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United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



LIVING WITHOUT DRUGS

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

Children are trusting of adults and can easily be influenced. Teachers can be role models for students and dissuade them from abusing drugs. This is all the more important if young people do not have supportive families to guide them. Young people may have to contend with the pressures associated with experimentation and with life in a complex and demanding society. Substance abuse is basically a mechanism to cope with or escape from feelings of insecurity. Help students realize that they are not alone in facing these challenges and that there are a variety of healthy ways of confronting them.

Teaching children to protect themselves

It takes confidence to say no to drugs. Teachers can help build a child's self-esteem and strengthen inter-personal skills. Show tolerance so that pupils can communicate their thoughts. Instil confidence by encouraging children to accept themselves. Help them to distinguish between the helpful effects of medicines and the harmful consequences of taking illegal drugs. Above all, teach young people refusal skills by letting them know that it is fine to say no.

Teaching children to express their creativity

- Organizing art contests for children on a given drug prevention theme
- Highlighting sports as a healthy choice for young people
- Designing T-shirts with slogans to prevent drug abuse and HIV/AIDS
- Collecting money for charities that help street children who take drugs
- Sharing knowledge gained with interactive games and drama / role-playing

Warning signs to look for

There are clear signs to look for if you think a student is taking harmful substances but first make sure that these signs are not the result of other problems. Do not immediately jump to the conclusion that a student is abusing drugs.

Emotional signs

- Mood swings ranging from elation to sudden withdrawal and depression
- Anger for no reason
- Loss of interest in school or extra-curricular activities
- Difficulty getting along with others
- Playing truant
- Falling grades and poor academic performance
- Short attention span



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Physical signs

- Red eyes
- Tendency to fall asleep in class
- Slurred speech
- Inattention in class
- Forgetfulness
 - Neglect of personal hygiene and general appearance
 - Trembling and uncoordinated movements



Teaching children about illegal drugs and their effects

Ages 5-7: Students should improve their decision-making skills and develop healthy habits. They should also be able to list the negative effects of taking illegal substances and differentiate between them.

Ages 8-9: Students should be able to name and identify drugs they have heard about and the dangers associated with drug use. They should be able to talk about how drug use at home and in the community affects them. Students should also know where people can receive assistance with drug use.

Ages 10-12: Students should be able to identify the reasons why people take drugs and distinguish between experimental, occasional/casual, regular and heavy users. They should demonstrate the ability to share information with peers. Students should also learn about the relationship between HIV/AIDS and drug use and the situations that expose people to infection.

Suggested curriculum:

Lesson 1: What are drugs? What does addiction mean? What is the impact on the individual and society?

Lesson 2: What are natural drugs (cannabis, opium and coca), their effects and measures for prevention?

Lesson 3: What are semi-synthetic drugs (morphine, heroin, cocaine and crack), their effects and measures for prevention? What can victims do in case of overdose?

Lesson 4: What are synthetic drugs (amphetamines, ecstasy, LSD, sedative hypnotics)? What are the effects of these drugs on the brain and personality?

Lesson 5: What is the link between drug abuse and HIV/AIDS? How can HIV/AIDS be prevented?

Lesson 6: What are the risk factors? These include academic failure, family dysfunction and drug availability. What are the protective factors? These include family and community supports, improvement of schooling and education on drugs. How can community leaders and others intervene?

Lesson 7: Life-skill activities include learning to use judgment, coping with peer pressure, learning how to say no to drugs, steps needed to ensure a person does not fall into the drug trap, and steps leading to commitment to stop using drugs.

Based on “Living without Drugs”, a series of pamphlets developed by UNODC Barbados and UNESCO CARNEID, and the primary school prevention programme developed by the Barbados National Council on Substance Abuse.

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