

Drug Awareness Week 2009

ACTIVITY GUIDE
for groups of young
people aged 15 to 21

Santé
et Services sociaux
Québec

With the participation of:
• ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport

Drug Awareness Week 2009

ACTIVITY GUIDE

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This year, during Drug Awareness Week, which will be held from November 15 to 21, 2009, we are offering you the possibility of holding these original activities for young people aged 15 to 21, who are attending the third to fifth levels of secondary school and for those who are in college.

IMPORTANT: You will find these and several other activities at www.dependances.gouv.qc.ca (Information Campaigns – Activities Section).

Comment: The activities that follow are not recommended for student groups in the first and second levels of secondary school. For this clientele, an activity guide is available and can be downloaded at www.dependances.gouv.qc.ca (Information Campaigns – Activities Section).



1. Commando Theatre

Source: Inspired by an activity offered by the Cumulus drug prevention program at www.projetcumulus.ca.

OBJECTIVES

- To enable youths to express themselves and state their opinions on:
 - using;
 - the reasons for using.
- To inform the other students at school about Drug Awareness Week and the reasons why young people use.
- To offer students a positive and validating commando theatre experience.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Special clothing for all of the students who participate in the commando theatre activity (for instance clothing of the same colour) in order for them to be clearly identifiable.

LENGTH

Step 1: From 60 to 75 minutes.

Step 2: Five minutes for each class participating in the activity.

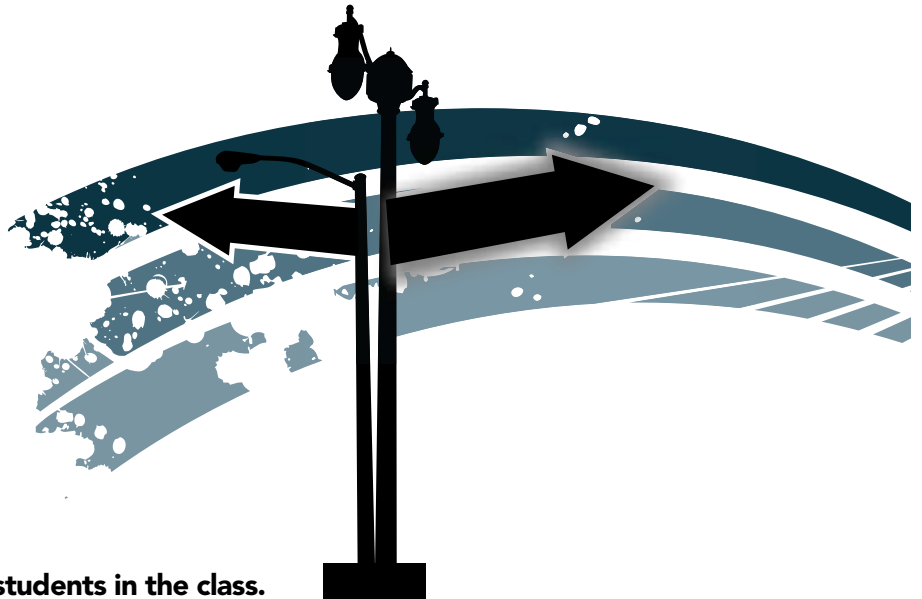
ACTIVITY FORMAT

- In-class group activity.
- Creation of a team of three to five participants who will constitute the commando theatre team.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

Following an in-class discussion about the theme of Drug Awareness Week, **Where are you at?** and the group's preparation with respect to the choice of various short interventions to illustrate the theme, your commando theatre team will visit targeted classes (the classes can be chosen by the teacher or by the students themselves depending on the young peoples' interest and schedules).





ROLLOUT

From 30 to 60 minutes with all of the students in the class.

- In-class discussion with the students.
(see **Appendix A** entitled **Questions and streams of thought for the in-class discussion**).
- For each question, write important, original, and relevant ideas on the blackboard.
- Brainstorming! After the discussion, divide the group into teams of four or five participants. Each team must draw inspiration from the information entered on the board to find catchy ideas for interventions. These can be short sketches illustrating the class' ideas following the group discussion or illustrating a validating situation for the young people, or an animated, vibrant approach to underscore and explain the theme for the week, etc.
- Return to a group discussion to hear about all of the teams' activities. The students may then choose two intervention ideas they feel to be original and relevant from among all of those presented by the teams.

Comment: The teams could also be asked to prepare a short play that they will present to the class at the end of the allotted time period. The teacher may then choose one and work to improve it with all of the students in the group.

COMMANDO THEATRE

Approximately five minutes per class, later in the week.

