

Introduction

We like to think it happens to other people in other cities. But the fact is that one in 20 Utahns -- or 100,000 people -- has a substance abuse problem. One-fifth of them is under the age of 18. Today, Americans spend more money on illegal drugs than on cigarettes.

Adolescence is a stressful time for kids. It's also a time when teenagers are particularly susceptible to peer pressure to try drugs and alcohol. Most kids who are hooked on drugs begin experimenting early - between the ages of 14 and 16. In addition, drugs are also readily available, and the number one drug of choice for teens is marijuana because it is so easy to obtain.

In Utah, the instantly addictive methamphetamine has replaced marijuana as the number one drug of choice for adults, with one meth lab in every 10-block neighborhood, according to the documentary.

Regardless of how an addiction begins, its consequences can be tragic and far-reaching. An important first step is recognizing that there is a problem- even in Utah. We offer this resource and discussion guide as a way to start the conversation with friends, family and in the classroom.

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“Good judgment comes from experience, and often experience comes from bad judgment.”
[Rita Mae Brown](#)

LESSON STRUCTURE

This discussion guide is divided into six written sections that accompany six video “chapters” or clips ranging in seven to 20 minutes in length throughout the documentary program.

Section I:

Discusses some of the reasons adolescents, teenagers and young adults begin experimenting with narcotics, prescription medications, tobacco and alcohol. It further explains that abuse of alcohol and drugs is epidemic in Utah, with one person out of 20 having a substance abuse problem requiring treatment.

Section II:

Begins by discussing the effectiveness of school drug prevention programs, as opposed to the “real” education kids get on the street from their peers, the media and popular culture. It also explains how the brain matures with the reasoned, logical, consequence-accepting area in the frontal lobe being the last to develop.

Section III:

Looks at addiction - what it is, who is most susceptible and how the brain interprets the substances of abuse. Personal stories detail the tremendous amount of time, effort, deception and money required to feed addiction.

Section IV:

Examines the abuse of prescription and over-the-counter pain medications. This section also provides an explanation of the history, popularity and devastation of methamphetamine.

Section V:

Looks into several treatment options for substance abusers. Because substance abuse is understood to be a chronic, relapsing disease, substance abusers find that when it comes to treatment, no single program works for everyone.

Section VI:

Provides insight for parents to become better educated about substance abuse. This includes what signs to look for if they suspect their child is using substances and likely places where drugs may be hidden in a child’s room or car. This section also touches on whether or not random drug testing should be allowed in schools.

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE AND VIDEO

This study guide, with the accompanying videotape or DVD, is designed for grades 7-12. It includes six short (7-20 minutes each) videotaped segments from *SUBSTANCE OF DENIAL*, accompanying hands-on classroom activities and student discussion topics. Each segment should take one to three class periods depending on the scope of the activities. The curriculum is to be used in conjunction with other class material pertaining to health, sociology and psychology, and should be adapted to fit in with specific grade levels.

SECTION I - INTRODUCTION TO SUBSTANCE ABUSE

(Cue VHS or DVD from the beginning and play to the end of Robby's story. Video length: 14:30).

Introduction

It should come as no surprise that drugs are an integral part of our everyday lives. Everywhere we turn, we see drugs that are used for pleasure, to treat mental disorders, and to give us relief from pain and the mundane. In one form or another, drugs have been around since the beginning of time. We are a pill-popping, quick-fix culture wanting feel-good answers to complicated problems. What is alarming, however, is that the average age a child smokes his first cigarette is 12, the average age to drink alcohol is 13 and the average age to smoke marijuana is 14. Utah is no exception. Drug use goes up dramatically in the first year of middle school or junior high.

Lesson Objective

Through classroom activities and instructor-led discussions, students will better understand some of the reasons they or their peers experiment with narcotics, alcohol, tobacco or prescription medications. They will hear Robby's story, as told by his mother. Robby Nunez died from a heroin overdose at 18.

Discussion Topics

1. Denial - Discuss denial with the class, in terms of what it is and how it may positively or negatively influence their lives. Is denial a healthy attribute? Is there more denial in Utah than in other areas of the country?
2. Alcohol - Discuss the impact and consequences of underage drinking.

