

TEACHER DISCUSSION GUIDE**Substance Use and Health Situations****Instructions:**

For each situation, research the health effects of each assigned situation, and share with the class.

Situation 1: TJ Forgetting Medication

TJ is supposed to take their medication, sertraline, every day. They were prescribed it by their physician to treat anxiety and depression. They never remember to take their medication unless their older sister reminds them. On average, TJ takes 3 doses per week. How could this affect their health? What could they do to help them remember to take their meds?

Answer:

Sertraline works best when taken daily, and missing doses can make it less effective or cause withdrawal symptoms. To help remember, TJ could set phone reminders, keep the medication in a visible safe place, or take it at the same time each day.

Situation 2: Lindsay Mixing Substances

Lyndsay has been partying every weekend for the past few months. She usually goes to a house party where she drinks alcohol and uses cocaine. How does mixing substances affect her health?

Answer:

Mixing substances makes their effects stronger and more dangerous. Alcohol (a depressant) and cocaine (a stimulant) can mask each other, increasing overdose risk. Together, they form cocaethylene in the body, which can seriously damage the heart, liver, and other organs.

Situation 3: Ramses Using Steroids

Ramses wants to bulk up because all his buddies call him skinny. He bought steroids from a person he met at the community gym. How could anabolic steroids affect his health?

Answer:

Buying drugs from strangers is unsafe because you don't know what's in them. Anabolic steroids may increase aggression, cause mood swings, and affect reproductive health (like shrinking testicles or lowering sperm count). They can also damage the heart and liver, increase cancer risk, and cause permanent side effects in teens such as stunted growth, acne scarring, and early balding. Steroids are often injected into the bum, which can hit the sciatic nerve and cause lasting pain or

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numbness.

Situation 4: Shelby's Pregnancy

- a) Shelby just found out she was pregnant and is excited to become a parent. She currently smokes at least a half pack of cigarettes per day and binge drinks alcohol every weekend. How can smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol affect the health of her baby?
- b) A few weeks into her pregnancy, she begins experiencing morning sickness. Her sister told her that she smoked weed (cannabis) to deal with nausea during her pregnancy. Is this a good idea? Why or why not?

Answer:

- a) Alcohol and nicotine pass to the baby during pregnancy and can cause serious, lifelong harm. Alcohol may lead to fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD), affecting growth, learning, and emotional regulation. Smoking or vaping increases risks like low birth weight, miscarriage, premature birth, and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).
- b) Cannabis use during pregnancy is not recommended. THC crosses the placenta and may affect the baby's brain development, learning, growth, and behavior, and can lead to low birth weight. Shelby should talk to her doctor or other healthcare professional about safer ways to manage morning sickness.

Situation 5: Ali's Concussion

Ali is suffering from a concussion after a bad fall he had while skateboarding. His friends invited him to a field party where they will be drinking alcohol and try to find other drugs to bring with them. How can alcohol and other substances affect his brain health?

Answer:

After a concussion, the brain is extra sensitive to substances. Alcohol and drugs can worsen foggiess, slow healing, and increase the risk of another injury. They may also hide symptoms of serious brain damage. Since the brain develops into the mid-20s, avoiding substances supports recovery.

Situation 6: Malachy's Diabetes

Malachy has Type 1 Diabetes and he uses insulin to control his blood sugar. The last

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time he had an appointment with his doctor, he was told to always bring candy or something sugary with him if he was drinking alcohol. He knows that it is a good idea for him to always carry some carbohydrates with him but why specifically when he is drinking?

Answer:

Alcohol can cause low blood sugar in people with Type 1 Diabetes because the liver is busy breaking down the alcohol instead of releasing glucose. This can lead to dangerous hypoglycemia, causing confusion, seizures, or unconsciousness. That's why Malachy should always carry quick carbs like candy when drinking.

Situation 7: Mimi Using Cocaine

Mimi is worried she will not fit into her prom dress she bought a few months ago. Her friend suggested trying cocaine, claiming it could help her fit into the dress. How can cocaine affect Mimi's health?

Answer:

Cocaine can cause restlessness, aggression, and sleep problems. It stresses the heart, leading to irregular or racing beats, and snorting it can damage the nose and sense of smell. Cocaine also carries a high risk of overdose, especially if it's mixed with other substances like fentanyl.

Situation 8: Alex - Mixing Alcohol and Caffeine

Alex is getting ready to go to a party with some older friends. One of them offers them a homemade drink made with vodka and an energy drink. Alex remembers hearing something about mixing alcohol and caffeine being dangerous, but their friend tells them it'll be fine and that it'll help them stay awake and party for longer. Why is it risky to mix alcohol and caffeine like this?

Answer:

Alcohol is a depressant and caffeine is a stimulant. Caffeine can hide the signs of being drunk, making it easier to drink too much. This raises the risk of dehydration, alcohol poisoning, and injuries.