

Reality Ride

6. The Game of Life

Spatial Requirements: Regular classroom setup: little or no space required

Activity Type: Movement/group

Grades: 3-12

Group Size: 2 or more

Time: 30-45 minutes

Introduction: We get stuck in the loop when we avoid thinking about the consequences of our negative actions, and instead focus on the perceived benefits. This activity looks at the consequences and perceived benefits of real-life behaviors, encouraging students to think twice before making a decision.

Materials:

- Whiteboard
- Markers
- Eraser
- 6 poker chips of the same color
- 6 poker chips of different colors
- 1 container to hold chips
- Props, as listed below (These can also be found at www.whytry.org/activities.)

Activity:

Number the poker chips (front and back) from 1 to 6 for each color. Write the following on the board:

| Perceived Benefits | Consequences |
|--------------------|--------------|
| 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 3 |
| 4 | 4 |
| 5 | 5 |
| 6 | 6 |

Ask the students, "What things do we do that get us in trouble?" and let the students brainstorm. Following this discussion, have the group brainstorm some "Perceived Benefits" for using drugs. and write these responses on the whiteboard. (You may use any of the other brainstormed ideas, but the sample props listed below may not apply.) The list may look something like this when you are finished:

Perceived Benefits

- 1 Buzz/High
- 2 Escape
- 3 Social/ fit in
- 4 Look older/status
- 5 Rebellion
- 6 Money

Now list six consequences associated with drug use. The props correlate with the following six categories, so try to tie in student responses to these:

- 1 School
- 2 Loss of job/no money
- 3 Health
- 4 Legal/jail
- 5 Family relationships
- 6 Death

Once the “Perceived Benefits” and “Consequences” columns are filled out, put the set of same-colored poker chips in the container. You are now ready to play the “Game of Life.”

Tell the students that they are going to draw poker chips from the container. Hold the container up high enough that students cannot see what they draw, then allow the students to take turns drawing a chip. Look at their number and make a statement about the perceived benefit that matches the one listed on the board. For example, if a student drew a “3,” you could say something like, “You are new in school and are using drugs to fit in and be part of the ‘cool crowd.’” Once a student has drawn and been given their “benefit,” they should return the chip to the container. You will then mix up the chips and go on to the next person. Allow everyone to take a turn and receive a “perceived benefit.”

Now add the colored chips to the mix. Say, “As time goes on, consequences start to come.” Go through the same process, allowing each student to draw from the container. When a “perceived benefit” chip is picked, follow the same procedure as the first round. If a colored chip is drawn, use the prop that correlates with the number, representing a consequence. For example, if a “1” chip is drawn, use one of the four props that goes with the “school” consequences. Continue this until everyone has had a turn.

Finally, remove the “benefit” chips from the container and leave the colored “consequence” chips. Say, “As the drug use increases or escalates, there are more consequences and fewer benefits.” Continue the game in the same manner until everyone has had a turn in Round 3.

Have the students look around at the consequences their classmates are suffering. Ask, “How many of you have school problems, job issues, health issues, legal issues, family issues, or died as a result of your drug use?”

Processing the Experience:

- Is this game true to life? Why or why not?
- Have any of the “Consequences” happened to you?
- Have any of the “Consequences” happened to people you know?
- What are some of the consequences that you would be willing to share?
- How do you break the cycle?

Props:

School

A sign with a student’s report card as follows: English: F, History: F, Math: F, Science: F, etc.

A letter informing a student that they need to attend truancy school

A suspension letter

An expulsion letter

Job

Three different signs with the following:

“Got fired from my job, will work for food”

“Got fired from my job, I came in late one too many times”

“Got fired from my job, stole from the till to pay off a drug fine I owe”