

TEACHER DISCUSSION GUIDE**Using Substances at Work and School****Scenario 1: Using Substances at School**

Name: Marcus

Age: 16

Setting: High School (During School Hours)

Substance Involved: Alcohol (in a water bottle)

Marcus has been going through a tough time lately. Things at home have been stressful. His guardians argue a lot, and it's been affecting how he feels. His schoolwork is starting to slip, and he feels like no one really understands what he's dealing with.

To cope, Marcus started drinking alcohol on the weekends. At first, it helped him feel more relaxed. But over time, he began drinking more often, even on school nights. Recently, he started bringing a water bottle filled with vodka to school, thinking it would help him get through the day.

Since then, Marcus has been acting differently in class. He's louder than usual, sometimes slurs his words, and has trouble focusing. One day, his teacher notices something is off and talks to Marcus. The teacher smells alcohol on his breath, but Marcus denies drinking.

His guardians are called in for a meeting. During the conversation, they ask to see his water bottle and realize it contains vodka. According to school policy, Marcus receives a warning: if it happens again, he may face a suspension and will be required to participate in a drug education program.

Consider the following questions:**1. Was the response (warning and possible suspension) appropriate?**

- Rules help maintain safety and fairness in school.
- A warning may be fair for a first offense; suspension could be too harsh if no support is offered.
- The school needs to respond for the protection of Marcus and others, but should consider Marcus's situation.
- Consequences should be restorative, not punitive.

TEACHER DISCUSSION GUIDE

2. What support systems could schools offer students like Marcus?

- Access to school counsellors or mental health professionals.
- Peer mentorship programs or student support groups.
- Safe spaces to talk privately with a trusted adult.
- Trained staff to recognize and support students.
- Anonymous ways for students to ask for help.
- Use restorative practices to support him.

3. What are some concerns with being in school under the influence of substances?

- Impaired judgment and decision-making, which can lead to risky or inappropriate behaviour
- Difficulty concentrating or learning, which can affect academic performance
- Increased risk of accidents or injuries due to impaired coordination or awareness
- Strained relationships with teachers, peers, and family members
- Disciplinary consequences such as warnings, suspensions, or loss of privileges
- Missed opportunities for support, as underlying issues may be overlooked or misunderstood
- Negative reputation or stigma that can affect how others treat or view them

4. How can schools balance discipline with restorative consequences?

- Create a culture that prioritizes well-being and accountability.
- Facilitate a conversation between Marcus, his teacher, and guardians to discuss the impact of his actions and how to move forward
- Refer Marcus to a school counselor or mental health support team for support
- Require Marcus to complete an educational session on substance use and healthy coping strategies
- Encourage Marcus to write a letter about his experience and what he's learned

TEACHER DISCUSSION GUIDE

5. What are some healthier ways Marcus could have managed his stress?

- Talk to a friend, counsellor, teacher, or trusted adult.
 - Engage in activities like sports, music, or art.
 - Use coping strategies like journaling or breathing exercises.
 - Join a wellness or mental health club at school.
 - Speak to his guardians about how their arguing is impacting him
-
- **How might Marcus's actions affect how others see him?**
 - Teachers might lose trust or be more watchful.
 - Peers may judge him or distance themselves.
 - He may face stigma or feel isolated.
 - His self-esteem could be negatively affected.
 - His guardians might feel disappointed, concerned, or even guilty if they weren't aware of what he was dealing with.
 - Teachers may feel concerned about his well-being and see him as someone in need of support.

TEACHER DISCUSSION GUIDE

Scenario 2: Substance Use at Work

Name: Jordan

Age: 17

Job: Line Cook at a Busy Restaurant

Substance Involved: Weed (cannabis) (edible)

Jordan recently started a job at a busy local restaurant. The work environment is fast-paced, and things can get pretty intense during peak hours. A while ago, Jordan had tried a weed (cannabis) edible and found it helped them feel less stressed. So before one of their shifts, they decided to take another edible that a friend gave them, thinking it would help them stay calm and get through the night.

At first, everything seemed fine. But as the shift went on, Jordan started moving more slowly, made several mistakes with orders, and even burned a dish. Both a coworker and the manager noticed that Jordan was not acting how they normally would. When the manager spoke with Jordan, they denied anything was wrong.

Because the restaurant has a drug-free workplace policy, Jordan was required to take a drug test. When the results came back positive for cannabis, Jordan was contacted by Human Resources. They were informed that the company has a zero-tolerance policy for being under the influence while working, and as a result, Jordan was fired from their position.

Consider the following questions:

1. What is the purpose of a zero-tolerance policy in a workplace, especially one involving food service or safety?

- To keep everyone safe, including customers and coworkers.
- Mistakes in food service can lead to serious health risks.
- A clear policy helps employers treat everyone fairly and avoid legal issues.
- It sets a professional standard that all employees are expected to follow.

2. What are the risks of working while under the influence of substances, even if you feel fine at first?

- Slower reaction times or impaired judgment could lead to accidents or mistakes.
- You might not realize how affected you are until it's too late.
- It can damage the business's reputation if customers notice.

TEACHER DISCUSSION GUIDE

- It puts extra pressure on coworkers who may have to cover for you.

3. How might Jordan's actions have affected their coworkers or the business?

- Coworkers might have had to fix Jordan's mistakes or take on extra work.
- It could create tension or make others uncomfortable.
- If customers noticed, it could hurt the restaurant's reputation.
- It might make managers more strict with everyone.

4. Should there be different consequences depending on whether it's a first-time incident or repeated behaviour? Why or why not?

- First-time mistakes should lead to a warning or education, not immediate firing.
- Repeated behaviour shows a pattern and might require stronger consequences.
- Everyone deserves a second chance—especially if they're struggling.
- Some jobs are too risky to allow even one mistake under the influence.

5. What mental health or stress supports could a workplace offer to employees in high-stress jobs?

- Access to counselling or mental health services.
- Stress management workshops or wellness breaks.
- A supportive environment where employees can ask for help.
- Flexible scheduling or time off when needed.

6. Do you think workplaces should allow some flexibility around cannabis use now that it's legal in many places? Why or why not?

- Maybe, but only outside of work hours, not during shifts.
- Legal doesn't mean safe while working, especially in certain jobs. Employers still have the right to expect sober employees.