

Assignment Discovery Online Curriculum

Lesson title:

The Cycle of Addiction

Grade level:

6-8

Duration:

One or two class periods

Objectives:

Students will do the following:

1. Understand how families and peers influence their decision making
2. Examine the cycle of addiction to drugs and what can be done to prevent it

Materials:

- Newsprint and markers
- Paper and pencils
- Computer with Internet access (optional but very helpful)

Procedures:

1. Begin the lesson by asking students why they think people experiment with drugs. Write their ideas on a piece of newsprint. Then ask students why they think that some young people go from experimentation and social use to more serious drug dependency, which eventually results in addiction, or a physiological dependence on a given drug. Write down any ideas students may have about why drug experimentation escalates. Then put away both sheets until later in the lesson.
2. Discuss with students the cycle of addiction, a scientific theory about why experimentation with drugs can lead to addiction. The cycle of addiction includes the following steps:
 - A young person is feeling pain and discomfort because of family or school problems.
 - The individual is looking for ways to feel better, so he or she starts to take drugs.
 - At first, the drugs seem to work because they dull the pain the person is trying to escape from. So the person keeps taking the drug.
 - From this point, it often doesn't take long for the person to become addicted because he or she has developed a physical dependence—an addiction—to the substance. Now the person can think only about getting more of this drug just to function.
 - At this stage, a serious downward spiral begins. The person will sacrifice anything—family, friends, school, or work—for drugs. Changed by drugs both

physically and mentally, the person is now an addict.

3. Discuss the cycle of addiction with the class. You may have a whole-class discussion or copy the information from step 2 and hand it out to students. Or students may look at the following Web sites for more information:

< <http://www.kidshealth.org/teen/safety/help/addictions.html>>

<<http://www.angelfire.com/biz2/TheRecoveryPage/Addcycle.html>>

<<http://www.getcured.org/cycle1.htm>>

4. After students have some understanding of the cycle of addiction, present the two scenarios below. They focus on why such a cycle gets set into motion. You may copy the scenarios or read them aloud to students. Then ask students to answer the questions that follow. Students may work alone or in small groups to complete the activity.

Scenario 1

Allison was having a bad year. After years of not getting along, her parents had finally decided to get a divorce. While there was a lot of tension in the house, her parents were trying hard to be polite to each other and considerate of Allison's and her younger brother's feelings. Always a good student, Allison continued to find comfort in studying hard and getting good grades in school. Her best friend, Susie, had really been there for her, too. Every weekend Susie had planned something fun for them to do by themselves or with other friends. Over the past several months, Allison and Susie had gone ice-skating on a regular basis, seen many movies, and gone bowling. Allison had also continued to play soccer on her school's team. Throughout the year, Allison had been able to talk to her parents about the pending divorce. Allison's parents had been willing to listen to her concerns and discuss her anger about this big change in her life. Allison felt really sad, but she also felt that she was going to be all right.

Scenario 2

Laura felt as if her life was falling apart. Her parents had just told her that they were getting a divorce. Although her parents hadn't gotten along for years, Laura had always hoped that they would find a way to stay together so they could continue to be a family. Instead, her parents didn't seem to have any time to talk to her about her feelings. Laura had always thought that she had a few good friends, but she wasn't feeling like she could turn to them now. Her friend Katy had a boyfriend, and she didn't get a chance to see her soccer teammates much outside of games and practices. Laura had always been a good student, and she continued to complete her assignments on time. But she had noticed that it was becoming increasingly difficult to concentrate on her schoolwork. Because she was feeling lonely and isolated, Laura was considering going to a party with Katy. She had heard that some kids brought drugs to these parties. For that reason, she had always stayed away. Now, however, she thought that it might be a way to get out of the house and forget about her problems for a little while. It might be fun. Laura was thinking that unless something else happened so that her social life improved, she might just go.

Questions

- a. Which girl is more vulnerable to becoming involved with drugs? Why?
 - b. What role do friends play in both girls' lives? Do you think friends are an important influence? Give reasons to support your ideas.
 - c. What role does family play in the girls' lives? Do you think the family is an important influence? Give reasons to support your ideas.
 - d. Do you think that Allison is going to turn to drugs? Why or why not? What factors in her life will help her decide not to use drugs? How do you think those factors will affect the way she makes decisions about other issues in her life?
 - e. Do you think that Laura is going to turn to drugs? Why or why not? What factors in her life will affect the way she makes a decision about drugs and other issues in her life?
 - f. What do you think are some characteristics of people who turn to drugs? What are some characteristics of people who cope in other ways? Give examples to support your ideas.
5. Give students time in class to answer the questions. Then discuss their responses. Which girl did students think was more likely to turn to drugs? What reasons did students give?
6. Make a class list of characteristics of people who begin using drugs. Students will probably say that people who turn to drugs have the following characteristics:
- They are lonely.
 - They are unhappy.
 - They feel isolated.
 - They are looking for ways to ease their pain.

