

Reasons for Me to Be Alcohol Free

Summary

Students will identify the effects of alcohol and how it impairs function, as well as reasons to be alcohol-free.

Main Core Tie

Health Education I (7-8)

[Strand 4: SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION \(SAP\) Standard HI.SAP.4:](#)

Additional Core Ties

Health Education I (7-8)

[Strand 4: SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION \(SAP\) Standard HI.SAP.1:](#)

Materials

- [Cards:](#)

"Alcohol Facts" and "Reasons for Me to Be Alcohol-Free"

Student Handout: ["What the Ads Don't Tell You--Know the Facts"](#)

Worksheet: ["Reasons for Me to Be Alcohol-Free"](#) ["What the Ads Don't Tell You--How Alcohol Impairs"](#)

Intended Learning Outcomes

Understand how alcohol impairs basic function, and the risk involved.

Identify the short- and long-term effects of alcohol.

Identify reasons to be alcohol-free.

Instructional Procedures

Lesson at a Glance

Distribute the "What the Ads Don't Tell You --Know the Facts" student handout.

Discuss alcohol facts and complete the "What the Ads Don't Tell You--How Alcohol Impairs" worksheet.

Play "Alcohol Facts" pictionary using "Reasons for Me To Be Alcohol Free" cards.

Complete the "Reasons for Me to Be Alcohol-Free" worksheet.

Present alcohol prevention presentation to elementary students.

New Vocabulary

oxidation

ethyl alcohol

addicting

alcoholism

Introduction (Setting Focus)

Discuss the following:

By the time the average American is 18, he or she has seen thousands of beer commercials.

Alcohol companies spend over 1 billion dollars a year trying to convince us that drinking alcohol is exciting, fun and cool.

Advertising never shows the downside of alcohol consumption, such as slurred speech, memory loss, health problems, murder, suicide, car crashes, poor relationships, broken families and shattered lives. In addition, they don't show that a majority of people choose not to drink and that alcohol is not needed to have a good time.

In spite of what the ads say, alcohol won't make us happier or more popular. Drinking will not make us more attractive.

Alcohol doesn't solve our problems. In fact, it may create new problems that are worse than before.

Don't buy the hype the ads are selling; look at all the reasons to be alcohol-free.

Body (Strategies/Activities)

Each student completes the "What the Ads Don't Tell You--How Alcohol Impairs" worksheet during the discussion.

Use the following facts to facilitate class discussions, activities, and demonstrations to help students learn the facts about alcohol.

ALCOHOL FACTS

Alcohol is a depressant. It slows down the central nervous system.

All alcoholic beverages contain ethyl alcohol. Ethyl alcohol is a flammable, volatile liquid. It is used extensively as a solvent in varnishes, perfumes, in the preparation of flavorings, medicines as a disinfectant, and as an automobile radiator antifreeze. Although ethyl alcohol is less toxic than other types of alcohol, it can still be harmful and even deadly.

Alcohol is a poison. Pure alcohol is deadly to living tissues. Explain that alcohol is a poison. It is an antiseptic that kills germs and also kills living cells in the human body. One of the major organs of the body affected by alcohol is the liver.

Liver cirrhosis activity:

To show the effects of alcohol on tissue, submerge a small piece of raw liver in a shallow bowl of rubbing alcohol and keep it overnight. Within minutes, the liver will begin to change in color (denatured alcohol will cause more rapid changes). Show how the bottom has been less affected because it has less exposure to the alcohol. On the following day, show how the outside has become harder, discolored, and almost crusty. The same thing can happen with the human liver (cirrhosis) as a result of drinking alcohol.

Too much alcohol is deadly. Discuss the dangers of binge drinking (drinking a lot of alcohol at a time) and chug-a-lug contests. Drinking too much alcohol may cause a person to vomit. The body is trying to expel the poison so that the body is not destroyed. Alcohol poisoning happens when the blood alcohol level (the percentage of alcohol circulating in the bloodstream) rises to a danger point. At very high blood alcohol levels, a person loses consciousness and goes into a coma. In the worst case, the person dies. The adolescent brain has not yet fully formed the "shut-off" mechanism that would allow a person who over consumes to pass out or fall asleep. Because a youthful brain is less apt to shut down before the blood-alcohol level becomes lethal, youth who drink tend to drink in more deadly quantities, which leads to more damage and higher levels of alcohol poisoning.

