

# From the Ground Up

A health promotion and harm reduction curriculum resource to address youth substance use, gaming, and gambling

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## **From the Ground Up 9: A Health Promotion and Harm Reduction Curriculum Resource to Address Youth Substance Use, Gaming, and Gambling**

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# Contents

<b>Facilitator Guide</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Inclusion .....	3
Harm Reduction .....	4
Social Determinants of Health .....	5
The Role of the Teacher .....	7
Circles, Check-Ins and Check-Outs, Community Standards .....	8
What About Arguments? .....	11
Emotional Moments .....	11
Assessment .....	11
Participation .....	12
Preparing for the Lessons .....	13
Needs Assessment .....	14
Supporting Youth Who Reach Out for Help .....	15
Check-out .....	16
<b>9.1 The Intro</b> .....	<b>29</b>
Grade 9: Lesson 1—The Intro .....	31
Activity .....	32
Check-out .....	35
Moving Forward .....	35
<b>9.2 Risky Business (Part 1)</b> .....	<b>49</b>
Grade 9: Lesson 2—Risky Business (Part 1) .....	51
Check-in .....	52
Activity .....	53
Check-out .....	57
Moving Forward .....	58



<b>9.3 Risky Business (Part 2)</b> .....	<b>69</b>
Grade 9: Lesson 3—Risky Business (Part 2) .....	71
Check-in .....	72
Activity .....	73
Check-out .....	76
Moving Forward .....	76
<b>9.4 Firsts: Revisited</b> .....	<b>103</b>
Grade 9: Lesson 4—Firsts: Revisited .....	105
Check-in .....	106
Activity .....	107
Check-out .....	110
Moving Forward .....	110
<b>9.5 Drug Land (Part 1)</b> .....	<b>177</b>
Grade 9: Lesson 5—Drug Land (Part 1) .....	179
Check-in .....	181
Activity .....	181
Check-out .....	185
Moving Forward .....	186
Sample Q & As .....	186
<b>9.6 Drug Land (Part 2)</b> .....	<b>221</b>
Grade 9: Lesson 6—Drug Land (Part 2) .....	223
Activity .....	225
Check-out .....	227
Moving Forward .....	227
Consequences Slides .....	228



<b>9.7 Collateral Damage</b> .....	<b>295</b>
Grade 9: Lesson 7—Collateral Damage .....	297
Check-in .....	298
Activity .....	299
Check-out .....	301
Moving Forward .....	301
<b>9.8 How to Care</b> .....	<b>369</b>
Grade 9: Lesson 8—How to Care .....	371
Check-in .....	373
Activity .....	373
Check-out .....	376
Moving Forward .....	376

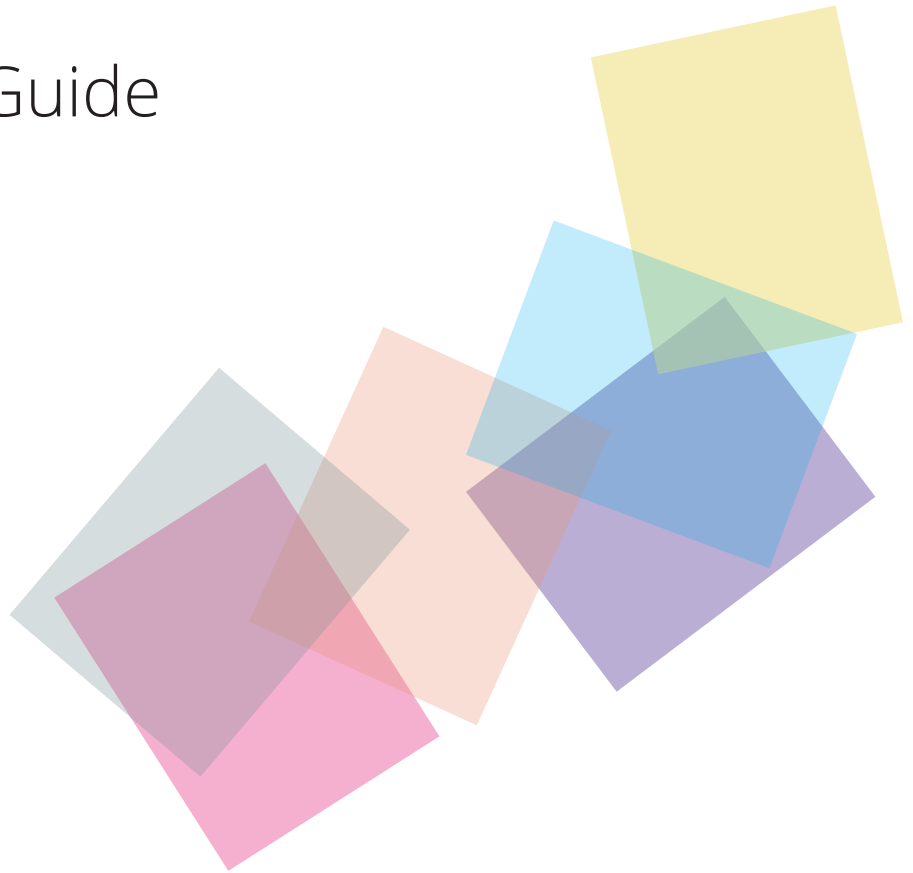




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## Facilitator Guide







# Inclusion

Creating safety in a classroom is one of the biggest challenges facing teachers. Inclusive language and practices based on gender identity, racial and/or ethnic identity, and sexual orientation are of paramount importance. In this curriculum we hope that students who are on the outside in some situations find a space that welcomes and celebrates their voices. For this to happen, inclusion must be seen through additional lenses—on top of gender identity, sexuality, race, and ethnicity. Some youth feel excluded because of a physical disability, neurodiversity, chronic illness, or the impacts of the social determinants of health, such as issues with food security, or a home environment that is very different from their peers. Teachers will regularly remind youth that the conversations they lead may help them to reflect on their experience and how it differs from others, and that their teachers and school staff are safe people to access for conversations about this. They can connect students with a range of supports in the education and health systems.

# Harm Reduction

The pedagogy behind this curriculum supplement is informed by harm reduction philosophy, (which aims to minimize negative outcomes of substance use and gambling/gaming), and prevention of and delaying substance use. These efforts are complimentary and are in contrast with an abstinence only approach. This curriculum meets individuals where they are—acknowledging that some youth are already involved in activities that can cause harm—and provides knowledge and support. Stigma reduction is an important component to this work. Facilitators take a positive, strengths-based approach, for example, teaching refusal skills or encouraging help-seeking. The curriculum does not seek to judge, stigmatize, or pathologize substance use and gaming/gambling and avoids coercive methods like scare tactics. Instead, these lessons will seek to start conversations that are developmentally appropriate and responsive to youth and community needs.

The topics of lessons are predominantly useful in educating about substance use and problem gaming/gambling overall, rather than limited to one substance or behaviour. For youth, this means support coping with stress, and developing identity and values, positive relationships, and communication skills. To do this work effectively, the lessons have been designed to be primarily relational; encouraging students to think about how this is useful in their own lives.

## Some harm reduction best practices in health education include:

- Substance misuse education needs to be developmentally appropriate.
- Provincial and local use patterns should be consulted when considering lesson content.
- Address only those substances (and behaviours) for which there is a pattern of use in the community.
- For students over the age of 14, lessons that focus on a single drug seem more effective than lessons about multiple drugs.
- Focus on short-term social consequences rather than long-term effects when providing information on use.
- Ensure that the information is accurate and balanced, including the benefit to people who use drugs and game/gamble.