Resources

The following Internet site is an easy tool designed to help teachers and students calculate the toll that serious alcohol problems are taking on their communities.

www.alcoholcostcalculator.org/kids/index2.html

Activities

Using the Internet site shown above:

- I. Ask students to compare Utah statistics with other states to discover the number of kids who have serious alcohol problems.
- II. Click on the FAQ link on the left side of the screen. Divide the 19 frequently asked questions among the class and ask students to report on the findings.
- III. Go to Internet site, www.alcoholfreechildren.org Click on the "statistics" link found on the left side of the screen. Discuss the information as it relates to alcohol abuse and the child, the family, the school, the community and society.

SECTION II - PREVENTION

(Cue VHS to begin at 14:33 or DVD at Chapter 2. This section begins with the ringing of a school bell and ends with comments pertaining to how dealing drugs is big business and very lucrative. Video length: 12:20)

Introduction

With a few possible exceptions, every student in Utah has been exposed to drug prevention programs since kindergarten. These programs have taught the risks and dangers associated with tobacco, alcohol and drugs. While these prevention programs have their merit, they do not work for all students.

Lesson Objective

Prevention programs only begin to counter the real education kids get on the street from their peers and popular culture. Students should discuss and examine the power of the media and how it can reinforce a child's impression that drug use is a normal part of growing up.

Discussion Topics

- I. Impact of the Media. Discuss the impact of the media, in terms of pro-use messages -- both subtle and overt -- as they relate to alcohol, tobacco and drug usage. As a society, have we become desensitized to the messages? In what fashion do the media tend to glamorize substance usage? If it were possible, would censoring the pro-use messages help with drug prevention efforts?
- II. Drug Prevention Programs. Discuss various drug prevention programs the students may have encountered over the years. Discuss the impact they may or may not have. Do they work? Do students internalize the messages?
 - a. For lessons from Prevention Research
visit: <http://www.nida.nih.gov/infobox/lessons.html>

Activities

- I. Gather several different types of print publications (magazines, comic books, newspapers, and inserts from CDs) ask students to list the references to drugs, tobacco, prescription and over-the-counter medications and alcohol. Discuss the various advertising techniques, such as sex appeal, having fun, mockery, comparison or personal testimony.

- II. Ask the students to watch television for 30 minutes and record the number of references made to drugs, tobacco or alcohol during the commercial breaks or during the program.
- III. By working in groups, ask the students to design a drug, alcohol and tobacco prevention advertising campaign that they think would work. This should include suggestions of possible visual media, activities and printed material.

Resources

- o The following Internet site, GET IT STRAIGHT, contains an interactive drug prevention workbook compiled by students as part of a classroom assignment. Their assignment was to find out as much as they could about drugs that are commonly abused. <http://www.usdoj.gov/dea/pubs/straight/cover.htm>
- o Partnership for a Drug Free America is loaded with useful information, descriptions of various substances, personal stories from teenagers and resources for help. <http://drugfree.org>

SECTION III - ADDICTION

(Cue VHS to begin at 26:54 or DVD to Chapter 3) This section begins with the following narration: "Addiction can be the frightening result from what started as simple curiosity." The clip ends after the personal story of a man addicted to prescription pain medication. (Video length: 18:00)

Introduction

Many people view drug abuse and addiction as strictly a social problem. Parents, teens and other members of the community tend to characterize people who take drugs as morally weak. They believe that drug abusers and addicts should be able to stop taking drugs if they are willing to change their behavior.

Lesson Objective

Addiction begins when an individual makes a conscious choice to use drugs, but addiction is not just "a lot of drug use." Scientific research shows that not only do drugs interfere with normal brain function, creating powerful feelings of pleasure, but they also have long-term effects on brain metabolism and activity. This lesson will provide insight into what addiction is, how it feels and how the brain interprets the substances.

Discussion Topics

- I. Taking Risks. Taking risks is part of life. There are risks in almost everything we do. Engage students in a discussion centered on the following questions.
 - a. What risks would you be personally willing to take?
 - b. What risks are you personally unwilling to take?
 - c. What would make you change your mind?
 - d. What influences you most in making your decisions?
 - e. How do you empower somebody to make good choices?

