasons. Add those to the list on the board.

After about five minutes of thinking together and listing reasons, add any of the following your students did not suggest:]

- **Lonely**
- **Depressed**
- **Anxious**
- **Incompetent or dependent, or both**
- **Disapproved of**

themselves and another secret mark beside the ones that they think are not a risk for themselves.

2. Now have them put a rating number of 1 to 5 beside each risk to indicate the strength of the risk (1 = low risk, 5 = high risk). Have students add their total risk score.
3. Now, outside of class time, have a close friend do the same rating of this list on you and compare it with your score.
4. Suggest to students that if they are high-risk people, they may want to discuss it with a personally respected and trusted adult or school psychologist.

- **Compliant**
- **Hostile**
- **A combination of these**
- **Hopelessness**
- **Abandoned any hope of reaching dreams and goals**
- **Peer pressure**
- **Danger/dare**
- **Need for love and acceptance**
- **Desire to experiment**
- **Parents or friends do it**
- **Masking pain (for example, drinking or taking drugs to temporarily escape a bad situation at home)**
- **Rebellion, because my authorities tell me I'm not supposed to do it**

 = 35 minutes

ENDING THE LESSON



LETTER TO DISCOURAGE DRUG USE ABOUT 10 MINUTES

[On a clean sheet of paper, ask your students to write a letter to a friend who is thinking about taking drugs. In the letter they should describe why they think the friend wants to take drugs and give some reasons they shouldn't. Tell your students you will collect their letters at the end of the session.]

Collect the letters at the end of the session and, before the next lesson, write comments on your students' letters about what is written. Be sensitive to what is being written; many students may be writing about their own struggles with saying no.

If you can get the student's permission and you promise to keep his or her letter anonymous, in your next class session, read one of the most convincing letters without revealing which student wrote the letter.]

In this lesson, we explored the first of our life skills – recognizing peer pressure. In our next session, we'll explore another life skill – dealing with infatuation.

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

 = 45 minutes

RESOURCES

GOING DEEPER

The book of Genesis in the Bible, tells the story of a remarkable young man named Joseph.

Joseph was handsome and successful, and he also desired to please God. Joseph was involved in many adventures. One of them took place when he was working for a wealthy Egyptian man named Potiphar. Potiphar trusted Joseph and eventually put him in charge of everything he owned. That's when the trouble began. Potiphar's young wife saw how handsome Joseph was and one day boldly said to him, "Come and sleep with me!"

Joseph refused, saying, "Your husband trusts me. He's made me responsible for everything, including what goes on in this house. How could I betray him and do what God forbids?"

However, the woman would not take "no" for an answer. She continued to try to seduce him, and he attempted to ignore her. Then one day, the whole large house was empty, except for Joseph and Potiphar's wife. She boldly grabbed his coat and said, "Come and make love to me!" Joseph slipped out of his coat and ran outside, leaving her holding his garment! (This story is adapted from Genesis 39:1-12.)

Let's take a few minutes to see whether we can list some of the things Joseph did to resist the pressure to compromise.

[Accept all answers and write the key ones on the board.]

CREATE JOSEPH SKITS

[When you determine that the most important points have surfaced, arrange the class into two or more groups. Have each group create a skit that shows a current-day situation where an adolescent is being pressured to compromise. Have the person respond in a manner similar to Joseph. Have each of the groups perform its skit for the rest of the class.]

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. **When pressured to compromise, we should politely but firmly refuse.**
2. **If the pressure continues, and if it is possible, the wise course may be to remove ourselves from the situation.**

PARENT-TEACHER CONNECTION

For Family Discussion:

1. Ask your adolescent, “What is the greatest pressure you are feeling right now from your friends?”
2. Discuss how you might help him or her meet the challenge of that pressure.