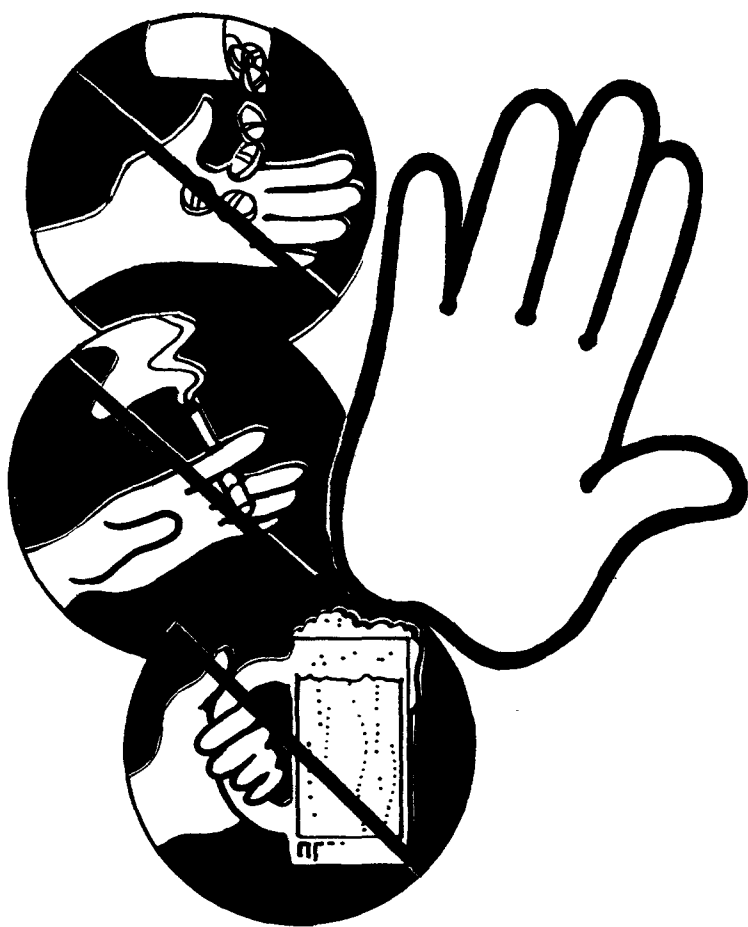


# Teacher's Guide

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## Drug Danger: EASY TO START, HARD TO STOP



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- Suggested Instructional Procedures
  - Script

**DRUG DANGER:  
EASY TO START, HARD TO STOP**

**Teacher's Guide**

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**Produced by**

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**DRUG DANGER:**  
**EASY TO START, HARD TO STOP**

**Time: 12:00**

**PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

Many things influence us when we make a decision -- especially when that decision involves using a drug such as alcohol, marijuana, or tobacco. To some youngsters, advertisements, adult behavior, and availability of over-the-counter drugs may suggest that drugs are not all that harmful. But they can be extremely harmful. Some people say drugs help them forget their problems. Later, they realize that drugs make their problems worse. When young people take certain drugs, they also break the law, possibly harm body organs, and risk long-term mental problems and even death. Nevertheless, some teens and pre-teens take those risks because drug addiction, which is a disease, may be very hard to recognize -- especially in its early stages. These young people may refuse to recognize they have a problem. Full-blown addiction may start with *occasional use*, move on to *habitual use* and *tolerance*, and then to *dependence*. Many young people also find it hard to refuse taking drugs when their peers pressure them to do so. However, there are many ways to refuse without people laughing at

you. The best strategies are to keep in mind that a growing number of young people *are* refusing, and to stay away from gatherings where drugs may be used.

## **STUDENT OBJECTIVES**

After viewing this video and participating in the suggested activities, students should be able to do the following:

- (1) Tell why some people may mistakenly believe that taking drugs is not harmful.
- (2) Discuss three reasons why young people may take drugs.
- (3) Enumerate the reasons why taking drugs is a bad idea.
- (4) Name and explain the stages of addiction.
- (5) Tell three ways to refuse taking drugs in the face of peer pressure.

## **SUGGESTED LESSON PLAN**

### **1. Introduction**

Discuss the reasons why a person would do

something that might cause harm to oneself. Then ask the class to define "peer pressure." Help students understand that when they make a decision, there may be many factors that go into the decision-making process, including peer pressure and views of adults. Discuss how and why friends and adults influence a person's decisions.