- f. Do you think making good choices takes away an individual's freedom or provides more?
- g. Think of some bad choices you made.
- h. What were the consequences
 - o For you
 - o For others

II. Addiction.

Seldom does a day go by that we do not encounter references to various types of addictions. Discuss addictions such as gambling, shopping, eating, tobacco, alcohol and drug use and the impact these addictions have on the lives of the addicted, their families and society.

Resources

- o The following interactive Internet site is designed for students in grades 6-10. This site includes information on how drugs affect the brain, drug facts, personal stories, activities and teacher support material.
<http://teacher.scholastic.com/scholasticnews/indepth/headsup>
- o For high school students, the following Internet site contains science-based facts on drug abuse and addiction.
<http://www.nida.nih.gov/infobox/infoboxindex.html>

Activities

For the following activities, students will need access to computers, either in the classroom or in the computer lab.

- I. The Reconstructors, <http://reconstructors.rice.edu> is a problem-based adventure game engaging the player in the role of scientist, historian, geographer and detective. There are several consecutive episodes, each with its own learning objectives. The knowledge gained from each episode will help students make better, more informed health choices when it comes to avoiding drugs of abuse.

Steps:

- o Locate Internet site <http://reconstructors.rice.edu>
- o Click on Episode III: A Plaguing Problem
- o Play the game

Teaching material for this site is available by clicking on "teacher pages" at the top of the screen or the direct address is

<http://reconstructors.rice.edu/recon1/lessons/Recon-TM3.pdf>

II. Addiction Activities - The Reconstructors

- Activity One - "It's all in the Cards." In this activity, the students will play a game that will help demonstrate that a person never knows at what point addiction will occur.

Steps: Locate Internet site:

<http://reconstructors.rice.edu/recon1/lessons/recon-TM5.pdf>

Scroll down to pages 8-12 for a description of the activity and the game rules.

- Activity Two - "Changing a Life." In this activity, the students will discuss the different environmental, behavioral, social and genetic influences that determine whether a person becomes addicted to drugs.

Steps: Locate Internet site:

<http://reconstructors.rice.edu/recon1/lessons/recon-TM5.pdf>

Scroll down to pages 13-17 for a description of the activity.

- Activity Three - "Balancing Act." In this activity, the students will model how long-term opiate use leads to tolerance and dependence.

Steps: Locate Internet site:

<http://reconstructors.rice.edu/recon1/lessons/recon-TM5.pdf>

Scroll down to pages 18-22 for a description of the activity.

SECTION IV - SUBSTANCES OF ABUSE

(Cue VHS to 45:00 or DVD to Chapter 4) This section begins with the following narration. "From pills for pain to medications to treat the common cold, there is no denying teenagers have found many other uses for the so-called "legal drugs" like prescription medications." The video clip ends with a young man, silhouetted saying, "Toward the end of my drug use, money was always on my mind. I had a job but I burned bridges." (Video length: 17:00)

Introduction

According to a recent MTV poll, 30 percent of teens pointed to drug use and abuse as the most important issue they face today. Tied with drug use and abuse was the war in Iraq. Both issues topped the economy, safe sex/premarital sex/teen pregnancy, education, violence and peer pressure in the survey.

Lesson Objective

Combining facts with personal stories, this lesson delves into the current trends of substance abuse. Students will better understand the harmful effects from using and abusing illegal substances, as well as inhalants, prescription medication and over-the-counter pain relievers.

Discussion Topics

- I. There seems to be a general attitude that abusing prescription pain medication is acceptable and not as harmful to the body as other illegal drugs like heroin, cocaine or methamphetamine. Do you agree? Why is this the perception?
- II. Methamphetamine usage is currently taking Utah by storm. Ask the students what they know about methamphetamine and why they think it is currently the drug of choice. Follow this discussion with information about how meth is almost instantly addictive and incredibly destructive.
- III. You can find current information at the following Internet sites.
<http://www.freevibe.com> (On the left column, click on meth)
<http://www.nida.nih.gov/infobox/methamphetamine.html>

Activities

- I. Make a list of legal and illegal drugs that are often abused. Assign each student a drug to research in terms of its harm, medical benefit, and impact on the individual, society and the environment. Report the findings to the class.