Alcohol depresses brain activity and impairs function in three main areas: mental skills, physical skills and basic life support skills.

Physical skill impairment activity:

Divide the class into groups of about five and give each group a dime. Instruct them to take turns picking up the dime, straight off the desk, and putting it back down. Time them to see how long it takes each group to complete the task. Tell them that picking up a dime isn't very hard, so now you're going to impair them, just as alcohol impairs basic functions. It can make things harder. Give each team a pair of heavy gloves and have them repeat the activity. Discuss how it felt to be impaired and the difference in their team's time.

Mental impairment activity:

Students gather in two equal-sized groups and form parallel lines facing away from each other. At one end of the two lines, place a garbage can and a wad of paper. At the other end of the lines, the teacher flips a coin to either heads or tails. The person nearest the

teacher is the "eye" and the person nearest the garbage can is the "foot." All other students are the "nerves" and hold hands to make the best possible connection. Since nerves can only communicate with impulses, no talking is allowed.

When the coin is displayed with "heads," the "eye" sends the signal to the next "nerve" by squeezing the hand. This squeeze or impulse is sent down the nerve-strand one squeeze at a time until it arrives at the "foot." The foot quickly grabs the wad of paper and throws it into the garbage can, simulating quickly stepping on the brake pedal of a car. If the coin is displayed with "tails," no action is taken.

Only correct impulses allow a rotation of the group. If the group sends a signal when "tails" of the coin is displayed and the foot places the paper in the garbage can, the other team is allowed to rotate.

One line of students simulates the physical effects of alcohol on the nervous system by not holding hands. Students must pass the signal down the group by giving each other a "high five" or tapping their neighbor on the shoulder. Play the game again and discuss how difficult mental functions become when under the influence of alcohol.

Basic life support skills impairment activity:

Mark a driving course on the floor with tape. Students take turns walking the course after being spun around 15 to 20 times and while wearing a pair of glasses with petroleum jelly smeared on the lenses. Discuss the impairment that the students experienced and how it affected their performance.

Alcohol increases the risk of accidents. Discuss and give examples of the effects of alcohol on the brain and how this leads to an increase in accidents, e.g., car crashes, falls, drownings, fire deaths, and boating accidents.

Alcohol is not digested or processed like most foods. It is absorbed directly into the bloodstream.

Demonstration of alcohol absorption

Use three different sizes of bottles almost full of water and drop the same amount of food coloring in each. Point out that the food coloring, much like alcohol, spreads immediately and circulates to all parts of the bottle.

The liver oxidizes alcohol from the body at a slow fixed rate.

Briefly discuss role of the liver in ridding the body of alcohol.

Make the liver quiver activity

Select eight students and have them form a circle. Choose one of the students to represent the liver. Introduce several soft squeeze-balls and suggest that they represent alcohol (three balls are equal to one can of beer). It will be the responsibility of the "liver" to squeeze each ball, one at a time, 15 times before setting them down outside of the circle. The squeezing represents the slow, fixed rate of oxidation of alcohol by the liver. The remaining students in the circle represent the body. They pass the balls (alcohol) around the circle. If the "liver" is still squeezing one of the balls, they pass him/her by and pass the ball to the next person. This represents the alcohol going to all parts of the body through the bloodstream. Students should move the balls around the circle as quickly as possible until the "liver" has been able to get rid of the balls (alcohol).

The "liver" begins by squeezing a ball (this represents the normal work of the liver.) The group begins passing two to three balls (that are different from the first one, representing alcohol) around the circle. As soon as one of the new balls get to the "liver," have the student pass the first ball on and begin to squeeze the new balls representing alcohol. The remaining balls continue being passed around the circle until the "liver" is able to get rid of all of the balls representing alcohol.

Start passing 15 more balls around the circle. The students in the circle usually become

louder, less coordinated, and off balance. The task becomes more difficult and disorganized. Just as the body is unable to function as well, the liver will eventually slow down and become damaged.

Process the activity using the following prompts:

How well did the group first handle the squeeze-balls or small amount of alcohol?

What did the group do when more alcohol was introduced?

What eventually happened to the liver?

What are similar effects of alcohol on a real body?

