

Natural High, a Better Choice

Summary

Students will learn to identify "natural high" activities and their benefits as healthy alternatives to substance use.

Main Core Tie

Health Education I (7-8)

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

Materials

- [Poster: "Yesterday Is History"](#)

Materials: Paper for "101 Activities to Reach a Natural High" assignment

Music: "My Favorite Things" (Julie Andrews, The Sound of Music (Original Sountrack), RCA Records, 2005)

Intended Learning Outcomes

Identify "natural high" activities and their benefits as healthy alternatives to substance use.

Instructional Procedures

Lesson at a Glance

Discuss why people use drugs, and possible consequences.

Discuss "natural highs," dopamines and endorphins.

Participate in natural high activities.

Review benefits of natural highs.

New Vocabulary

natural high

dopamine

endorphin

Introduction (Setting Focus)

Discuss why people use tobacco, alcohol, and other harmful chemicals (what they want to "get to" and what they want to "get away from") and then examine some of the consequences.

Get To

be cool

fun and excitement

freedom

relaxation

friends

relief from stress

respect

confidence

acceptance

sense of accomplishment

good feelings

Get Away From

demands and pressure

expectations

failure

negative feelings
problems
boredom
frustrations
disappointment
built-up emotions
stress
Consequences
trouble at school
legal problems
addiction
health problems
poor relationships with others
death
money problems
fights
inability to stop

Explain that natural highs and positive alternatives can help an individual achieve his/her needs and desires in a fun, positive, and safe manner.

Body (Strategies/Activities)

Discuss and define "natural high" using the following prompts:

A natural high is a pleasant sensation caused by the release of brain chemicals called "endorphins" and "dopamines."

Endorphins and dopamines are the body's own natural, feel-good, painkilling opiates, similar to morphine. They are chemicals produced and released by the brain affecting the entire body.

The release of endorphins is often associated with feelings of well-being and a sense of euphoria.

These neuro-chemicals also increase the pain threshold, can counteract stress, and lower blood pressure and heart rate.

Although the physical effects of these neuro-chemicals are short-lived, the psychological effects are long lasting.

The reduction of these neuro-chemicals creates feelings of unease, lack of normalcy and a general feeling of "down."

Discuss ways students can experience endorphins and dopamines using the following ideas and prompts:

Plan a "Save the Endorphins" day and participate in a variety of activities.

Engage in some physical activity which includes laughter and humor. For instance, distribute cotton balls and have a class "snowball fight."

Watch a funny video clip, tell jokes, read a funny story, give several students the assignment to make the class laugh, or use the "How to Laugh" cue cards.

Play a fun party-type game as a class.

Discuss service opportunities that are available to the students. Plan and participate in a service project.

Make a music video showing natural high activities or listen to enjoyable music.

Tell a scary story or have students share some of their "scary" experiences.

Participate in a challenging activity that can be achieved.

Make badges, or balloon animals, or do some other creative activity. Create and decorate

paper airplanes and then have contests to see whose plane flies the farthest or shortest distance, does the most loops-the-loops, comes closest to the target, or has the most unique flight pattern.

Share and solve brain teasers and mind benders.

Make the choice each day to find opportunities to enjoy and celebrate life.

Discuss the poster, "Yesterday Is History."

Students divide in small groups and create a poster of "101 Activities to Reach a Natural High."

Share the posters with the class.

Closure (Wrap-Up and Extension)

Discuss and review why natural highs and positive alternatives are a better choice than ingesting drugs. Encourage students to try different natural high activities and find what works for them.

Explore other activities that encourage natural highs.

Write the word or words that describe a personal natural high. Use the words as part of a line drawing of that natural high.

Design a natural high calendar representing their natural highs. List a natural high activity for each day of the month. The calendar can be enhanced by adding drawings, stickers, photographs, or magazine pictures. Encourage students to do the activities listed. Allow students to share their experiences with the class.

Create a class calendar of natural high activities and, as a class, do an endorphin-producing activity every day.

Develop a natural high brochure, collage, poster, or bookmark.

Inflate a beach ball or similar toy. Toss it around the classroom and have each student tell the class one of his/her natural highs and then write it, with a permanent marker, on the beach ball. Continue until all students have had an opportunity to share their natural high. The ball can then be displayed in the classroom or used in games and class activities throughout the year.

Prepare a natural high capsule. This can be accomplished by cutting two plastic liter bottles in half. The two bottom pieces can be put inside each other to make a capsule. Students write their favorite natural high activities on ping pong balls, marshmallows, or wooden blocks and put them in the capsule.

Complete the "These Are a Few of My Favorite Things" worksheet while listening to the song. Share ideas with the class.

Make a small poster illustrating their ten top natural highs. Display it around the class and/or school.

Authors

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