- Information presented should have utility, helping students build useful skills and abilities.
- Lessons should emphasize student–student interactions more than student–teacher. Teachers must remain non-judgmental and open.
- Social influences should be examined, and students should be equipped to analyze, minimize, and navigate negative social influences.
- Emphasizing how many students are not using, and correcting misperceptions about this, is especially effective for younger groups.
- Refusal skills, assertiveness, and communication skills can be effective tools in reducing use for young people.
- If approximately 40% of a group has used a particular substance in the past year, messaging that promotes safe ways to use, alongside noting that minimizing use is safest, is appropriate.
- To sustain behaviour change, taking opportunities to reinforce messaging should be spread across the year.
- Guest presenters are useful when they can engage with students interactively as part of a larger body of work, rather than presenting an isolated, didactic session.

(Department of Health Promotion and Protection 2007)

## Social Determinants of Health

Social determinants of health are the social, political, and economic factors that contribute to inequities in health outcomes. Examples are income, education, food security, racism and discrimination, and housing. The social determinants reflect the inequitable systems through which the most advantaged have better health and vice versa. See the table below for examples of protective factors and risk factors related to social determinants of health across individual, family, community, and societal levels.

## Determinants of Population Mental Health for Children and Youth

<b>Determinant level</b> (proximal, distal)	<b>Protective factors/conditions</b> (increase chance of high mental health)	<b>Risk factors/conditions</b> (increase chance of low mental health)
<b>INDIVIDUAL</b> Elements include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• physical health and health behaviours</li> <li>• cognitive ability</li> <li>• emotional temperament</li> <li>• social skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good physical health and healthy behaviours (physical activity, sleep)</li> <li>• Ability to problem solve, manage one's thoughts, learn from experience; tolerate unpredictability and be flexible</li> <li>• Feeling empowered, a sense of control or efficacy, positive emotions, a sense of self and a sense of spirituality</li> <li>• Good social skills (communication, trust)</li> <li>• A sense of belonging</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chronic health condition, physical or intellectual disability, premature birth/ low birth weight/ birth complications/ birth injury, prenatal brain damage, alcohol or drug abuse</li> <li>• Weak problem solving skills</li> <li>• Low self-esteem</li> <li>• Feeling of a lack of control</li> <li>• Feeling negative emotions</li> <li>• Isolation</li> <li>• Weak social skills</li> </ul>
<b>FAMILY</b> Elements include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• attachment and relationships</li> <li>• physical environments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong emotional attachment</li> <li>• Positive, warm and supportive parent-child relationships</li> <li>• Safe stable housing, adequate nutrition, and access to childcare</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor attachment, lack of warm/affectionate parenting and positive relationships throughout childhood</li> <li>• Domestic abuse/violence</li> <li>• Parental substance abuse</li> <li>• Parental health status</li> <li>• Caring for someone with a disability or illness</li> <li>• Inadequate housing</li> <li>• Inadequate nutrition</li> <li>• Inadequate access to childcare</li> </ul>
<b>COMMUNITY</b> Elements include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• relationships</li> <li>• social environments</li> <li>• built and natural environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure and satisfying relationships that give support</li> <li>• High levels of social capital (reciprocity, social cohesion, sense of belonging, ability to participate)</li> <li>• Safe urban design and access to green spaces and recreation</li> <li>• Supportive school and workplace environments</li> <li>• Access to adequate transportation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insecure or no relationships and isolation</li> <li>• Low levels of social capital, belonging and social exclusion</li> <li>• Lack of accessible or safe transportation</li> <li>• Poor urban design</li> <li>• Lack of leisure areas and green spaces</li> </ul>
<b>SOCIETY</b> Elements include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• socio-economic status (SES)</li> <li>• social structure, discrimination/oppression</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher levels of education, economic security, and standards of living (housing, income, work)</li> <li>• Freedom from discrimination/racism</li> <li>• Low levels of social inequality</li> <li>• Legal recognition of rights</li> <li>• Social inclusion</li> <li>• Public safety</li> <li>• Political participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low education</li> <li>• Low material standard of living (housing/homelessness, unemployment, inadequate working conditions, economic insecurity and debt)</li> <li>• Social and cultural oppression and discrimination, colonization or war</li> <li>• Poverty and social inequalities</li> <li>• Neighbourhood violence and crime</li> </ul>

Excerpted from National Collaborating Centres for Public Health, Foundations: Definitions and Concepts to Frame Population Mental Health Promotion for Children and Youth, 2017 ([02\\_Foundations\\_MentalHealth\\_NCCPH\\_2017\\_EN.pdf](#)).



# The Role of the Teacher

The approach to teaching in this curriculum supplement borrows from the idea of facilitation; it demands a different approach from what we see in many classrooms. It provides an opportunity to listen to young people without judging them, and better understand the world they are living in.

Youth are exposed to frequent and often unhealthy messages about how they should act. It's helpful for teachers to step back and consider what they would be like as adolescents today. Adultism and ageism can easily surface, but teachers can avoid those forms of discrimination by grounding themselves in their experience of being young. This approach is an invitation to engage in a learning opportunity where there is shared authority in the classroom, embodied by the circle style of teaching. The role of the teacher includes creating a safe and welcoming environment, and modelling behaviours that are acceptable in the group; in other words, this starts with modelling behaviour that teachers would like to see from everyone else. Teachers play a vital role in creating a positive group dynamic by doing the following:

- listening without interrupting
- being honest and authentic
- helping the group dig deeper and get more serious, but when needed, also help lighten the mood and have some fun
- helping to create opportunities for everyone to participate
- asking questions and probing for opinions, without pressuring youth to share
- answering questions and sharing their own opinions if youth ask
- helping youth to articulate their thoughts; offering to summarize; and
- checking responses or questions for accuracy
- working to summarize conversations and opinions for common understanding
- creating a unique opportunity for the youth to learn alongside other youth, rather than giving a lecture from the adult in the room
- learning alongside youth
- encouraging students to be authentic with their responses, and not say things to please the teacher
- knowing the group participants and understanding their unique needs

- using language that is inclusive and recognizing there are situations where not everyone in the room has the same racial, ethnic, sexual or gender identity, or similar conditions in their lives
- recognizing that people come from many different backgrounds and a variety of lived experiences
- understanding that attitudes and behaviours come from the conditions that surround youth, and may not represent who the youth really are or want to be
- encouraging people to share their thoughts and opinions and regularly acknowledge participation with positive feedback
- being mindful of their own lived experience and privilege, and how that can influence their own perspective

While working from this facilitative perspective it is important to meet the youth as an equal; acknowledging that teachers may have some knowledge and their own experience but they do not have the particular experience of being a youth here and now. Teachers are a resource for the youth as they address their needs and issues. If you do not know the answer to a question, tell the group that you will find out for them, or bring a speaker in with more expertise in this area to help expand their knowledge. It is okay to admit that you do not know something. This is better than providing possible misinformation.

## Circles, Check-Ins and Check-Outs, Community Standards

### Meeting in a Circle

Gathering a group in a circle may be new for facilitators and youth. Lessons are conversation-based, with the circle creating a natural space for talking to each other. Students appreciate being able to see each other during conversations. Youth with vision or hearing issues have said that the circle allows them to participate more easily than a classroom with rows of chairs.

Students have also recognized that the circle creates an atmosphere of shared authority. While the teacher may still be in charge, there is no authority figure at the front of the class standing over the students. Every lesson is a circle-based activity.



## Check-ins and Check-outs

Lessons start with a check-in activity and end with a check-out activity. A check-in activity is a way to ground the group—together, in a new space and/or configuration, leaving behind where they have come from. It's a way to take the temperature of the group.