How could people avoid the damage caused by alcohol?

The only way to rid the body of alcohol is to let time pass.

Demonstration:

Use the bottles of dye used previously. Place chlorine bleach into each bottle (more in the bigger bottle and less in the smaller ones) to demonstrate how time is needed to rid the body of alcohol. The liver is a vital organ in the body and without it, life is not possible. It is the organ responsible for the purifying of blood and removing toxins, such as alcohol, from the body. The liver identifies alcohol as a poison and immediately prioritizes its cleaning of blood to rid the body of this toxin. The liver ignores working on other jobs and handles the alcohol first. The use of alcohol can exact a devastating toll on the liver. The liver oxidizes alcohol at a slow, fixed rate, and it takes longer for a smaller and younger person to get rid of the alcohol poison in the body. Have the students observe the bottles throughout the class period. It is interesting to note that even though the dye will eventually clear from the bottles of color, they will be slightly discolored and not as clear as a bottle of water without the bleach and dye. (Show a bottle of clear water.) Even though a person will eventually become sober, it doesn't mean the body has been unaffected. Damage has occurred.

Alcohol is the leading cause of death and disability for young people. According to www.utah.gov and the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, alcohol use contributes to the leading causes of death for young people: car crashes, suicide, homicide (killing six times as many people as all other drugs combined).

Drinking and Driving are Deadly. Discuss different situations where students may be asked to ride with a driver who has been drinking. Divide the class into groups, and have each group select one of these situations, brainstorm safe alternatives, and then perform a short skit showing one of their alternatives.

Alcohol is addictive. People who drink at an earlier age are greater risk and more likely to become a problem drinker or an alcoholic. According to Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), about half of youth who start drinking at age 13 will become alcoholics. MADD indicates that the latest brain research shows that between 12 and 21, the brain undergoes some of its most important changes. Anything that interferes with our brain messages can change or alter our development in unpredictable ways. This means the adolescent brain is more vulnerable to anything that interferes with how the brain operates. Alcohol use, especially at young ages, interferes with brain development and can be very dangerous.

There is no cure for alcoholism. The only treatment for alcoholism is abstinence and counseling through support groups. A famous saying in Alcoholics Anonymous is, "Once a pickle changes to a cucumber, there is no going back to being a pickle." There is no cure for alcoholism, only treatment.

Alcoholism is a family disease. Alcoholism is considered a disease which affects the entire family, not just the drinker. If there is alcoholism in the family, other family members have a greater risk of becoming an alcoholic.

People who drink don't just hurt themselves. There are people who say, "It's my life, I'll do what I want, and it isn't anyone else's business." Discuss the fallacy of this statement and

some of the societal problems related to alcohol use.

Alcoholism affects more than just the alcoholic:

Students divide into groups of three to four. Each group reads a story from a magazine, newspaper, etc. on a societal problem related to alcohol use (FAS, drunk driving, children of alcoholics). Each group discusses all the people or groups of people that are affected and then sets up dominos to represent these people. Have the students summarize their story to the class and, using the dominos, discuss how others are affected. Students allow their domino formation to fall at the conclusion of their presentation.

Alcohol use has a huge impact on society. Use the website, <http://www.samhsa.gov>, and give current statistics on some of the societal problems related to alcohol use.

Play "Alcohol Fact Pictionary" as a review.

Cut apart and stack "Play It Straight: Stay Drug-Free" cards face down in front of the class.

Divide the class into two teams.

One student from each team selects a card and must draw a picture(s) representing the fact that he/she selected. His/her team has approximately 45 seconds to guess the fact.

Rotate between teams and keep score.

Closure (Wrap-Up and Extensions)

1. Students complete the "Reasons for Me to Be Alcohol-Free" worksheet. Students draw pictures and list examples of their own reasons to be alcohol-free. Students share some of their ideas with the class.
2. Students imagine that they have been invited to speak to a fifth or sixth grade health class (for about 5 to 10 minutes) about the harmful effects of alcohol and the benefits of being alcohol-free. Students write out what they would do and say during this presentation. Encourage students to make the presentation as interesting as possible. At least six to ten facts about alcohol should be included in the presentation, as well as a conclusion, with a personal message, reinforcing some of the advantages of choosing to be alcohol-free. Some students may wish to make the actual presentations.

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