Getting Wise to Drugs
by the same authors

Understanding Drug Issues
A Photocopiable Resource Workbook
2nd edition
David Emmett and Graeme Nice
ISBN 978 1 84310 350 9

Understanding Street Drugs
A Handbook of Substance Misuse for Parents, Teachers and Other Professionals
2nd edition
David Emmett and Graeme Nice
ISBN 978 1 84310 351 6

of related interest

Contentious Issues
Discussion Stories for Young People
Márianna Csóti
ISBN 978 1 84310 033 1

Helping Children to Build Self-Esteem
A Photocopiable Activities Book
2nd edition
Deborah Plummer
Illustrated by Alice Harper
ISBN 978 1 84310 488 9

Self-Esteem Games for Children
Deborah Plummer
Illustrated by Jane Serrurier
ISBN 978 1 84310 424 7

Cool Connections with CBT
Encouraging Self-esteem, Resilience and Well-being in Children and Young People
Laurie Seiler
ISBN 978 1 84310 618 0

Working with Gangs and Young People
A Toolkit for Resolving Group Conflict
Jessie Feinstein and Nia Imani Kuumba
ISBN 978 1 84310 447 6

Social Awareness Skills for Children
Márianna Csóti
ISBN 978 1 84310 003 4
Getting Wise to Drugs
A Resource for Teaching Children about Drugs, Dangerous Substances and Other Risky Situations

David Emmett and Graeme Nice
To Mick Davies, Personal and Social Education Consultant, and valued friend, with grateful thanks for his invaluable advice during the preparation of this volume.
Contents

Introduction 11

For 8–9-year-olds

Exercise 1. Full House 14
An exercise consisting of 24 statements describing a personal experience of a safety related issue that participants have to match to other members of the group.

Exercise 2. Tell the Truth 18
A quiz in ‘true or false’ and short answer format, designed to allow participants to check out their knowledge and understanding of substance misuse and other risky behaviours.

Exercise 3. Scenarios 1 26
An exercise to encourage participants to look at the dangers present in a number of different situations and to consider the options available to the people involved.

Exercise 4. Do the Right Thing 1 31
An exercise consisting of a storyline within which are embedded eight different incidents, which require the reader or readers to consider a number of courses of action that could be taken by the characters in the story.

Exercise 5. Risks Pyramid Ten 41
An exercise to encourage participants to assess and classify the potential for danger in a number of activities that present different levels of risk.

For 9–10-year-olds

Exercise 6. Warning Signs 48
An exercise comprising images and safety messages depicting everyday objects, substances and situations that can be found in and around the home, school, etc. or that are commonly experienced, designed to increase participants’ awareness and understanding of warning and safety information concerning potential risks to themselves or others.
Exercise 7. Get the Facts
A quiz in ‘true or false’ and short answer format, designed to allow participants to check out their knowledge and understanding of substance misuse and other risky behaviours.

Exercise 8. Scenarios 2
An exercise to encourage participants to look at the dangers present in a number of different situations and to consider the options available to the people involved.

Exercise 9. Do the Right Thing 2
An exercise consisting of a storyline within which are embedded eight different incidents, which require the reader or readers to consider a number of courses of action that could be taken by the characters in the story.

Exercise 10. Alcohol Pyramid Ten
An exercise to encourage participants to examine pressures, temptations and reasons that lead young people to start or to continue using alcohol. It also looks at the corresponding pressures, temptations and reasons that prevent many young people using alcohol or that encourage current users to stop.

For 10–11-year-olds

Exercise 11. What's That Rule For?
An exercise where small groups of participants discuss the purpose of specific rules that exist in schools. This exercise can also be used in situations other than a school where rules of behaviour apply.

Exercise 12. Get It Straight
A quiz in ‘true or false’ and short answer format, designed to allow participants to check out their knowledge and understanding of substance misuse and other risky behaviours.

Exercise 13. Scenarios 3
An exercise to encourage participants to look at the dangers present in a number of different situations and to consider the options available to the people involved.

Exercise 14. Do the Right Thing 3
An exercise consisting of a storyline within which are embedded eight different incidents, which require the reader or readers to consider a number of courses of action that could be taken by the characters in the story.
Exercise 15. Smoking Pyramid Ten
An exercise to encourage participants to examine pressures, temptations and reasons that lead young people to start smoking cigarettes. It also looks at the corresponding pressures, temptations and reasons that prevent many young people smoking or that encourage current smokers to stop.

For 11–12-year-olds

Exercise 16. Life – A Risky Business
An exercise comprising individual statements, some describing everyday events and others more unusual, designed to increase participants’ awareness and understanding of the risk assessment procedure, both for themselves and others.

Exercise 17. The Truth Is Out There!
A quiz in ‘true or false’ and short answer format, designed to allow participants to check out their knowledge and understanding of substance misuse and other risky behaviours.

Exercise 18. Scenarios 4
An exercise to encourage participants to look at the dangers present in a number of different situations and to consider the options available to the people involved.