Substances may include: Methamphetamine, Heroin, Cocaine, Crack, Marijuana, Hashish, GHB, Rohypnol, Ecstasy, Inhalants, LSD, PCP, Prescription Pain Medications (OxyContin, Lortab, Codeine, Percocet, Vicodin), Prescription Sedatives and Tranquilizers (Xanax, Valiums, Quaaludes, Mebaral, Nembutal), PMA, Steroids, Ketamine, Alcohol, Tobacco, Khat, Mushrooms, Ritalin, Peyote, Pseudoephedrine, Foxy, DMT, DXM, 2C-B, 2C-T-7.

Resources

- o www.inhalants.org
- o www.drugfree.org

SECTION V - TREATMENT FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE

(Cue VHS to 1:02:00 or DVD to Chapter 5. This video clip begins with applause led by the drug court judge. The section ends with the comment: "Most young adults have gone through their money. What do we do for them? Leave them on the street?" (Video length: 7:30.)

Introduction

Drug abuse has a great economic impact on society - an estimated \$67 billion per year. This figure includes costs related to crime, medical care, drug abuse

treatment, social welfare programs, and time lost from work. Treatment of drug abuse can reduce those costs.

Lesson Objective

Drug addiction is a treatable disease, much like diabetes and heart disease. Through treatment tailored to each individual, patients learn to control their addictions and live normal, productive lives. Students will learn that drug addiction is a relapsing, yet treatable disease.

Activities

- I. When it comes to drug-abuse treatment programs, there is no one-size-fits-all. The methods are as varied as the individual and the period of recovery. Ask the students to research and report on a drug-treatment program or method.

Treatment methods may include short-term (residential therapy, medication therapy, and drug-free outpatient therapy); long-term (methadone maintenance, residential therapeutic community treatment; drug treatment programs in prison; treatment methods for women with children and 12 step programs.)

SECTION VI - WHAT PARENTS SHOULD KNOW

(Cue VHS to 1:09:20 or DVD to Chapter 6) This section begins with the following narration, "Regardless of an individual's social standing, religion or grasp of right or wrong, most young people are going to make a decision of whether or not to use drugs or alcohol." (Video length: 7:00)

Introduction

Drug abuse occurs in families of all economic and social backgrounds, in happy and unhappy homes alike. Often, even in the face of mounting evidence, parents have a hard time acknowledging that their child has an alcohol, tobacco or drug problem.

Lesson Objective

Students will understand that parents and educators are quickly becoming educated about substance abuse.

Discussion Topics

- I. Discuss with the students how they would want their parents to help if they (the student) were to get involved with drugs or alcohol.
- II. Discuss the ramifications of random drug testing in school or in the workplace. Should it be required or is it an infringement of personal rights?
- III. Experts say the "War on Drugs" will never be over. Ask the students if they agree with the experts. What steps would they take to control the flow of drugs coming into the state? The country?

Activity

Assign each student a topic to research concerning the "War on Drugs."

- a. What has the government done in the last three decades to address the drug problem?
 - b. What laws against drugs have been passed?
 - c. How many people abuse drugs in the U.S.?
 - d. How do illegal drugs lead to crime?
 - e. How many people die from drug-abuse or drug-related crimes each year?
 - f. Which drug causes the greatest burden on medical facilities?
 - g. Which drugs are the most addictive?
 - h. Do illegal drugs lead to violent crime?
 - i. What does the U.S drug policy do to the black community?
 - j. How does our policy compare with the policies of other countries?
 - k. Do illegal drugs have any legitimate uses?
-
- l. Does marijuana lead to harder drugs?
 - m. What should/could we do about drug-abuse?
 - n. What are some arguments for and against "legalization?"
 - o. How many people are currently in prison for drug-related offenses in Utah?

SECTION VII - FAMILY AND PARENTAL DISCUSSIONS

Introduction to Activity

A solid relationship with parents and family provides teenagers with a support network. Parents were once teenagers and have experienced many of the same issues. They can often be a helpful resource if you are honest and open.