During check-in, the youth may be tired, distracted, or even upset. There may be clues during the check-in for the teacher that the planned lesson may not be appropriate given the mood of the youth. A check-in activity also engages the group in doing something together, setting the stage for the ethos of the curriculum. Sometimes a check-in activity is tied to the topic of the lesson and prepares the group for the upcoming activity. And a check-in activity can be silly or serious.

The check-out activity (final part of each lesson) is designed to gauge how everyone is feeling after the activity. Answers can serve as indicators of energy and curiosity, and can inform the teacher's approach to current or subsequent lessons. They can also let us know if the lessons are working as intended. It's natural to have some louder voices in each group, so a check-out is an opportunity for everyone to have space to express something, as a way of sustaining an atmosphere of inclusion. A check-out can continue if the class decides there's more to say or if it surfaces questions for the teacher.

**Note:** The check-ins provided in this resource may or may not work in every classroom. Teachers are encouraged to modify, adapt, or create new check-in activities that suit their classroom make up. The same goes for check-out activities. Some teachers tell us that they use exit slips, or a simple thumbs up, thumbs down, or thumb midway to indicate how the lesson went for them.

## Community Standards

These lessons are unique spaces where there can be freedom to express things in ways that might not always feel invited into classrooms. In the intro lesson of each grade, students and teachers work together to create community standards. These standards are established to guide the group around how they are going to work together and function as a small community. These are not rules imposed by the teacher; rather they are standards suggested and agreed upon by the group. The teacher may suggest some community standards that have worked well in the past.

Some examples are listed below.

- Acknowledge one voice at a time: everyone's voice is important, and we must protect each other's voice so we can hear one another.
- Sustain a respectful atmosphere: we may come from different cultures, have different lived experiences, and/or hold different opinions, but we don't judge each other. We listen and hear each other's thoughts and views to better understand one another.

- Prohibit or restrict use of cell phones: youth may decide to have cell phones placed in a basket at the front of the room to keep themselves from getting distracted, or cell phones placed on “silent” mode.
- Protect confidentiality: we will often say, “What’s said in the circle stays in the circle,” because that allows the group to have deeper conversations without worrying that personal stories will leave the circle. Youth may share a lesson topic with people outside of the group, but not any personal stories that were told.

**Here are some other common community standards that have been suggested:**

- Be able to leave the room without permission if needed.
- Don’t take all the “airtime.” In other words, remember that your comfort in talking may inhibit others in the circle from participating.
- Never say, “You’re too old to understand this,” or, “You’re too young to understand this.”
- Students can articulate their thoughts and opinions in a way that is comfortable and authentic for them. Their language will not be censored, but everyone should still be mindful of their choice of words and the effect they have.
- Engaging in any activity is voluntary, as is participating in a conversation or answering a question.

What else ends up on a list of community standards is up to the group. To help students build their list, it often helps to ask the question “What do you need to feel comfortable in this circle?” A very long list may be impractical, so be mindful of how exhaustive the list becomes. Community standards will help build trust and safety in the group. Once the list is complete, ask everyone in the circle to commit to the standards. Check in regularly with the group to see how everyone is doing in meeting the standards. The community standards are dynamic and can be revisited and revised at any time.

***Duty to Report***

*There is a qualification to the confidentiality community standard in a school-based setting, and that’s the “duty to report.” If teachers hear things from youth that make them think the young person may be at risk of harming themselves, harming someone else, or being harmed by someone else, there is a legal obligation to break confidentiality and seek support. This is something that should be made clear to all participants.*





## What About Arguments?

Teachers may wonder if it's okay for arguments or debates to happen inside the circle. Learning how to argue and debate in a respectful manner is an important skill. Teachers should be mindful of how they present themselves during a debate or argument, and to model the kind of behaviour they want to see from everyone else if a conversation gets intense. Using the one-voice-at-a-time rule is crucial during arguments and teachers might have to play a role in designating who talks first when the pressure is mounting.

## Emotional Moments

It is normal for the lessons to surface big emotions for some students. For example, a youth participant during the grade 9 Drug Land lesson started crying when thinking about a family member who was impacted by alcohol use. Several of his peers reached out right away to comfort him, and staff followed up afterward to make sure the youth knew they were available for support. In another class, several participants stated that it was valuable to feel vulnerable in a safe space and experience feelings with peers and trusted adults. Many had never had this experience before. Sometimes teachers know in advance if a lesson may get intense because of trauma or an incident in the community; for example, if a community recently had a fatal car crash and youth knew a victim. Sometimes teachers will not be forewarned. It is important to be prepared for students to become emotional during any of the lessons. Teachers should also always follow up and check in with youth after big reactions during intense lessons. There are a variety of supports available both in and out of the school building. Young people should be allowed to have a range of emotions. These moments can help normalize uncomfortable emotions and vulnerability.

## Assessment

One of the ways that we encourage earnest participation in lessons is to not apply a formal score or mark to them. Students will not be given a participation score, an attendance score, or be scored on the quality of their responses to the questions. The intent behind this is to remove any potential sense of judgment. We aim to remove incentives that might lead to sharing something less than authentic or sharing more than feels comfortable.

That said, teachers are still easily able to assess the learning of their students in these lessons. One way to think about the lessons themselves is through the lens of assessment for learning. Teachers will be able to assess what information students already know and what they may need some help with. Misinformation and

misunderstandings often surface and teachers can then address them in subsequent lessons. There will also be ample opportunity for teachers to assess for skills, like speaking and listening, and to aim subsequent lessons more precisely at student needs. Some teachers who have used these lessons have created rubrics that demonstrate reflective thinking during circle conversations.

On top of this, we provide further assessment ideas in the Moving Forward section of each lesson. These are not obligatory in order to meet outcomes but offer teachers a few creative ideas about how to extend or assess the learning that took place in the lesson.

## Participation

Many of the lessons in this curriculum create a challenging atmosphere that encourages youth to step out of their comfort zone. Some amazing learning experiences can happen when students and teachers take chances, but be mindful that even the act of participating in these lessons with both peers and teachers can be stressful. Although there are opportunities for growth and learning when we step outside our comfort zones, we want students to do this when they feel ready, not when they feel pressured. This can be a judgment call. Does a teacher carefully nudge a student to do or say something, or do they leave them to observe? Getting this right is something that comes with experience. One suggestion is to explain to the class that they should only share what they feel comfortable sharing, and that they are also participating in the lesson by listening to others, even if they're not sharing their own experiences with the group. It's important to validate those who are listening while creating the space for them to share when they feel comfortable.

### **French Immersion**

*When implementing these lessons in a French second language classroom, teachers should use best practices for supporting learners' oral language development. The learning environment should support students to build confidence in their French language abilities in order to participate authentically in these lessons.*

*Teachers are encouraged to implement principles of backwards design by reviewing the content of this curriculum supplement in order to select the vocabulary, grammar, and language structures they will need to model for students.*

*For further information see:*

- *High Leverage Literacy Practices in French Second Language: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RYexSKZ2eWeyTguQI5MPZrNkmquJ11Lf/view>*
- *Ressources de la 7<sup>e</sup> année à la 9<sup>e</sup> année: <https://curriculum.novascotia.ca/fr/ressources-de-la-7e-annee-a-la-9e-annee>*



## Preparing for the Lessons

Lesson plans provide detailed instructions. The lessons require very little material preparation in advance because there is no audio-visual equipment required and few, if any, props. In most cases, teachers will need only to print activities from the accompanying appendices.