Choose four or five students who will act as class spokespersons and present these short performances during the course of the week to other classes or in the cafeteria or social centre.

- The students who are chosen for commando theatre must wear special clothing.
- They will make a short presentation to select classes during class time (this could also take place in the cafeteria or the social centre during lunch hour). They will perform their presentation in a few minutes (two to three minutes), and will then go to visit another class.

Furthermore, **Appendix A** contains questions to help teachers prepare the groups for the arrival of commando theatre in the classroom.

2. The Jury Debate



OBJECTIVES

- To encourage the young people to find the solution to their problems in ways not involving the use of drugs.
- To ensure that the youths do not trivialize the use of alcohol and that they know how to distinguish between different types of use.
- To increase the awareness of young people of the consequences of drinking alcohol.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

- One facilitator, who will also be the judge.
- A jury comprising between four and ten young people, one of whom will be appointed jury chairperson.
- The YES team (three to five people).
- The NO team (three to five people).
- The other people who are present, if there are any, will serve as the public board.

ACTIVITY FORMAT

Two teams will address a specific topic and each in turn attempt to convince the jury that their arguments are better. The jury will decide the outcome of the debate. The judge will end each debate by providing the answer indicated after every statement in this guide.

LENGTH

Approximately fifteen minutes per statement in the debate.

ROLLOUT

The facilitator (judge) must choose three statements from among those that are proposed. He or she will explain the rules of the game and ensure that the timelines set for each step are followed.

For each of the selected statements, the YES team and the NO team will spend eight minutes preparing their arguments. It is not necessary for all of the members of a team to agree with the orientation they are taking (YES or NO). The important thing is to find arguments that support the team's position. Also, to strengthen the arguments, the facilitator can encourage team members to use examples (real situations) when they state their case.

- Each team will have two minutes to present its arguments to the jury. (Call heads or tails to determine which team will begin the debate).
- The jury will deliberate for three to five minutes, and the jury chairperson will give his or her verdict.
- The chairperson will comment on the jury's verdict and if necessary, begin a discussion on the topic with all participants.

As necessary, the teacher may refer to the brochures entitled *Young people and alcohol, and Drugs... Let's talk about it?* produced by the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux. These can be downloaded from the Ministère Website at www.msss.gouv.qc.ca or copies can be ordered by email at communications@msss.gouv.qc.ca.

Someone who uses for the first time because of peer pressure is lacking in character.

NO

We can all be influenced, and we all tend to minimize the impact of peer pressure in our lives. Peer pressure goes beyond taunting with remarks such as *"you're no fun"*. It is also the sum of our observations of other people and what we have heard about them.

Everyone who uses drugs does it to forget about their problems, even if they say that this is not true.

NO

People who use do it for all types of reasons, not just because they have problems. It can be out of habit (for instance caffeine), or just for fun.

Regardless of the reason for using, everyone is at risk of experiencing negative side effects.

Mixing alcohol with an energy drink can be very risky for your health.

YES

The caffeine in these beverages increases your energy level, while alcohol has the opposite effect. Mixing the two leads users to drink much more alcohol and they are therefore exposed to a higher risk of negative and even dangerous effects such as vomiting, loss of consciousness, memory loss, coma and even death, to name just a few.

Drinking an alcoholic beverage is the best way to relax.

NO

Alcohol is a depressant. Consequently, it slows down the central nervous system, which in turn relaxes the person who drinks it.

There are however far better ways to relax. Participating in sports, going for a walk, reading a book, listening to music, etc., are all excellent ways to help you relax.

Cannabis is a "light" drug that has virtually no negative effects.

NO

There are several risks associated with cannabis: difficulty concentrating, impaired judgment, memory problems for regular users, etc. The issue should not be approached from the perspective of a hard drug/soft drug debate, because this emphasizes the perception that using soft drugs is *"less serious"*. The way drugs are used, the context, frequency, and many other factors also have a significant effect.

NO

People who use only for fun do not risk developing a drug problem.

Fun is exactly the reason why drug users say they use. This does not mean that there are no risks associated with this behaviour. Even if you use for fun, this can negatively impact several areas of your life: health, school, love, family, etc.

For this reason, it is important to know yourself and to know how to recognize the signs of a problem with using (refer to the *Law of Effect* and the risk factors).

The *Law of Effect* is an important reference framework when it comes to drug experiences.

The E = PIC, namely **Effect = Product x Individual x Context** helps us to remember that a drug's effect depends on certain characteristics and not only on the drug that is used. It also depends on certain characteristics related to the individual and the usage context.