## 2. **Pre-Viewing Activities**

Tell the class it is going to see a video called *Easy to Start, Hard to Stop*. Ask what the title might mean. Then discuss the term "addiction" and "drug addict." Make certain that your students understand that drug addiction is a disease, and that addicts come from every station in life. Help the class realize that the majority of addicts do not fit the stereotype of an addicted individual -- derelicts on skid row or glassy-eyed burnouts in crack houses. Many hold positions of importance and responsibility, or are students in school. They may dress well and may be able to hide their addiction -- at least for awhile. Finally, it is extremely important that your students understand that **NOT EVERYONE** experiments with drugs. The latest report issued by the Federal Office of Drug Control Policy, for instance, states that marijuana, cocaine, and heroin sales dropped by roughly 23 percent during the past two years. The excuse that "everybody's doing it" has never been true, and is even less valid today.

If you feel it will be helpful, write on the



chalkboard and define the following terms used in the video: *joint (marijuana), over-dosing, cocaine, alcohol addiction, habitual, tolerance, full-blown addiction, crack.*

List the five student objectives on the board. Tell the class that after viewing the presentation and after participating in the follow-up activities, they will be expected to meet those objectives.

Present the video. A transcript of the narration is found on pages 9-16.

### **3. Post-Viewing Activities**

Explain to your students that there is no certain way to determine whether a person will become addicted to drugs. Then ask them to explain, in terms of that fact, the wisdom of the aphorism, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Invite a rehabilitation counselor to your class to discuss the drug rehabilitation process. If appropriate, ask the counselor to discuss what a child can do if a parent, guardian, or sibling is chemically addicted.

Form committees to devise strategies for refusing to take drugs in a social setting. Have each committee give demonstrations of their strategies to their classmates.

## **TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO**

Some day, this may happen to you. Maybe it already has. You're with several friends, and someone pulls out a bottle of beer, a marijuana joint, or some other drug and says, "Here, have some."

When you hesitate, your friend says, "What's the matter, are you chicken? C'mon, don't be a such a baby."

Your other friends look at you, waiting for an answer. What should you do? Well, you're not a chicken, and you're not a baby, either. But you don't like being pressured into something that you're not completely sure about.

You need to make a decision. The purpose of this program is to give you some facts to help you make an intelligent decision, one that's right for you.

There are many things in our world that influence us when we make a decision. And that's especially true when it's about using -- or not using -- a drug such as alcohol, marijuana, or tobacco.

When an advertiser makes drinking or smoking look glamorous, or fun, or grown-up, we may be more likely to say "yes" when a friend or acquaintance asks us to try a cigarette or a beer.

Of course, advertisements seldom tell everything about a product, especially facts which could reveal

how much harm that product may do to the mind or body.

And even if an ad does give a warning, it's done in a way that won't get your attention. Small black-and-white lettering at the bottom of a big, colorful billboard probably won't be noticed -- at least, not by most people.

What you see in your neighborhood also has an effect on your decisions. There are so many medicines, such as hay fever pills and aspirin, sold in neighborhood pharmacies and supermarkets, it's easy to conclude that drugs aren't harmful.

Sometimes it seems as if almost everyone uses them, even though that's certainly not the case.

And of course, medicines sold in pharmacies or supermarkets -- or taken under a doctor's supervision -- are very different than those sold on street corners and alleys -- or obtained from friends, an older brother or sister, or somebody down the block.

The adults in our home also play a role in what we decide to do. If we see them smoking or drinking, it's easy to think that their actions are okay because, after all, they are grown-ups.

But adults do make mistakes. Practically every adult who smokes admits that they made a big mistake when they lit up that first cigarette.

Nevertheless, with so many people and so many things around us seeming to say "drug use can be

acceptable," it's easy to overlook the dangers of drug abuse.

And then, there's all that curiosity about drugs. Lots of young people want to know what all the fuss is about. "How would a drug make me feel?" they ask.

Well, let's clear up that mystery. Sometimes drugs make people sick; sometimes, sleepy; sometimes, panicky; sometimes happy, with a floating sensation. Actually, it all depends on the kind of drug used, and the individual.

Some people say that drugs help them forget their problems. Later, of course, they come to realize that drugs only make their problems worse -- much worse.

Others say that alcohol and other drugs help them feel like they're part of a group -- even if that group is doing something unlawful. And teens who drink and do drugs are breaking the law.

If caught, they could be arrested. And, of course, they are doing something very dangerous.

The thing about drugs, though, is that the dangers can be easily ignored or overlooked -- at least for awhile. The dangers may sit in the background, hidden away.

For instance, the harm drugs do to a person's organs -- such as the lungs, brain, liver, and heart -- aren't always seen or felt immediately. Nevertheless, that damage can take place, slowly but surely.

Two other dangers are over-dosing and getting

drugs with dangerous impurities. Both can cause very serious, long-term mental illness -- and even death.

It's easy to say, "Oh, that could never happen to me." But don't kid yourself. It can. In fact, some drugs, such as cocaine, can cause death the first time they're used.

Besides death, another danger is, of course, addiction -- a condition in which the only thing in life that matters is taking a drug, or several different drugs. And that can include beer. Most experts believe that addiction is a disease.