The room and chairs can impact the lessons. A cozy and quiet room works well. Chairs should be easy to move around and not have wheels. Desks with built-in chairs don't work very well for the lessons. In some of our test schools, students, excited to be involved in "circle time," knew to help set up the space for circle upon entering the classroom.

There is no strict set amount of time for each lesson to unfold. The amount of time you choose to spend on a lesson depends on the energy and engagement of the group. The lessons accompanying the facilitator's guide can go for as long as 60 minutes (grades 8 and 9) and as little as 25 to 30 minutes (grade 6), but more or less time may be needed. It's the same for the number of lessons. Teachers know their students best, and if one lesson needs to stretch into a second class, that's appropriate. It's the same with the order of the lessons. Each package of lessons has an introductory activity that will typically be run first, but some teachers may wish to start with more classes to help build trust and safety in the group before the formal lessons begin.

The purpose of the introductory activities at the start of each lesson is to help encourage participation in a group. They are there to establish an initial learning environment that supports student engagement as they interact, move around the room, and collaborate in learning. The activities are there as examples, and teachers are encouraged to consider how best to start the lessons. Some lessons require safety more than others, but if you're familiar with the lessons and know your audience, you're in the best position to decide the order of the topics, type of introductory activities, and information to gather through exit ticket/check out. There is also an opportunity in classes, before beginning these lessons, to ask students to share what they know, or have learned in previous classes/years, about substances or gambling and gaming. This can assist the teacher in looking for opportunities to correct misunderstanding or misinformation.

As the size of the group increases the opportunities for participation may be impacted, as well as feelings of safety and comfort. If there is capacity, schools have the option of splitting the class and running two groups at the same time; engaging other school staff in the process. It may also be helpful for other school staff to know if a lesson is planned that may bring forward strong emotions. In that way, more adults can be aware of signs of distress among youth after the lessons are over, and make sure other safe adults are in the building if there's an opportunity to connect a youth with a school-based specialist during or after the lesson.

There can be great variability in physical and emotional development within a grade. The more you know your group, the better you will be able to gauge how ready they are for any given topic.

## Needs Assessment

These activities use the Health Promoting Schools model to take a whole-school approach to student well-being. Health Promoting Schools is based on four inter-related pillars: Teaching and Learning; Social and Physical Relationships; Policies; and Partnership and Services. This approach requires strong partnerships between school staff and with community supports, and is rooted in the idea that students who are well will do well.

School supports play a pivotal role in student well-being, particularly as students explore issues related to substance use and mental health. Substance use education is most effective when the issues are becoming relevant to students; school support service providers may be able to provide important context to ensure these activities are relevant, and to inform teachers about specific local issues that may affect classroom discussions. Teachers are encouraged to perform the following needs assessment:

Determine what supports exist in/for your school:

- School Counsellor
- Youth Health Centre Coordinator
- SchoolsPlus Mental Health Clinician
- Mental Health and Addictions Adolescent Outreach Worker
- Child Youth Care Practitioner
- SchoolsPlus Facilitator
- SchoolsPlus Community Outreach Worker
- School Social Worker
- African Nova Scotian/Indigenous Student Support Worker
- Family Resource Centre
- School Health Promoter
- Other community organizations



Arrange a meeting with at least one service provider to understand the context of substance use in the school and community. Use the following questions as a guide:

- How prevalent is substance use among students and families on your caseload/in the community?
- To your knowledge, what are the most common substances being used by young people?
- What changes in substance use have you seen in your time at this school/in this region?
- What evidence do you see of students with problems related to gambling and gaming?
- What community supports do you partner with when it comes to youth or family substance use issues?
- What might come up as potentially sensitive issues related to substance use? For example, has there been a recent drinking and driving incident in the area?

## Supporting Youth Who Reach Out for Help

One of the goals of this curriculum is to normalize help-seeking behaviour among young people. Some students want support with a health issue but are reluctant to disclose a problem to a parent, elder, or family member, or even a family doctor. Facilitators should be prepared in advance so they can appropriately respond to a youth who asks for help. Some of the lessons provided focus on what to do and how to get help if our substance use is out of balance. This provides an opportunity to do some local asset mapping in subsequent classes so that youth are aware of the formal and sometimes informal supports available in their school, neighbourhood, or larger community. Students and teachers can generate a list together of all the places where people can go to for help with a variety of issues. In an urban area, this may include a school health nurse, a walk-in clinic, a help-line, as well as a list of school-based staff that can be safe as go-to adults. In rural areas and more isolated communities, the task can be more difficult. While teachers may feel the desire to help students who reach out during non-work hours, this is not expected of them. It is important for teachers to adhere to professional boundaries regarding communication with youth.



## Check-out

There are five slides on the floor which help surface feelings about the class. The teachers remind students not to stand on or near a slide if they don't mean it. We want authentic responses, without judgment. Examples of slides are:

- The class was fun.
- The class was boring.
- The class helped me learn new stuff.
- The class didn't teach me anything new.
- I felt comfortable during the class.
- I felt uncomfortable during the class.

If you sense safety in the room, feel free to quickly probe and ask students some quick questions about why they chose to stand where they were. The activity can also be done “Move into the Circle” style.

The class  
**was fun**





The class  
**was boring**



The class  
**helped me  
learn  
new stuff**



The class  
**didn't teach  
me anything  
new**



**I felt  
comfortable  
during  
the class**





**I felt  
uncomfortable  
during  
the class**



# From the Ground Up

A health promotion and harm reduction curriculum resource to address youth substance use, gaming, and gambling

## 9.1 The Intro





# Grade 9: Lesson 1—The Intro

## Background

Discussions around substance use are personal and require trust and honesty to be impactful for young people. This intro lesson is important to establish a foundation for the rest of the lessons, which will rely on students' honesty, participation and vulnerability. At the end of this lesson it should be clear that these lessons will:

- value youth voice and experience, first and foremost
- not be adult/teacher focused
- encourage trust, teamwork, and collaboration
- seek different opinions and answers over the right answer

## Materials

- chairs in a circle
- tape/rope to make two large concentric circles on the floor
- paper to record class expectations
- Check-out slides

## Facilitation Tips

- Returning to activities like this can help reset a class when they are off topic or having a hard time focusing. There is a lot of value in having fun together to build class cohesion.
- During “One Big Clap” students can get a little competitive and may point out students who are making errors. The teacher should use this opportunity to remind students this activity is challenging and everyone is working towards the same goal. As a teacher, consider making a few intentional errors to demonstrate this fact.
- When creating class expectations for this unit (part 3) make sure students discuss confidentiality, judgment, taking turns speaking, and the right to pass.

**Estimated Time:** 1 hour

# Activity

## Part 1: One Big Clap

Begin with a brief challenge for the class. They have to figure out how to make “one big clap,” meaning everyone in the class claps at the same time making one big sound. The teacher should not give more direction than that and leave the students to figure out and test the best method. The teacher should participate like everyone else. If they are successful, challenge them to do two claps in a row. If the teacher thinks this will work better with smaller groups, split the class into two groups each with the same challenge.

The goal of this activity is to have fun, encourage problem solving and shared communication amongst the students. By the teacher participating in the activity, but not leading it, we show students that the structure of this unit will be student-focused.

## Part 2: Circle Zones

Set up two concentric circles on the floor (e.g., using rope or tape). The largest circle should be big enough so all students can stand on the outside edge. The smaller circle in the centre should be large enough for five or six people to stand on the edge comfortably.

Ask students to stand along the outer circle. Let them know that for the next few sessions, most of the activities and discussions will take place in a circle, and that you’ll spend some time today setting the stage for future conversations. Point out that circles are already helpful for conversations because it’s easy to see everyone in the class, and because there’s no obvious leader—whoever’s speaking is leading the conversation at that moment. You’ll spend the rest of the session practicing being in a circle and developing group norms/community standards that will support future activities.

