

Section 3

Why do people take drugs? ●

Section 3: Why people take drugs

The Problem

Many young people would like to believe there is a single cause as to why young people take drugs—find that cause and we can find a solution. But research suggests that there are many reasons why different people take different drugs at different times. Looking at the reasons for taking drugs needs to happen at the specific real level of why I took drugs at that point in time and at the generalised level of why people generally take drugs.

Number	Title	Purpose	What To Do	Use with Young People
11	Personal reasons and excuses	To develop an understanding of different personal reasons and excuses for taking drugs.	Self-assessment using handout and group discussion.	✓
12	A structural analysis of reasons for drug use	To improve understanding of why people take drugs.	Role plays of drug-taking scenes based on a 4-point analysis of drug taking.	

Activity 11:

Reasons and excuses

Purpose

To develop understanding of different personal reasons and excuses for taking drugs.

What To Do

1. Ask each member of the group to mark on Handout 18 the reasons or excuses that they think made them take drugs (of any sort) on the last three occasions.
2. Then ask them to put a star by three phrases they think are the first three most important reasons for taking drugs; and three that are the most important excuses for taking drugs.
3. Write up everyone's top three reasons and top three excuses on two sheets of paper.
4. Discuss these.
 - what's the difference between a reason and an excuse?
 - what are 'good' reasons or excuses?
 - what could be done to get rid of these reasons or excuses?
 - what might happen if you can get rid of them?

Activity 12:

Why do people take drugs?

Purpose

To improve people's understanding of why people take drugs.

What To Do

1. Work in 4 groups. Each group has a copy of Handout 19, "Why Do People Take Drugs".

Each group is asked to:

(a) discuss the four reasons and, if possible, come up with examples from their experience of those things happening in reality.

(b) Prepare a 5-minute role play showing a scene illustrating the most important influences.

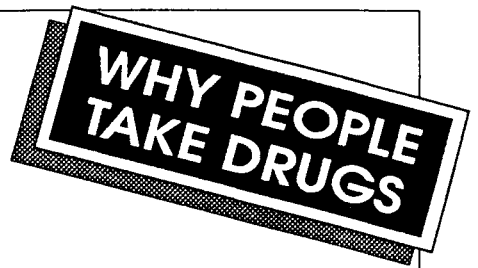
2. Each group act out their role play to the rest of the group. The rest of the group make a note at the end of the role play of the reasons/influences they thought were being acted out and who they thought was the person responsible for the drug abuse being acted out.

Have a group discussion in which:

- the reasons for drug taking in each role play as seen by the group are written up;
- the differences and similarities in people's views are raised about why people take drugs;
- the implications are drawn out about who is responsible for people taking drugs

Handout 18

Why I took drugs: Reasons and Excuses



Tick the statements below that were reasons or excuses for you actually taking drugs.

- ☐ My parents use it/them.
- ☐ I really don't know why.
- ☐ It's what all the gang were doing.
- ☐ I had a headache.
- ☐ It made me feel good the first time.
- ☐ We had arranged to meet at a local pub.
- ☐ I wanted to get through the day.
- ☐ I wanted a buzz.
- ☐ I wanted to take the risk.
- ☐ Someone passed me a joint to smoke at a party.
- ☐ When you're down-and-out, what else can you do for kicks?
- ☐ Everyone takes drugs, so why not me?
- ☐ It goes with my 'image'.
- ☐ Someone dared me to do it, so I had to.
- ☐ I was unhappy.
- ☐ It was just a phase I was going through.
- ☐ It was advertised on telly so I thought I'd try it.
- ☐ I was bored.
- ☐ It was cheap.
- ☐ I wanted to prove I wasn't scared.
- ☐ It was on impulse.
- ☐ To have a laugh.
- ☐ I just got caught up with a crowd that took drugs.
- ☐ Everyone else was getting 'high' and I didn't want to be left out.
- ☐ I wanted to do something different.
- ☐ To control my nerves.
- ☐ I didn't know I was breaking the law.
- ☐ To get in touch with my inner self.
- ☐ I was depressed.
- ☐ To see what it was like.
- ☐ To rebel against my parents, the school, the law.
- ☐ I didn't know what it was.
- ☐ I wanted to harm myself.
- ☐ Other—please specify.



Reasons For Taking Drugs

**WHY PEOPLE
TAKE DRUGS**

Why Do People Take Drugs?

1. Because they want to change how they are feeling

- To relieve pain (eg. caused by disease or fatigue)
- To enjoy pleasurable effects
- To obtain new sensory and perceptual experiences
- To enhance feelings of self-esteem through a drugs 'high'.

2. Because of the influences on them

- It is easily available (eg. in inner city areas)
- Mass media (eg. advertising for legal drugs, stories in the paper of drug abuse incidents)
- Life is so appalling because of poverty, poor conditions, lack of facilities
- The price dropped
- There is no feeling of a personal future
- Escape boredom and use up spare time
- Peer group pressure (eg. be in with the in-crowd)
- Cultural/religious norms.

3. Because of how they were brought up

- Family life experiences
- Way looked after as a child
- Cultural/religious norms

4. Because of their personality

- Curiosity
- Seek thrills, take risks
- Way of experiencing independence
- Way of rebelling against 'the establishment'
- To hurt myself

