

Drug Busters – Drugs, Alcohol, and the Brain

Week 2 Facts – Grade 8

Day 1

1. Increased music video viewing and television are risk factors for the onset of alcohol in teens. These media images portray characters using tobacco and alcohol without any negative health messages.*
2. Alcohol along with other drugs affects the brain. As a consequence of this, behavior changes. These behavioral changes impact relationships in negative ways.*
3. In a chemically dependent family, the family members assume roles. They are: enabler (protector of the family who maybe super responsible and self-righteous), hero (caretaker for the family who follows rules and seeks approval), scapegoat (problem child who maybe hostile and in trouble), mascot (the family clown who maybe immature and fragile), the lost child (the forgotten child who maybe shy and solitary), and the victims (chemically dependent person who maybe hostile, manipulative, and charming).*
4. A family which has a member that is chemically dependent is under a great deal of stress. Often the family needs the service of an outside professional (counselor, physician, psychologist, minister, priest, rabbi, etc.) to confront the user with the effects of his/her behavior. It is difficult to get the person to acknowledge the effect of use on self and others; this lack of awareness is called denial.*
5. Someone may drink or use other drugs to relax but find that he/she is very impulsive, silly, behaving in ways that make others uncomfortable.
6. Someone may drink or use drugs to become less angry but find increased anger and hostility.
7. Someone may drink or use other drugs to become closer to friends and find that he/she has become isolated as behavior is out of control. This is scary for others to observe. It produces anxiety, worry, helplessness, and fear in the friends of the drug abuser. The user experiences guilt and shame.

Day 2

1. No drug can be considered completely safe. Over-the-counter and prescription drugs can be dangerous if they are not used according to the directions.*
2. Inhalants are common household products (glue, paint, hair spray, freon) which when used correctly have many good uses. When used for other than their intended purpose (inhaling, “huffing”, “sniffing”), they can be even more harmful than many drugs.*
3. Inhalants damage all the senses (sight, touch, taste, smell, hearing), cause liver, nerve and brain damage, affect the way the heart works, and cause death.*
4. Inhalants cause damage to many different parts of the brain and nervous system. These include the cerebral cortex (change of personality, memory loss, learning problems, hallucinations), cerebellum (balance and movement problems), hippocampus (memory problems), and visual system. This produces a variety of psychological and emotional problems, motor problems, and sensory problems.*
5. Inhalants are chemicals which give off fumes that are toxic to the brain. These chemicals can be used by people in destructive ways by sniffing to produce the effects of drugs.

Day 3

1. Users of inhalants do develop a dependency and may go through withdrawal when they stop using. Detoxification can require some time; some users never return to their original level of functioning.*
2. If you see someone become disoriented and nauseous after use of inhalants, (a severe reaction) call 911 immediately. It is important to stay calm because an increase in excitement

or apprehension might increase the user's distress. For referral assistance, call the National Inhalant Coalition at (800)269-4237. You might also consult your family physician, hospital, or the yellow pages for additional options.*

3. There are around 1000 substances that may be misused as inhalants. There are three classes of inhalants: volatile substances (spray paint, glue, etc.), gases (ether, freon, etc.), nitrites (room odorizers).*
4. Inhalants enter the body as vapors which are inhaled. They are absorbed in the lungs and then enter the bloodstream. From the bloodstream these chemicals travel to the brain and then go to tissues throughout the body.
5. Inhalant use has increased slightly in recent years; most inhalant use is done by teens. Around 20% of 7th and 8th graders have used inhalants to obtain a high.

Day 4

1. Steroids are called 'roids and are used to increase muscles and gain weight.*
2. Steroid use may cause liver damage and heart disease, acne, depressed or violent feelings and reactions, and even death.*
3. Steroid use may produce a dependency so that when use stops individuals become depressed and moody.*

Day 5

1. Marijuana is the world's most commonly used hallucinogenic drug. It is called grass, pot, reefer, and weed; cigarettes made from marijuana are called "joints."*
2. Marijuana acts on many brain areas: hippocampus (memory), cerebral cortex (concentration and perception) and cerebellum (movement).*
3. Long term marijuana use can produce changes in the brain that make a person more at risk of becoming addicted to other drugs.
4. Smoking marijuana is similar to cigarettes since the lungs get a big dose of chemicals (very high levels of tar) which cause lung problems and cancer later in life. Marijuana today has 10 to 15 times the amount of THC (a very poisonous chemical) than it did in the 1960's when it was first used.
5. A recent survey (2000) showed 20% of 8th graders have tried marijuana at least once. Among 12th graders 22% were current users. If you know someone who has a drug problem, you could consult with a counselor, friend or parent about how to go about getting the individual help.
6. One of the building blocks for healthy development in children is the belief that it is important not to use alcohol or other drugs.

DFW Community Newspapers.

Middle School Health Education Curriculum, Grade 8. Plano Independent School District.

Search Institute. "40 Developmental Assets."

The Addicted Brain. Catherine Christie and Susan Mitchell.

National Institute on Drugs and Alcohol (NIDA), Marijuana Brochure, #16