Let students know that in a moment you’ll be reading statements and they’ll move into the circle depending on their answer. Tell them that the inner circle represents their comfort zone: they would stand in the comfort zone to represent something they would be totally comfortable doing or that they’ve had experience doing before and would do again. The outer circle represents their panic zone: they would stand at the edge (or beyond!) to represent something that seems too risky for them or would cause panic. Let students know everyone has individual comfort and panic zones, and while you would hope everyone will participate, for any question there’s always the option to pass.



Ask students to move to the comfort zone, panic zone, or somewhere in between based on the following statements. Feel free to add your own:

- climbing a 10-foot ladder
- reading a poem you wrote in front of the class
- giving speech in front of 300 people
- touching a snake
- walking outside during a thunderstorm
- going to the dentist
- shooting a foul shot to win a basketball game
- asking a friend for help on a math problem
- asking a friend for help with a problem in your life

At this point, stop and let students know there's another zone you haven't mentioned yet. The space between the comfort zone and the panic zone is called the learning zone. This represents experiences that are new or challenging enough that you're not coasting through, but safe enough that you're not panicking. Tell students your hope is that the class can work together to keep people in the learning zone as much as possible over the next few sessions. Let students know you'll be asking them to move for a few more statements:

- having open conversations about mental health
- participating in activities like this where we respond by moving
- listening to each other's ideas about issues such as substance use
- answering questions that don't have an easy answer

### Part 3: Reflection

Have students return to the outer circle. Ask them to take a moment to reflect on how they responded to the last few statements and how they may have noticed their classmates/teacher responded as well. Then ask the following questions:

- What do you need from this class to keep you in your learning zone?
- What can you do to help other people in this circle stay in their learning zone?

After each question, take time to record the answers. You can theme the answers or take them individually to create community standards that will guide the class through difficult conversations. If students don't bring up the idea of confidentiality you can add it to let students know the personal details of conversations should stay within the circle, with the caveat that you would need to break confidentiality in the event of a disclosure of past, current, or future harm.

## Part 4: Community Standards

Because these lessons may elicit a student's personal experiences and are structured conversationally, it is important to remind students of some expectations. These may be encompassed in existing classroom rules, so highlight them in a way that makes the most sense for the class. You should think about how best to facilitate conversation between students (hands, talking piece, etc.) and explain this process here. Printouts are provided with community standards to highlight and you can create additional ones that students suggest.

### Expectations to highlight:

- What's said in this class, stays in this class.
- Take turns speaking.
- Share the air space.
- You can always pass.
- No judgment.





## Check-out



There are five slides on the floor which help surface feelings about the class. The teachers remind students not to stand on or near a slide if they don't mean it. We want authentic responses, without judgment. Examples of slides are:

- The class was fun.
- The class was boring.
- The class helped me learn new stuff.
- The class didn't teach me anything new.
- I felt comfortable during the class.
- I felt uncomfortable during the class

If you sense safety in the room, feel free to quickly probe and ask students some quick questions about why they chose to stand where they were. The activity can also be done “Move into the Circle” style.

## Moving Forward

Take this first week to set up opportunities for students to further engage with the material in the lessons. Ideas include a question or comment box in the classroom or a reflection journal for students to write about their experiences with the lessons.



**What's said**

in this class,

**stays in**

**this class**



**Take turns**  
speaking



Share the air  
**space**





You can  
**always pass**



**No  
judgment**



**Other**



# From the Ground Up

A health promotion and harm reduction curriculum resource to address youth substance use, gaming, and gambling

## 9.2 Risky Business (Part 1)







# Grade 9: Lesson 2—Risky Business (Part 1)

## Outcomes

- Analyze the role of alcohol in the decision-making process related to increased risk of unintended consequences Indicator(s).
- Practise speaking about concerns regarding substance use and gambling in self or others pregnancies, STIs, impaired driving, and injury.

## Guiding Question

- What is the relationship between substance use and the safety of self and others as a driver, a passenger, and a pedestrian/rider?

## Student Goals

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to

- assess the risks taken by driving or being a passenger under different conditions of substance use and distraction
- reflect on their own risk tolerance compared to those around them

**Estimated Time:** 1 hour

## Materials

- Levels of Risk-taking slides
- sets of 5–6 chairs that can be moved around the room

## Facilitation Tips

- Try to take the moments before and after the activity to check in with individual students; especially those you worry might need extra support based on your experience of them in these lessons. There may be students and staff with past histories of car crashes, injuries, and death. Those stories may be known, but sometimes not.
- Remind students about school support people and the option to take a break if the discussion becomes too personal or intense.

- This lesson can bring a lot of laughter and fun, while also delivering very serious messages. Use your own energy and volume to model to the group. If you want them to get up and engage you can be louder and faster in your speaking and moving. If you're hoping to bring things into a more serious or thoughtful place you can slow down and get quieter.
- When building the distracted driving car it can help if teachers ask for the loudest students to populate that vehicle.

## Background

Car crashes are a leading cause of death for teenagers in Canada. Getting a driver's license is a rite of passage for many young people, giving them a sense of independence and freedom, but also a new vector for risk-taking. The activities in this two-part lesson give participants an opportunity to consider risk taking as a driver and passenger, sometimes with substance use involved, and explore the concept of refusal skills to avoid risky conditions.

## Check-in

Place the five slides on the floor that describe different **levels of risk-taking** and ask for groups of five people to stand up and stand on the slide that best describes their appetite for risk. When we talk about risk for this activity, we're talking about physical risks where there can be injuries, like skydiving, surfing, wrestling with tigers, etc.

- **Heck no. Never. I'm very cautious.**
- **Very, very little risky stuff for me.**
- **Sure, if I'm sober, wearing safety gear, and trained.**
- **Always up for trying risky stuff.**
- **Anywhere, anytime, and if someone records it.**

Teachers should play too. See if you notice any gender differences, or if students want to change their answer based on how peers answer. This information can be used later to ask about how relationships might affect attitudes toward risk-taking. Ask students to remember where they've stood for later.



# Activity

## Part 1

Let everyone know the lesson is about risk—specifically taking risks in cars while impaired. Arrange the chairs into four cars (two seats in the front, the rest of the seats in the back) so that they are facing each other as if each car is parked at a four-way intersection or four-way stop. This activity can be done with as few as five students, so only build as many cars as you need. There may be a single car that will be used to demonstrate several scenarios, or two or three or four, depending on the size of the class. If it's a full class, you may have to create four cars with six or more seats, and maybe three rows (simulating vans or SUVs). Make sure there's enough room between cars for the teacher to move around during the activity.

### **Car 1 Scenario: This is the alcohol and fatigue car.**

A group of youth has gone to a party and is driving back home around sunrise. Everyone in the car is still drunk. They're also fatigued from partying all night. Get the group to act out passing out in the car. Let them know afterwards that on the way home, the drunk/sleepy driver crashes the car and there are multiple people killed, and everyone else is injured. No one was wearing a seatbelt.

### **Car 2 Scenario: This is the distracted car.**

This car has some similarities with the alcohol car, but also some differences. There is still no one wearing a seatbelt, but this time no one is drunk or fatigued. And the time is different. It's around suppertime, and the car is heading to a high school hockey game or football game, but it's late, so the car is speeding. Ask the driver to put both hands on the wheel, one foot on the pedal, and make a funny speed face. Tell the front seat passenger that they are having an argument with one of the passengers in the back seat. There's lots of yelling back and forth and finger pointing, but no physical contact. The two passengers can be blaming each other for the car being late. Tell the remaining passengers that they're partying while driving. They can sing or yell, and one of them should also be poking the driver who's trying to concentrate. Tell everyone that at the count of three, they all must play their role as described, but before they do, give the driver a cell phone, and ask them to pretend to be texting while driving (or making a TikTok video). Tell the driver that after a few seconds they should turn around and tell everyone to shut up, and that the passengers should quiet down as soon as that happens.