Activity

Some teenagers think that if they talk with their parents about drugs or alcohol, their parents will suspect that they are using the substances. Parents, however, say they would just like some information about what is going on in the schools and their child's life.

Look for an opportunity to discuss one of the following subjects with your parent/teenager and report on what you have learned from the experience.

- a) Look for an appropriate time to talk about how you feel about the use of steroids in sports. Continue the discussion with what you may or may not know in terms of other drug and alcohol usage.
- b) Let your parents/teenager know that it is important for you talk about drugs and alcohol with them because drugs are a fact of life and you want to know how they feel about them.

- c) Ask your parents what it was like when they were teenagers. Did they have more or less freedom? How were your parents lives affected by peer pressure and the media messages you see daily.
- d) When surveyed, parents say they want to know their kids are not in danger from using substances; that their child is in control and not at risk of harm and to know that their kids understand what drugs can do to them. Talk about what you feel they/you need to know.
- e) If you are well informed, you should be able to have a proper discussion with your parents/teenagers about drugs and alcohol. You might find your parents/teenagers need more education about drugs so they will stop worrying. Alternatively, perhaps you will find they know quite a bit and have some useful things to say. Look for opportunities, like television programs, commercials or magazine advertisements to open a conversation. Then, set ground rules such as no lectures, no leaving the room angry, and no accusations. Engage in an open discussion about drugs, tobacco and alcohol.

Websites:

www.utah.gov	Government of Utah Health Services
http://www.utahpd.org/	Utah State Office of Education (Prevention Dimensions)
http://www.namiut.org/	National Institute for the Mentally Ill (Hope for Tomorrow Project)
http://theagapecenter.com/Treatment-Centers/Utah.htm	Treatment Resource site for Utah
www.alcoholfreechildren.org	Alcohol Free Children of America
www.drugfreeamerica.org	Partnership for a Drug Free America
www.cadca.org	Community Anti-Drug Coalition of America
www.nida.nih.org	National Institute of Drug Abuse
www.omhrc.gov	Office Of Minority Health Resource Center
www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov	Office of National Drug Policy
www.na.org	Narcotics Anonymous World Services
http://ncadi.samhsa.gov	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
http://prevention.samhsa.gov	Building Blocks for a Healthy Future
http://family.samhsa.gov	Family Guide to Keeping Youth Mentally Healthy and Drug Free
http://www.soyunica.gov	Soy Unica, Soy Latina!

www.cdcpin.org

www.cdc.gov/tobacco

www.theantidrug.com

www.freevibe.com

www.cyfernet.org

www.al-anon.alateen.org

www.alcoholics-anonymous.org

www.scouting.org

www.campfire.org

www.girlscouts.org

www.girlsinc.org

www.madd.org

www.na.org

www.napafasa.org

www.nbcdi.org

www.hispanichealth.org

www.uchsc.edu/ai/ncaianmhr/index.htm

www.ncpc.org

www.pta.org

www.prideyouthprograms.org

www.saddonline.com

www.ymca.net

www.ywca.org

Center For Disease Control and
Prevention

Tobacco Information and Prevention

ONDCP's Parents: The Anti Drug
Freevibe

Children, Youth, and Families
Education and Research Network

Alateen Family Group Headquarters

Alcoholics Anonymous Worldwide

Boy Scouts of America

Camp Fire USA

Girl Scouts of America

Girls Incorporated

Mothers Against Drunk Driving

Narcotics Anonymous Worldwide

National Asian Pacific American

Families Against Substance Abuse

National Black Child Development
Institute

National Alliance for Hispanic Health

National Center for
American Indian and Alaska Native
Mental Health Research

National Crime Prevention Council

National PTA Drug and Alcohol

Abuse Prevention Project

Pride Youth Programs

Students Against Destructive
Decisions

YMCA of the USA

YWCA of the USA

Please note this list of resources is not intended to be exhaustive; inclusion or exclusion is in no way intended as an endorsement or lack thereof. Many of the above listed organizations may have local chapters of their organization. We have listed the national organization site as local chapters often change.

For additional information, contact KUED Community Outreach at 101. S Wasatch Drive, RM 215, Salt Lake City, Utah 84112. (801- 581-6163 or visit the KUED 7 website at www.kued.org