By the way, if you're like a lot of people, you probably aren't aware that alcohol addiction develops much more rapidly in young people than in adults. A pre-teen or teenager can become fully addicted to alcohol within six months of taking his or her first drink.

To the addicted person, friends, parents, brothers, sisters, school, hobbies, and personal health have no meaning at all.

Only getting the drug and taking it count.

How could a person ever come to feel that way? In some ways, it's easy because getting drugs may not be all that difficult, and because the steps of addiction can be very hard to recognize, especially in its early stages.

Addiction usually starts with only the occasional use of a drug, perhaps once a week with friends -- on Saturday nights, at a party, or on Friday afternoons, after school.

If occasional use continues, the next step downward -- habitual use -- may take place. That's when a person takes the drug on a regular basis. Habitual users like the feeling the drug gives them, so they begin to take it several times a week -- and then, eventually, every day.

As they use the illegal substances more often, their brain changes in an important way: certain nerves there become used to the drug. This condition is called "tolerance."

When tolerance occurs, the abuser must take more and more of the drug -- or drugs -- to feel their effects. If he or she continues to use the drug regularly, the chemicals in the brain change even more.

When that happens, the unfortunate person has stepped firmly onto the third step of addiction, called dependence. Persons on this step depend on the drug -- or drugs -- to help them feel merely normal.

Now, the brain and body of the dependent person really need the drug, or drugs, to feel okay -- just like they need food, water, and air. If the drug or drugs are taken away, the dependent person feels very ill.

In time, dependence gives way to the last stage of the disease, full-blown addiction. As already mentioned, fully addicted persons don't care about anything else except getting and taking their drugs. There are few things worse in life than being an addict.

Certain drugs, such as crack cocaine, can make a

person addicted immediately, without going through the other steps.

But in most cases, this is how the road to addiction begins -- at a week-end party, with an older brother or sister, or at a friend's or acquaintance's home.

Of course, if you experiment with drugs, you may not ever become addicted. You may be lucky.

But then again, you may not be so lucky. Nobody ever knows for sure what will happen.

Your choice, then, is to either take a dangerous risk -- or not take it. Put that way, the decision may seem simple.

But when a friend or a group of friends are urging you to take the leap, it can be very hard to refuse -- especially when you're afraid that if you do, you'll lose your friends and become an outsider.

Many young people in high school, and in junior highs and middle schools, have experienced those same fears. And a lot of them have found ways to refuse without upsetting or angering their friends. Some say they simply make excuses.

For example, this teen says, "I haven't been feeling well today, and I'm afraid that if I have a beer, I'll throw up."

Another student gives this excuse: "My parents are suspicious," he says. "They always smell my breath when I get home and I'll be grounded if I drink (or smoke)."

A third one sometimes says, "I'm taking a medicine that doesn't mix with alcohol or marijuana."

A fourth truthfully tells his friends that he once had a very bad experience with alcohol and almost died. Then he forcefully states that he won't ever touch it again.

Because beer and liquor are fattening, one girl says she gives the following reason when refusing: "I'm trying to lose some weight," she says. Or simply, "Thanks, but I'm on a diet."

An athlete says this: "I have a game tomorrow, and I don't want to be hung over." Sometimes he just says he's in training.

However, some students, like this one, don't like to give excuses. So they simply say, "I don't drink," or "I don't do drugs." But, they add, it's best to be firm when saying those things, because if you're wishy-washy, you'll be pestered -- perhaps until you give in.

In other words, some people just won't give up. They'll say you don't have anything to worry about, or that nothing is going to happen, or that everybody else is doing it.

Well, those arguments just don't stand up to the facts.

As you've already seen, there's plenty to worry about. Things can and do happen; and everybody is not doing it.

In fact, the number of young people taking drugs has been falling in recent years, as the dangers of drugs have become more widely known.

Finally, our student panelists agreed that it's smart to just leave -- or, better yet, stay away -- from any



gathering where alcohol or other drugs may be taken.

In any event, there are ways to refuse -- ways that won't make you feel like everyone is laughing at you.

And everyone won't, because, as we said, more and more young people are turning down drugs and alcohol as each day passes. So you won't be alone if you refuse.

Even so, it's true that some kids do fool around with alcohol and other drugs. It's also true that by doing so, they're making a choice that puts them on a very dangerous path.

At first, alcohol and other drugs may seem fun and exciting. In the beginning, they may seem to make personal problems disappear.

But it's all a cruel trick, because over time, illegal drugs and alcohol almost always create many new problems, and make existing problems much worse. But by then, the drug abuser is hooked, and an escape becomes more and more difficult.

In short, it's easy to start, even when you may not be so eager to do so ... and hard to stop -- when you really want to, when your life may even depend on it!