Quickly debrief and identify the list of distractions in the car, as well as asking why speed is an issue in injury (i.e., the faster the car is going the greater the kinetic energy and the greater the force and worse the injury; the faster the car is going, the less time the driver will have to respond in an emergency).

**Now ask the question:** If we compare the alcohol car with the distracted car, do we think the distracted car is less risky, riskier, or just the same?

Canvas the students for their answers and rationale. There are no right or wrong answers; this question is just to surface opinions.

### **Car 3 Scenario: This is the cannabis car.**

It has some similarities, but also some differences from the other cars. There is still no one wearing a seatbelt. There's no alcohol, fatigue, or distraction. It doesn't matter what time of day it is. In this scenario, the driver and the passengers are really stoned on cannabis. Ask the driver to put both hands on the wheel, their foot on the pedal, and have everyone in the car make their best stoned face.

**Now ask the questions:** If we compare the alcohol car with the distracted car and the new high car, do we think the stoned car is less risky, riskier, or just the same?

Canvas the students for their answers and rationale. Remind them that the space is confidential, so please be honest.

In many classes, a significant number of students will say that the stoned car is less risky, for a variety of reasons, but often because they think the high driver will be more relaxed, less stressed or anxious, more focused and concentrated, and more paranoid (so they're driving slower). Some students will go as far as saying that the high driver will be an even better driver than a sober driver. The teacher should still allow all answers at this point, paying attention to points that can be discussed later.

Let the students know that the driver of the stoned car drives high all the time; even when he passed his driver's exam. This new information may increase the number of students believing that the high car is less risky. The teacher should still allow all answers at this point, paying attention to points that can be discussed later.

#### **Car 4 Scenario: This is the prescription drug car.**

It is driven by someone impaired on a prescription drug. The teacher should explain that prescription drugs are medicine that doctors give patients who are sick or injured. If you are not sick or injured and take a prescription drug, it can hurt you or severely impair driving skills. They are especially harmful when mixed with other drugs, like alcohol. A prescription drug impaired car can be unpredictable and unsafe.

## **Part 2**

Return to the cannabis car again and ask all the students who said it was less risky to move into the high driver's car. Remind everyone that the driver drives high all the time and has never been in a crash. Any students who are uncomfortable being passengers in the cannabis car should take a seat in one of the other cars. This will be a bit chaotic, but essential for the next step. If there's a mass exodus, have some fun with the group. Tell them the cannabis car is going on a great road trip with a never-ending supply of food. Anything that will convince some of the students to stay in the car.

Tell the class that it is no longer a car. It is now a large passenger jet, and the pilot and co-pilot are stoned. They like to smoke before take-off because it chills them out and helps them focus. They've also done this before, and never crashed, and the plane does have autopilot. Statistically speaking flying is also the safest form of travel. If any students choose to stay on the plane, ask them to explain why. If there is a mass exodus, remind them that the plane is going somewhere amazing, and the pilots have done this before, and never crashed.

Hopefully there are still some students left on the plane—one of whom you'll ask to volunteer for the next part of the activity. Ask them to lie on the ground on their back, with another volunteer standing up beside them. Explain that it is no longer a car, or plane, but it is now the operating room of a hospital, and the student on the ground is about to have surgery, and the volunteer standing up is the surgeon. Tell the patient that the doctor likes to operate high because their hands are steadier, and they are more focused and relaxed. Ask the patient if they are okay being operated on by a stoned surgeon.

If the patient says okay, you can have some fun with the scenario and see how they react when you add specific details: maybe the operation is repairing a broken leg, maybe it's laser eye surgery, maybe the operation is on a sensitive area of the body.

If the patient does agree with the surgery, it's a good time to check in with the other students for their opinions. Good decision, or bad?

There is one more step you can take if the patient says yes to the surgery. Ask the patient to take a seat in a chair and ask two other students to pull their chairs up on either side of the patient's chair. Explain that this is no longer an operating room, and the patient is now the single parent of the two students on either side. They are twin babies, and the parent is about to put them in their car seats and take them to the doctor for a routine vaccination. Just before the appointment, there is a message for the parent to report to work, and they can't get out of the shift. The only person who can drive the babies to the doctor is the parent's stoner sibling.

Ask the parent if it's okay for the kids to be driven to the doctor by a stoned driver. If they think it's okay, you can ask the rest of the class what their decision would be, and why—typically there is wisdom from someone that says it's a bad idea.

If you want to drive one more point home—if the parent finally decides it's more important for them to miss work and face consequences and drive their kids to the doctor sober, give them the bad news that on the way he gets into a crash with a stoned driver—his sibling. The point is, you can do whatever is in your control to reduce risk, but what is out of your control is what other drivers are doing.

Thank the students for their honesty and take a moment for a reality check:

- **Cannabis impairs brain function.**
- **It can affect the brain in some similar ways to alcohol, and it can affect the brain in some different ways.**
- **We're not telling you NOT to use cannabis, but to understand that if you're doing something that requires a lot of attention and skill—like driving a vehicle or using machinery—there's an increased risk of injury.**

To wrap up this section of the activity the teacher will make the following points if they haven't already been made:

- The scenarios may seem very different (car vs. plane vs. operating room, etc.), but the principle of impairment when doing a task that requires attention is the same. Impairment by alcohol increases the risk of injury. Distraction increases the risk of injury. And impairment by cannabis also increases the risk of injury.
- Knowing how long impairment can last, and before impairment begins to impact the body, is important decision-making information to have. For example, cannabis edibles take longer before effects manifest. A combination of cannabis and alcohol used at the same time is even worse.



- Prescription drugs that impact the brain—especially response time and alertness— increase the risk of injury.
- This lesson is not meant to demonize any one drug, rather to give students information that will help with their decision making. Youth (and adults) have a great deal of power over when and where they choose to be impaired and distracted, and it is helpful to have a conversation about avoiding impairment and distraction in situations that require a high level of skill and attention.

### Part 3 (Optional)

To further drive home the previous point, ask everyone to imagine a fifth car that we'll call the angelic car, because everybody is doing the right thing in the vehicle. There is no impairment (including fatigue), no distractions, no speeding—no issues of concern. If everyone is doing everything right, including wearing their seatbelts, does that mean there's no risk for everyone in this car? If the answer is no, where does the risk come from? It comes from others on the road who may not be as safety-conscious.

## Check-out

There are five slides on the floor which help surface feelings about the class. The teachers remind students not to stand on or near a slide if they don't mean it. We want authentic responses, without judgment. Examples of slides are:

- The class was fun.
- The class was boring.
- The class helped me learn new stuff.
- The class didn't teach me anything new.
- I felt comfortable during the class.
- I felt uncomfortable during the class

If you sense safety in the room, feel free to quickly probe and ask students some quick questions about why they chose to stand where they were. The activity can also be done “Move into the Circle” style.

## Moving Forward

- Share information about the “Designated Driver” campaign in the United States, which made the term a household name and created an identity for people who remain safe and supportive at parties. Have students research the campaign and find out how effective it has been in Canada by comparing statistics around impaired driving.
- Have students write a reflection on which car they feel is the most risky and why. Tally the results and share them with the class.
- If you teach in a community where youth are using off-highway vehicles (OHVs), consider doing a modification of this activity replacing a car with an OHV. Additionally, you could hold space for conversations around risks of impaired driving and OHVs.