Exercise 19. Do the Right Thing 4
An exercise consisting of a storyline within which are embedded eight different incidents, which require the reader or readers to consider a number of courses of action that could be taken by the characters in the story.

Exercise 20. Drugs Pyramid Ten
An exercise to encourage participants to examine pressures, temptations and reasons that lead young people to start or to continue using drugs. It also looks at the corresponding pressures, temptations and reasons that prevent many young people using drugs or that encourage current users to stop.

Useful Organizations and Websites
We have been closely involved in writing and presenting substance misuse and safety education to young people across a wide age range for more than 20 years. Throughout that time it has been apparent to us that simply telling young people ‘don’t take drugs’, ‘don’t smoke’, ‘don’t drink’ or ‘don’t take risks’ was not an effective way of delivering this type of education. Let us make our position on these issues crystal clear. We firmly believe that young people would be wise to steer clear of street drugs and tobacco, should, if they choose, learn to use alcohol in moderation, and have the necessary awareness to avoid unnecessary risk taking. In our work we have seen at first hand the often tragic consequences of young people’s unwise involvement with such issues. However, it is not for us to tell them what to think or what to decide. It is for each young person to do that for themselves. If we were simply to advise them to do or not to do a certain thing, then all they have to do is to ignore this if they choose to do the opposite. If, on the other hand, we enable them to gain knowledge and greater understanding of many of the issues concerning such things as drug use, smoking, drinking and risk taking, they then have to reject all of that internalized knowledge and understanding if they still decide to get involved, a much more difficult task.

The past two decades or so have seen the establishment of many well thought out programmes of substance misuse education for post 11-year-old young people. During that same time frame, however, it has become apparent to us that the first involvement of young people with drugs, alcohol and smoking has begun to occur at younger and younger ages. It is not an uncommon experience for us to listen to young people under the age of ten talking openly about their own and their friends’ involvement in such activities. It is our view, therefore, that substance misuse education needs to be provided at an early stage in the lives of young people to provide them with the necessary knowledge and understanding, enabling them to make healthier choices. It is also our view that many of the issues surrounding young people and substance misuse are connected with ‘making life more exciting’, and as a result this book also seeks to provide education around the topics of risk taking, through exploration, risk recognition, assessment, reduction and, in appropriate circumstances, avoidance.

Early attempts at substance misuse prevention education depended very largely on the principle of ‘shock horror’. Films were produced showing cancerous human lungs, festering drug injection sites, cirrhotic livers and so on. The simple idea was that such scenes could not fail to deter, thus preventing the problem arising. It soon became clear that this approach was failing or, at best, its effects were only short lived. Young people were indeed shocked and

horrified but they were also fascinated. In some cases this fascination may even have led directly to experimentation. This is perhaps not surprising as young people believe themselves to be immortal and immune to the negative potential consequences of such actions.

Substance prevention education then moved to the information model. The simple idea was that if educators passed on information about such substances to young people then they would take the right decisions. The flaw in this approach was that, despite giving them all the necessary facts to make a decision, we failed to teach them how to handle the many different pressures that surround the total decision making process. Efforts were then made to rectify this flaw by adopting the ‘just say no’ approach, where fiercely negative messages were added so that young people were left with two clear choices, rejection of all that they had been taught, or rejection of substance misuse. Clearly, with the rapid escalation in young people’s drug use over the last two or three decades this approach has also failed to a large extent.

In our view all involved in educating in this area should be fully aware of the possibility that young people with whom they are dealing may currently be experiencing or have previously been exposed to the negative consequences of substance misuse and risk within their family and social circles. It is therefore vital that in delivering this education we consider the highly sensitive and personal nature of these topics for such individuals.

New strategies must therefore be found and utilized whereby even very young people can become involved in their own education about these issues and their views sought, considered and valued. When the time comes for each young person to make a real life decision about their own involvement in drugs, alcohol, smoking or any other risky behaviour, it is unlikely that they will have a ‘guardian angel’ close by ready to tell them the best way to act. Instead, they will be making that decision on their own, often under powerful peer pressure. In our view the most effective way of helping them to make good choices is to provide them with both information and understanding of all of the possibilities that they need to consider.

Adrian King of the Drugs Education Forum, writing in 2004, advised that educators of young people should not treat drugs as an isolated issue. Rather, drug education should be set in the wider context of the lives experienced by our young people. The authors of this volume agree totally and have set out to present a series of exercises that both challenge and provide information across a range of related topics. The primary focus remains that of substance misuse, but this is presented within a context of risk-taking behaviour in general.

At the end of the book, group leaders and teachers will find a list of useful organizations and websites, which offer further advice and guidance on the teaching of those issues covered by the exercises in this volume.