Then make a class list of characteristics of people who cope in other ways. Characteristics of people who don't turn to drugs include the following:

- They are involved with people.
 - They find satisfaction in outside interests.
 - They are able to talk about their feelings in order to ease their pain.
7. Ask students to compare the two lists. What healthy actions could Laura take to feel better?
8. Then bring out the two lists made in step 1 of reasons why young people experiment with drugs and why experimentation can escalate into addiction. Have the students' ideas changed as a result of learning about the cycle of addiction? If so, how? What conclusions can they draw about the causes of drug use among young people?

9. Conclude the lesson by discussing with the class how they make decisions in their lives. What role does family play? What role do peers play? What role do teachers, coaches, or other adults play? How can these influences help them make healthful choices?

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you see peer pressure as positive, negative, or both? Give examples.
2. Describe a situation in your life where you had to make a difficult choice. What factors influenced you during that time? What choice did you make?
3. Imagine that you are Laura's best friend. What advice would you give her? As her friend, what would you do to support her during this difficult time in her life?

Evaluation:

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' involvement in class discussion, their responses to the questions following the scenarios, their ability to create a list of characteristics of young people susceptible to drugs, and their ability to work cooperatively with their peers:

Three points: was highly engaged in class discussions; gave thoughtful responses to the questions following the scenarios; created a strong list of characteristics of young people susceptible to drugs; demonstrated strong interpersonal skills.

Two points: participated some in class discussions; gave careful but somewhat simplistic responses to some of the questions following the scenarios; created an adequate list of characteristics of young people susceptible to drugs; demonstrated average interpersonal skills.

One point: participated minimally in class discussions; gave simplistic responses to a few of the questions following the scenarios; created a weak list of characteristics of young people susceptible to drugs; demonstrated weak interpersonal skills.

Extension:

Role Playing

Divide students into two groups. Assign one group to the Allison scenario and the other to the Laura scenario. Have students develop a script dramatizing each girl's situation. Students can add other characters, specific examples to make the points more dramatic, and a conclusion to each scenario. Then have students perform their skits for the class. What additional information did students learn about each girl?

Suggested Reading:

Alcohol 101: An Overview for Teens

Margaret O. Hyde and John F. Setaro, MD.

Twenty-First Century Books, 1999.

Alcohol has been and remains a serious problem for teens. In this basic and informative introduction to the subject, the reader learns why people drink, what they drink, who drinks what, what binge drinking is, and a definition of alcoholism. An excellent series of statements help define whether a person has a drinking problem. Chapter notes include useful Internet sites, along with a list of helpful organizations.

Heroin

Humberto Fernandez.

Hazelden Information Education, 1998.

Heroin has been around for a long time, and this comprehensive treatment covers the drug's history, information on heroin addiction and treatment options, and the impact of heroin use on society. Case studies personalize the information, and occasional black-and-white photographs accompany the text.

Vocabulary:

addiction

Definition: Physiological dependence on a certain drug.

Context: Alex thought that he could snort cocaine without developing an **addiction**, but he soon learned that he couldn't control his cravings.

cycle of addiction

Definition: A downward spiral of unhappiness, followed by drug use and temporary relief, that leads to physical and mental dependence.

Context: By the time Jake's mother realized that he had a drug problem, he was an addict, the final phase in the **cycle of addiction**.

drugs

Definition: Substances such as alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine that are unhealthy, are illegal in some cases, and can lead to addiction.

Context: At some of the parties given during middle school, a few kids brought **drugs** for others to try.

peers

Definition: A group of people of the same age, grade, and social standing.

Context: As young people move from childhood into adolescence, they become more dependent on and involved with their **peers**.

peer pressure

Definition: Influence that young people have on each other.

Context: While many people think that **peer pressure** is always negative, young people can influence each other to do well in school, participate in sports, and behave in positive ways.

Academic Standards:

The following standard is from the American Association for Health Education for students in grades six through eight:

1. Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention.
2. Students will demonstrate the ability to use goal-setting and decision-making skills to enhance health.

This lesson plan adheres to the standards set forth in the *National Science Education Standards*, in particular the category Science in Personal and Social Perspectives.

Credit: Marilyn Fenichel, freelance writer and curriculum developer.

This lesson was created in consultation with Shannon Mennell, high school health teacher.

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