**Heck no.**

**Never.**

I'm very  
cautious.



**Very,  
very little  
risky stuff  
for me.**



Sure, if I'm  
**sober,**  
**wearing**  
**safety gear,**  
**and trained.**



**Always up  
for trying  
risky stuff.**





**Anywhere,  
anytime, and  
if someone  
records it.**



# From the Ground Up

A health promotion and harm reduction curriculum resource to address youth substance use, gaming, and gambling

## 9.3 Risky Business (Part 2)





# Grade 9: Lesson 3—Risky Business (Part 2)

## Outcome

- Identify and practise negotiation, assertiveness and refusal skills related to sexual activity, alcohol, tobacco, cannabis and gambling

## Guiding Question

- What is the relationship between substance use and the safety of self and others as a driver, a passenger, and a pedestrian/rider?

## Student Goals

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to

- reflect on their own refusal skills and risk tolerance when it comes to risky driving
- apply the idea of informed consent to risky scenarios like driving

**Estimated Time:** 1 hour

## Materials

- chairs for car scenarios
- Levels of Risk-taking slides
- Consent to Risk slides
- Gotta go! slides

## Facilitation Tips

- Try to take the moments before and after the activity to check in with individual students; especially those you worry might need extra support based on your experience of them in these lessons. There may be students and staff with past histories of car crashes, injuries, and death. Those stories may be known, but sometimes not.
- Remind students about school support people and the option to take a break if the discussion becomes too personal or intense.

- This lesson can bring a lot of laughter and fun, while also delivering very serious messages. Use your own energy and volume to model to the group. If you want them to get up and engage you can be louder and faster in your speaking and moving. If you're hoping to bring things into a more serious or thoughtful place you can slow down and get quieter.

## Background

Car crashes are a leading cause of death for teenagers in Canada. Getting a driver's license is a rite of passage for many young people, giving them a sense of independence and freedom, but also a new vector for risk-taking.

The second hour of this activity (9.3) takes a closer look at risk-taking and refusal skills—the power to say no to a situation, or the power to actively remove oneself from a risky situation, and to support friends who want to say no.

## Check-in

Place the five Levels of Risk-taking slides (from Risky Business Part I) on the floor and ask if anyone in the class has changed where they would stand based on the first session. For those that say something has changed, ask them to stand on where they were the first time, and then where they've moved to, and, if they feel comfortable, to explain the shift.

- **Heck no. Never. I'm very cautious.**
- **Very, very little risky stuff for me.**
- **Sure, if I'm sober, wearing safety gear, and trained.**
- **Always up for trying risky stuff.**
- **Anywhere, anytime, and if someone records it.**

Teachers should play too. See if you notice any gender differences, or if students want to change their answer based on how peers answer. This information can be used later to ask about how relationships might affect attitudes toward risk-taking. Ask students to remember where they stood for later.



# Activity

## Part 1: Risky Conditions

If the class has already covered topics related to sexuality and consent, this is an opportunity to expand on ideas such as **coercion** and **informed consent**. Teachers can remind students to think back to those lessons.

**Are there lessons related to sex and informed consent that could or should be used for other risky situations? Let's try an activity to find out.**

Ask one of the students to pull their chair into the middle of the circle. They're in the driver's seat of a car. They're going to pick up four other people and head to a field where there's a concert and fireworks. Ask four volunteers to bring their chairs in and create the rest of the car (two chairs in the front, three in the back).

Around the newly formed car the teacher lays down the following slides, face down. On the flip side of each slide is information that could dissuade someone from getting into the car. Have a volunteer pick up and read one. The teacher will then ask the passengers whether they would have gotten into the car if they knew the information on the slide. Repeat for all slides. Consider switching out the volunteers in the car halfway through if engagement is waning.

- **The driver has an active case of herpes.**
- **The driver lives and breathes the game Grand Theft Auto.**
- **The driver ate three cans of beans.**
- **The driver hasn't slept for 36 hours.**
- **The driver just binged watched all the Fast and Furious movies.**
- **The driver stole and swallowed some prescription drugs from home to try and get high.**

*The idea that if you want to have sex with someone, you're in charge of making sure the other person is cool with it, they have all the information they need to make a good decision, and they are saying yes freely and with enthusiasm, without fear or intimidation, or any other type of coercion. And during sex a person is free to withdraw consent at any time if they're feeling uncomfortable.*

- The driver is raging from an argument at home and needs to drive to calm down.
- The driver had a few beers an hour before picking everyone up.

If the circle has other suggestions feel free to keep the activity going. Encourage the passengers—and anyone else in the circle—to explain their reluctance to get into the car for each new piece of information.

Remind the class that consent is dynamic, and a person can stop having sex any time they want. **Are there comparisons with risky conditions?**

Five more slides are put face down somewhere else in the circle revealing new information that may make a passenger want to get out of the car. As they are turned over and read by a volunteer, canvas the passengers to see who wants out, and who would take action to get out of the car.

- The driver is always passing in no-passing zones.
- The driver pulls out a flask of alcohol and starts to drink while driving.
- The driver is constantly texting while driving.
- The driver who got into the car angry is still raging and is now having a huge argument with someone in the backseat.
- The weather has turned lousy, with heavy rain, but the driver refuses to slow down and drive safely for the conditions.

Encourage the passengers—and anyone else in the circle—to explain why they want out of the car, but also if they would say something. Like before, see if there are other suggestions from the circle for discussion.

There's no judgement if you feel the risk and feel scared, but don't want to say something. It's important to **surface the challenges with refusing to get into the car, and the challenges in asking to get out of the car.** Refusing to get in and asking to get out sound simple in theory, but can be difficult.

For those students who say they would have no problem refusing to get into the car when they know there's a risk, or have no problem asking to get out, seek their wisdom and have them explain their thinking. Maybe even ask them to model a conversation and see how the driver reacts.





On the floor are five more slides, each with a handy excuse students can use in risky situations where they want to leave the risky conditions:

- **I haven't changed the cat litter in six months. Gotta go.**
- **Great horny toads! My pants are on fire! Gotta go. (Thanks to Yosemite Sam for the quote).**
- **I have diarrhea. Gotta go.**
- **I just remembered I have Healthy Living homework. Gotta go.**
- **Sorry, I'm learning Spanish on this app and I'm really locked in. Tengo que irme ahora (Gotta go).**

All kidding aside, refusal skills—the ability to say no or navigate yourself out of a risky situation—is an amazing life skill to have. Three things can help:

- 1. Think in advance of a situation—if possible—and consider if you'll say no and how you'll say no.**
- 2. Supportive friends, who have your back in a risky situation, and support you refusing to do something so you don't feel and look bad.**
- 3. Just like the person who is trying to secure informed consent in a sexual situation, and encourages the other person to say no to sex, and to end consent if they're feeling uncomfortable, the person at the centre of the risk (e.g., the driver) can help friends feel comfortable to say no. That may not sound realistic, but consider it good behaviour and perhaps a responsibility if you're leading your friends into risky conditions.**

## Part 2 : Refusal Skills

Students in grade 9 are rarely old enough for a driver's license, but they're often passengers in cars with other teenagers, and they may have already witnessed risk-taking (impaired driving, distracted driving, and dangerous driving). This last activity is a chance to explore refusal skills and the idea of an exit strategy when youth are aware of risky conditions.