NO

"Chugging" games can't hurt you. The worst-case scenario is that you have a hangover the next morning.

"Chugging" means drinking a large quantity of alcohol over a very short period of time. It is practiced by groups of young people for whom drinking a large quantity of alcohol represents a test or a challenge. "Chugging" can cause dangerous levels of intoxication and even death.

(Source: www.dependances.gouv.qc.ca)

NO

Driving a vehicle under the influence of cannabis is legal.

Impaired driving is illegal regardless of the substance that causes this condition. Driving a vehicle is a complex activity requiring the use of several parts of the brain. Alcohol, drugs like cannabis, certain medications, and fatigue can significantly alter your ability to drive a vehicle.

Did you know...

- It is difficult to maintain a straight trajectory when under the influence of cannabis?
- Being under the influence of a combination of alcohol and drugs significantly increases the risk of being involved in a traffic accident?

(Source: www.dependances.gouv.qc.ca)

Compared to a sober driver, the risk of a driver who has used cannabis being in a fatal accident is twice as high.

(Source: www.saaq.gouv.qc.ca)

Using amphetamines increases the body's energy "reserve".

NO

It does not increase the body's energy reserve. In fact, it accelerates the use of the energy that is already available in the body and condenses it. This is why the person who uses it experiences a bout of fatigue followed by a recovery period.

Amphetamines have euphoristic and stimulating effects, meaning that they provide a feeling of physical and mental power, and an increased sense of well-being. They decrease the appetite and feelings of fatigue, heighten vigilance, and cause euphoria, as well as logorrhoea (verbal diarrhea), agitation, and insomnia.

(Source: *Young people and designer drugs*, MSSS.)

Using steroids to enhance athletic performance has very few negative effects.

NO

These products are not only prohibited in several sports by federations, but they are also very dangerous for your health.

Here are a few of the risks associated with their use:

- Heart problems (possible heart attack);
- Liver problems;
- Increased risk of cancer;
- Stops the growth of long bones;
- Emergence of inappropriate sexual characteristics.

More specifically:

- Anabolic steroids affect behaviour by increasing aggressiveness. These synthetic hormones that are swallowed or injected can also cause health problems such as severe body acne and hormonal dysfunction. For girls, the voice becomes deeper, hair appears on the face and body, and menstruation stops. Boys can experience hair loss, enlarged breasts and prostate, and weakened reproductive functions. Even more serious problems can occur, for instance the long bones can stop growing, kidney damage can occur, and the risk of heart problems increases.
- Furthermore, young people who share syringes are exposed to the risk of contracting diseases such as hepatitis and AIDS.

(Source: *Drugs... Let's talk about it?*)



3. Where are you at?

OBJECTIVES

- To increase the students' knowledge about energy drinks, alcohol, and cannabis.
- To enable the students to think of different reasons for using.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- The *Where are you at?* Quiz (refer to the PowerPoint file).
- A computer and a multimedia projector.
- Tons of energy!

ACTIVITY FORMAT

Group of twenty young people divided into teams of four or five.

LENGTH

From 30 to 45 minutes.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

- Divide the group into teams of four or five participants.
- Use the *Where are you at?* Quiz (see the PowerPoint file) to ask teams the questions.
- Each team must take a turn to answer a question.
- Have fun!



APPENDIX A: ACTIVITY 1

Questions and streams of thought for the in-class discussion

1. Introduce the Drug Awareness Week theme: *Where are you at?*

- What does this theme mean for you?
- Why is it important to think carefully about your using habits?
- When should you start to ask yourself about your using habits?
- What questions should young people ask themselves about their using habits?
- What could emerge as being a problem with respect to the using habits of some young people?

Write a summary of the group's ideas on the blackboard.

2. Why do young people use for the first time?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS:

- Curiosity
- Friends' influence
- Social influence
- Influence of advertising

And why might a person continue to use?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS:

- For fun
- Influence
- Curiosity
- Dependency
- To relax
- To forget about their problems

Write a summary of the group's ideas on the blackboard.

Questions for teachers who are visited by commando theatre

To prepare the classes for the arrival of commando theatre, it could be a very good idea to have a brief discussion. Here are a few streams of thought for the groups:

- What does this year's theme mean to you?
- Why is it important to think carefully about your using habits?
- What do you want to avoid?
- What is your limit with respect to the importance using has in your life?

Furthermore, after the visit, the teacher can also conclude the commando theatre performance by discussing it.

- What stood out for you in the commando theatre performance?
- What did you take with you from this experience?
- What resources are available to students at your school or in your neighbourhood?