As in our previous workbooks, the exercises in this new volume are devised not to put young people down by telling them that they are wrong, bad or stupid if they become involved in smoking, drinking alcohol, misusing drugs or other risky behaviour. On the contrary they have been devised to allow them to explore and enhance their knowledge, and challenge their attitudes and beliefs about such issues, whilst at the same time encouraging them to look at these topics in a comprehensive and forward-looking manner, considering a whole range of possible outcomes.

We recognize that levels of intellectual and social maturity vary widely and that we all deal with young people from the most ‘street wise’ to the most ‘innocent’. It is our hope that by treating them in a responsible, respectful and intellectually appropriate manner, they will become enabled to make better informed decisions concerning their own actions.

This resource takes account of many learning styles and hopefully will cater for the majority rather than the few. Similarly, we have deliberately designed each exercise to be as flexible as possible in its presentation and use. Teachers will easily be able to adapt each exercise to suit their own teaching styles and the capabilities and needs of any particular group. We hope that these exercises will stimulate young people and, through awareness raising, go some way to reduce the numbers who experiment with substances or go on to develop greater problems.
Exercise 1

Full House

Suggested age: 8–9 • Suggested time: 40 minutes

Outline

An exercise consisting of 24 statements describing a personal experience of a safety related issue that participants have to match to other members of the group.

Purpose and expected outcome

- To demonstrate that personal experiences of health and safety situations are commonplace in everyday life.
- To enable participants to consider and explore the implications of such health and safety situations for the individual concerned and for others.
- To reinforce safety and healthy living messages.

Method

The exercise worksheet details 24 examples, divided between two worksheets, of health or safety situations that may have been experienced by members of the group. The teacher or group leader should distribute copies of either one or both worksheets, to individuals, pairs or small groups of participants, depending on the nature of the group and the time available. The group leader should explain that participants are to circulate amongst the rest of the group to locate others who have personal experience of one of the situations outlined in the worksheet. Their aim is to complete all the health and safety situations listed in the boxes on their worksheet by writing the relevant group member’s first name in the appropriate space in each box. Participants should not write their own name in a box, even if they have experienced the particular situation. After the allotted maximum time for this part of the exercise, no more than 10–15 minutes, or once any participant has completed their worksheet and called ‘full house’, the group leader should bring the group back together to:
1. allow participants to calculate their worksheet score by counting their completed name boxes

2. allow selected participants to give greater details of, or answer questions from the group about, a personal experience of one of the issues and what effects it has had on them and others

3. encourage a general group discussion of the issues raised.

Notes for teacher or group leader

Teachers and group leaders should be sensitive to the possibility that some participants may be adversely affected by some statements. The group leader should use their judgement in dealing with the possibility that one participant may complete their sheet in such a short time that others in the group are unable to participate fully and meaningfully.

This exercise contains some words and expressions that may be unfamiliar to participants and require further explanation. These include the following:

- inhaler
- allergic
- food poisoning
- drugs.

Follow-up exercises

- Collect stories from newspapers or magazines that illustrate one or more of the types of scenarios outlined in the exercise about health and safety.
1.1 Find someone...

- ...who uses an inhaler
- ...who is allergic to something
- ...who has seen a doctor in the past month
- ...who has tried vodka or champagne
- ...who has had stitches for a cut
- ...who has had an injection
- ...who hates cigarette smoke
- ...who has tried beer
- ...who has broken a bone
- ...who has fallen off a skateboard
- ...who has tried wine
- ...who has been stung by a wasp
1.2 Find someone...

...who has fallen off a bicycle
...who has been bitten or scratched by an animal
...who has cut themselves on broken glass
...who has fallen out of a tree
...who uses medicines every day
...who has fallen off a climbing frame or swing
...who knows someone who uses drugs

...who has seen someone drunk

...who has had food poisoning

...who knows someone who smokes cigarettes

...who has found a needle and syringe

...who has burnt themselves

Exercise 2

Tell the Truth

Suggested age: 8–9 • Suggested time: 40 minutes

Outline

A quiz in ‘true or false’ and short answer format, designed to allow participants to check out their knowledge and understanding of substance misuse and other risky behaviours.

This quiz is the first of four, one for each age group, contained in this volume. A number of similar questions are to be found in some of the quizzes. This is deliberate and allows for the answers given by participants to become more comprehensive as their maturity and understanding develops.

Purpose and expected outcome

- To provide accurate information about drugs and drug use, alcohol use, smoking and other risky behaviour.
- To encourage thoughtful debate about such issues.
- To encourage good decision making.
- To reinforce safety and healthy living messages.

Method

The quiz consists of 35 questions designed to be suitable for young people aged eight to nine years. The first two sheets contain 15 questions each which all require answers of either ‘true’ or ‘false’. The third sheet has five questions which require short paragraph-length answers. The teacher or group leader can decide on the length of the quiz to suit the participants and the time available.

It should be explained to the participants that the purpose of the quiz is not to examine their level of knowledge about such topics as drugs, alcohol, smoking and other forms of risky behaviour but rather to encourage them to consider such issues and check out the