

Cannabis and You – Making Safe Choices

Activity

Resource: Cannabis Education Resources

Grade(s): 8

Overview

- Students use a Mind Map activity to gather information about the warning signs of problematic use of substances such as cannabis and the consequences that can occur, and they apply strategies they can use to avoid dangerous situations relating to cannabis.
- Students express their understanding by creating a written piece as part of an education series directed at a youth audience, titled “Cannabis and You – Making Safe Choices”.
- This activity may be used as part of a unit of learning or at the end of a unit of learning.

Curriculum Expectations

A1.2, A1.6, D1.3, D2.2

Materials Needed

- Chart paper and markers
- Information about the warning signs of problematic cannabis use and its possible consequences (e.g., see Drug Free Kids Canada’s [Cannabis Talk Kit: Know How to Talk with Your Teen](#), pages 2–10)
- Information about strategies students can use to avoid dangerous situations relating to cannabis (e.g., see Government of Canada’s [Don’t Drive High](#))

Learning Goals

- We are learning about the warning signs of problematic cannabis use and its possible consequences.
- We are learning to assess the potential dangers of situations that involve cannabis.
- We are learning about strategies we can apply to avoid dangerous situations involving cannabis.

Sample Success Criteria

- I can identify the warning signs of problematic cannabis use.
- I can describe the possible consequences of using cannabis.
- I can assess a situation involving cannabis for potential dangers.
- I can describe strategies I can use to avoid dangerous situations involving cannabis.

Opportunities For Assessment

- During the **Minds on**, use teacher-moderated conversation to assess students' ability to assess situations for potential dangers and apply strategies to avoid dangerous situations.
- During the **Action**, use the student-generated Mind Maps and group presentations to assess students' ability to understand the warning signs of problematic substance use and its possible consequences, assess situations for potential dangers, and identify strategies to avoid dangerous situations.
- During the **Consolidation**, use student writing or student-generated scenarios to assess students' ability to understand the warning signs of problematic substance use and its possible consequences, assess situations for potential dangers, and identify strategies to avoid dangerous situations.

Minds-On

- Share the Learning Goals with students and co-construct Success Criteria.
- Show students a video, such as Government of Canada's [In an Instant](#), to provide an example of a dangerous situation involving cannabis that might occur.
- Have students work with an elbow partner to generate alternative choices that the characters might have made rather than getting into a car with someone who was high and, when the passenger in the

front seat noticed something was wrong with the driver, how these choices could have led to a safer outcome.

- Using a teacher-moderated discussion, have students share their ideas with the class.
- Have students assemble in groups of 4–5.
- Have each group re-enact the scene as a passenger who makes a choice that leads to a safer outcome.

Action

- Have students remain in the same groups from the **Minds On**.
- Provide each group with chart paper, markers, and information about the signs of cannabis use, warning signs of problematic use of a substance such as cannabis, and possible consequences of cannabis use (e.g., see Drug Free Kids Canada’s [Cannabis Talk Kit: Know How to Talk with Your Teen](#), pages 2–10).
- Have each group use the information to create a Mind Map illustrating the connections between cannabis use, problematic substance use, and their possible consequences (e.g., changes in behaviour, negative impact on mental health, gradual withdrawal from social circles, a decline in academic performance, legal consequences resulting from underage cannabis use, ingesting too much cannabis through edibles, inability to make good decisions).
- Provide students with information about alternative strategies they can use to avoid dangerous situations involving cannabis. For example, see Government of Canada’s [Don’t Drive High](#), which has videos such as [Alternatives](#).
- Have groups add all the alternative strategies from the literature and their own strategies to their Mind Map.
- Have each group present their Mind Map to the class and then post it in the room.
- As a class, have students rank the alternative strategies they generated for avoiding dangerous situations in order of ones they would most likely use to less likely to use, and have them justify their ranking.

Consolidation

- Have students use the information from the class Mind Maps to create a piece of writing such as a blog, vlog (videolog), rap, poem, or excerpt from a short story that will become part of a class anthology titled “Cannabis and You – Making Safe Choices”. The goal of their written piece is to educate youth about the warning signs of problematic use of substances such as cannabis, the possible consequences, and strategies for making safe choices in potentially dangerous situations involving cannabis.
- Alternatively, have students create scenarios that demonstrate their understanding of the warning signs of problematic use of substances such as cannabis, the possible consequences, and strategies for making safe choices in potentially dangerous situations involving cannabis.

Ideas For Extension

Have the class share their class anthology, “Cannabis and You – Making Safe Choices”, with another class in the school and/or a selected audience in the community.

Notes To Teachers

Providing opportunities for students to explore concepts from multiple perspectives and through a variety of lenses enriches their learning.

- Consider integrating this activity into the Grade 8 Language Arts curriculum: Writing 1. Developing and Organizing Content, Writing 2. Using Knowledge and Form and Style in Writing, and/or Writing 3. Applying Knowledge of Language Conventions and Presenting Written Work Effectively.
- This activity focuses specifically on warning signs of substance misuse as it relates to cannabis, the possible consequences, and strategies for making safe choices in potentially dangerous situations involving cannabis. Additional learning related to the warning signs of problematic substance use for other substances, activities, consequences, and assessing potential dangers in a variety of situations is recommended to fully address the intended learning as articulated in curriculum expectations D1.3 and D2.2. These concepts may be addressed within this activity or as a follow-up activity.

Additional Resources

[In an Instant](#)-(video)