



The Seven Project is a multimedia, speaker-driven school assembly. The Seven Project Assemblies entertain and captivate audiences all across the United States. Seven addresses real-life issues and situations students face every day. The Seven Project Discussion Guides culminate the Seven Project experience by creating intensified discussions about student life.

The activities and discussions in these guides are designed for use in single classroom settings or as entire school or community-wide campaigns. The Seven Project offers these guides as tools for use at the discretion of local school educators and administrators in part or entirety. The Seven Project and your school: *building students' hope...one issue at a time.*

DRUGS

For Grades 6-12. Students will study facts about drug abuse. Students will learn the dangers of drug use and abuse.

Objectives:

- Understand the realities of drug abuse.
- Understand why and how drug abuse starts.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of the *Why Do People—Even SMART People—Try Drugs?* and *Drug Free*.

Discussion:

- 1) What issues/messages from The Seven Project School Assembly stood out to you the most? Why?
 - *Transition: *"In our classroom time today, (principal's name) and I felt it was important that we follow-up on one of the topics: drug abuse, since this is something we deal with at our school."*
- 2) Do you think there is a drug use/abuse problem in our school or community? Why?
- 3) Do you hear about students using and/or abusing drugs?
- 4) How is drug abuse portrayed in media? What message about drug use is being conveyed? Is this message influential?
 - *Distribute *Why Do People—Even SMART People—Try Drugs?* sheet.
- 5) Do these reasons sound correct? Why do you think some of your classmates, friends or family start using and/or abusing drugs?
- 6) Have you ever been approached and offered drugs? What did you say/do?
- 7) What are possible responses we could give when refusing drugs, without offending our friends?
- 8) Do you know and understand the kinds of things drugs can do to your mind and body?
- 9) Do you have any questions about the rumors you have heard about drug use and abuse?
- 10) What are your feelings toward others who use drugs?
- 11) How can we help those who might want to quit?
 - * Close with the *Drug Free* sheet.

**Extensions and Adaptations:**

- Use information from the websites below. Discuss the many types of drugs that are prevalent today, their dangers and side-effects.
- Have the class create a survey that could be used throughout the school. Make sure the survey allows anonymity, but includes race, gender, age, grade. Include questions regarding the ifs, whens and hows of trying/habitually using drugs. Compile the results.

Online Resources:

National Institute on Drug Abuse
www.drugabuse.gov www.nida.nih.gov

Freevibe
www.freevibe.com

National Drug Control Policy
www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov

National Clearinghouse of Alcohol and Drug Information
www.health.org

Relevant National Standards

McREL establishes the following National Standards at www.mcrel.org

Health

- Knows essential concepts about the prevention and control of disease
- Understands aspects of substance use and abuse

Thinking and Reasoning

- Understands and applies basic principles of logic and reasoning
- Applies basic trouble-shooting and problem-solving techniques
- Applies decision making techniques

Life Skills

- Working with others: Contributes to the overall effort of a group
- Working with others: Displays effective interpersonal communications skills
- Self-Regulation: Considers risks

Language Arts – Listening and Speaking

- Demonstrates competence in speaking and listening as tools
- Students will use descriptive language that clarifies and enhances ideas



Why Do People—even SMART people—try drugs?

Adapted from Freevibe (www.freevibe.com)

One reason often heard from people using drugs is to feel good. This can be considered *recreational* use. Some might light up a cigarette at a party. They might not consider themselves a “smoker,” but they do it to feel good. Someone might smoke pot at a friend’s house because he/she thinks it could be fun. **The problem?** *Drugs don’t care what the reason is.* The same effects can occur whether you’re drinking to have fun or drinking to forget a problem, whether you’re doing drugs to see how they feel or doing them to fit in.

People often want to change their situation. If they’re depressed, they want to become happy. If they are stressed or nervous, they want to relax, and so on. By taking drugs, people often think they can be the people they want to be. **The problem?** *It isn’t real.* They haven’t changed the situation; they’ve only distorted it for a little while. Following are some of the reasons people say they do drugs to feel good or change the situation:

They want to fit in.

No one wants to be the only one not participating. No one wants to be left out, so sometimes they make bad decisions, like taking drugs, to cover-up their insecurities. They don’t think about how drugs can isolate them from friends and family. They forget to look past that one party to see how things could turn out. Or maybe they just don’t see the people around them who aren’t using drugs.

They want to escape or relax.

You’ll hear a lot of people saying things like “I’m so stressed, I need to get messed up!” or “Drugs help me relax” or whatever. What they’re really saying is “Drinking or doing drugs is just easier than dealing with my problems or reaching out for help.” The thing is, *the problems are still there when they come down—and not only do they still have to deal with it, they have to deal with it when they’re not 100% and feeling guilty or even worse when they’re not thinking straight.*

They’re bored.

Lots of people turn to drugs for a little excitement because they say there’s nothing else to do but watch the same *Simpsons* rerun for the tenth time or hang out at the Burger King. But people who make these kinds of decisions usually find out that drugs are ultimately really a waste and painful. Drugs don’t change the situation, and they just might make it worse.

The media say it’s cool.

Even though there’s an anti-drug every minute and more rock stars and ball players than you can shake a stick at tell you to stay away from drugs, the truth is the entertainment world still manages to make drugs appear very attractive—kind of like how it encourages people to be really skinny even when it says anorexia is bad, or when it says you should be super muscular but steroids are bad. But if you’re wise, you’ll understand that the entertainment world is not the real world, and basing your life on these messages is superficial.

They think it makes them seem grown-up.

This is one of the weirdest reasons. Think about it...why would an adult want to use drugs? Probably for many of the same reasons you would consider. The reality is that the most grown-up people out there aren’t users. They’re too busy living their lives to bother with stuff, like drugs, that will interfere. Do you have a parent or adult family member who uses drugs?

**They want to rebel.**

Sometimes people turn to drugs not so much for themselves, but to make a statement against someone else, such as their families or society in general. Somehow taking drugs makes them out-laws or more individual. The problem is taking drugs, ultimately, robs these people of their ability to be independent, because it makes them dependent—on drugs and their drug connections.

They want to experiment.

It's human nature to want to experiment. Trying things out helps you decide if they're right for you. But it's also human nature to avoid things that are obviously bad for you. You wouldn't experiment with jumping off the Brooklyn Bridge. The point is, there are a zillion better things to experiment with sports, music, dying your hair, seeing bad movies, eating spicy food...

Are drugs always bad?

Illegal drugs are always bad. There's no good use for sniffing glue or snorting heroin. But many drugs were developed as medications by doctors to help treat patients with very specific medical conditions. And for those people, drugs make sense. Unfortunately, many of these drugs are used by people who don't need them. Which, if you think about it, is kind of like going for chemotherapy when you don't have cancer. In other words, really dumb.

Why do people keep taking drugs?

Many people don't become addicted to drugs, but may continue to do drugs for the same reasons they started: because they want to fit in, because they want to escape, because they're bored, whatever. These are people who have issues with insecurity, and are scared or unwilling to deal with problems in a straight-up, intelligent way—like talking to friends, counselors, even parents!

For other people, once they've started taking drugs, they become physically or mentally addicted. They want more—in fact, they feel like they *need* more. Eventually, trying to get drugs becomes the most important thing in their lives, using up all their time, money, and energy, and really hurting people they're close to.



Drug-Free

Get advice.

Talk with parents, teachers, clergy or counselors.

What you know.

Learn as much as you can about the harmful effects of drug use. These resources will help:

- National Institute on Drug Abuse www.drugabuse.gov/students.html
- Freevibe www.freevibe.com
- National Clearinghouse of Alcohol and Drug Information www.health.org
- The Seven Project Teens In Crisis www.thesevenproject.com/m_teencrisis.html

Be risky.

If a friend of yours has a problem with drugs that you'd like to address, be sure you let her/him know the reason you're bringing it up: you care.

Just the facts.

Share with your friend the dangers of drug use.

Be there.

You can't force your friend to find help; however, you can let him/her know you *want* to help when he/she is ready.

Get involved.

You can help your friend (and YOU) by keeping busy. Join a club. Get a hobby. Don't be bored.

Choose wisely.

If your friend starts behaving wrongly, do what you can to help, but do not let him/her influence you to join that behavior.