Ask volunteers to recreate a risky car scenario they've witnessed by pulling together the number of chairs and people they need to create a picture of the risk. For example, a student was a passenger in a car racing against another car on the highway. Ask five volunteers to bring their chairs into the middle of the circle and create a five-passenger car.

Check in with the class to see if they would be comfortable speaking up in the car if they were uncomfortable, and why. What's the impact of speaking up, or saying no to getting into the car in the first place if they suspect there will be risk? How supportive are students of their friends who don't want to be in the car? How would substance use (alcohol or marijuana) impact the scenario, especially the refusal piece and the support for friends?

The closing message is simple and reinforces the earlier message. Refusal skills are important, but not always easy to put into practice:

- You'll likely never regret saying no to a situation you know could leave you or others hurt.
- You'll never regret supporting friends to say no in a risky situation.
- You'll never regret supporting friends to say no if you're the one influencing a situation where there is risk.

## Check-out

There are five slides on the floor which help surface feelings about the class. The teachers remind students not to stand on or near a slide if they don't mean it. We want authentic responses, without judgment. Examples of slides are:

- The class was fun.
- The class was boring.
- The class helped me learn new stuff.
- The class didn't teach me anything new.
- I felt comfortable during the class.
- I felt uncomfortable during the class

If you sense safety in the room, feel free to quickly probe and ask students some quick questions about why they chose to stand where they were. The activity can also be done "Move into the Circle" style.

## Moving Forward

- Ask students to reflect on the ideas of coercion and informed consent. Where else can you apply these concepts in your life?



The driver has  
**an active  
case of  
herpes.**



The driver  
**lives and  
breathes**  
the game  
**Grand Theft  
Auto.**



The driver  
**ate three  
cans of  
beans.**





The driver  
**hasn't slept  
for 36 hours.**



The driver just  
**binge-watched**  
all the  
**Fast and  
Furious  
movies.**



The driver **stole**  
**and swallowed**  
some  
**prescription**  
**drugs** from  
home to try  
**to get high.**



The driver is  
**raging from**  
**an argument**  
at home and  
needs to drive  
**to calm down.**





The driver had  
**a few beers**  
an hour  
**before**  
**picking**  
**everyone up.**



I haven't  
**changed the  
cat litter in  
six months.  
Gotta go.**



**Great horny  
toads!**

My pants  
are on fire!

**Gotta go.**



I have  
**diarrhea.**  
**Gotta go.**





I just  
remembered

**I have  
Healthy  
Living**

homework.

**Gotta go.**



Sorry, I'm  
**learning**  
**Spanish on**

this app and I'm  
really locked in.

**Tengo que irme**  
**ahora (Gotta go).**



# From the Ground Up

A health promotion and harm reduction curriculum resource to address youth substance use, gaming, and gambling

## 9.4 Firsts: Revisited





# Grade 9: Lesson 4—Firsts: Revisited

## Outcomes

- analyze their health needs in times of change and apply strategies that enhance their capacity to manage change in their lives
- practice speaking about concerns regarding substance use or gambling in the self or others

## Guiding Questions

- What are some influences on student substance use and gaming and gambling?
- How can we build our own resilience, as well as the resilience of those around us, to those influences?

## Student Goals

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to

- discuss outside influences on their substance use and gaming or gambling
- discuss resilience to these influences and how to build it in themselves and others

**Estimated Time:** 1 hour

**Note:** If the conversation is rich, you may find it best to break this lesson up into two classes. Part 3 could be done in a following class and include role plays on supporting a friend or peer.

## Materials

- Can Be slides (begin on the floor in the circle)
- Conditions and Influences slides
- Resilience slides
- Helpful Firsts slides

## Facilitation Tips

- Try sitting near the quieter students in the circle in some lessons. Often they will participate by sharing some thoughts directly with you.
- Remind students about school support people and the option to take a break if the discussion becomes too personal or intense.
- When students disclose something vulnerable/personal to the class it is often appropriate to note it; thanking them for their contribution, mentioning their bravery, and/or letting them know that if they ever need help you are someone they can come to.

## Background

In grade 7 students may have been introduced to a lesson called Firsts which explored the range of ages when it might be appropriate to begin using a substance or be involved in gaming or gambling, along with some other examples of a first time experience. It was an opportunity to also surface the sorts of conditions that might influence initiation with different substances and activities. Two years later we're revisiting the idea to explore more firsts, but this time the sorts of behaviours we can initiate that help build resilience in ourselves, and the support we can show friends. It's also a chance to reflect on some unhelpful or unhealthy firsts that have already taken place with substances or involvement in some activities, and thinking about the next steps ...will they be helpful or unhelpful?

## Check-in

### A quick and fun move into the circle about firsts:

Move into the circle if you think you'll be the first person in the class to

- be a millionaire
- be famous
- be arrested for something
- climb Mount Everest
- get their driver's licence
- get married
- move away
- go into space
- become a politician
- become a teacher





# Activity

## Part 1

Already on the floor, in the middle of the circle, are the **Can Be slides** (as in, can be used in a way that is an issue):

- **Tobacco**
- **Cannabis**
- **Alcohol**
- **Prescription Drugs**
- **Gambling**
- **Problem Gaming**

Ask students to look at the slides on the floor, and to move into the circle if they've already been involved with one of them for the first time.

Let the class know you will not hold judgement for the next statements. Remind students to stay in the same spot if they'd rather not let the circle know what they're thinking.

Make sure to note that using these is in the category of "can be an issue" rather than "always being problematic." Examples that might help clarify this would be prescription drugs prescribed to you for an illness or chronic condition, tobacco used in ceremony or smudging, or alcohol sipped during religious ceremonies. Remind the class, this is about your own answer; refrain from any reactions if you see or don't see a peer move.

- Move into the circle if you've gone back for seconds with any of them.
- Move into the circle if you're feeling a bit of regret about any of them.
- Move into the circle if the firsts haven't happened yet, but you think it will be different one year from now. What about six months from now? What about later today? (the last one is for the giggle factor)

There is room in the activity for anyone who feels like they want to say something about the regret statement—if they feel comfortable. One way for the teacher to open the door for comments is to ask the class if anyone's grade 7 self would be surprised that they have already made it past the first time for some of the stuff on the floor, in other words, they didn't think they'd be at this stage already. This is a way for the class to revisit some of the conditions or influences; factors that move us to start using a substance, start using a substance in a risky way, and getting involved with something like gambling or gaming. It's a reminder that these influences and conditions can be powerful in our lives and can change our attitudes and behaviours.

Lay down the **Conditions and Influences slides** during the conversation (or before it) as a reminder of what these conditions and influences could be:

- Advertising/Marketing
- Social Media
- Family influence
- Peer Influence
- Pop Culture Influence
- Loneliness
- Boredom
- Stress
- Trauma
- Attention Seeking
- Tradition/Ritual

## Part 2

These conditions and influences can shift our attitudes towards use/involvement, and can change our behaviours towards use/involvement, posing a risk to our health. The influences and conditions—sometimes we call them enabling factors—represent competition to our efforts to be resilient and improve our health.

In the next part of the lesson, we're going to consider how we use resilience to manage our risk and NOT use substances or get involved in activities like gambling or gaming in a way that is unhealthy, or we can use substances and get involved in activities like gambling that reflect moderation and balance (while recognizing there is always a risk involved).

First let's see where the class is in terms of how resilient they feel and how strong their forcefield is towards the influences/conditions. We're going to do a very quick check-in with the four **Resilience slides** on the floor in four different areas of the circle:

- Very Resilient
- Somewhat Resilient
- Not Very Resilient
- Zero Resilience



Resilience in this conversation is about an identity that is comfortable saying no, and resistant to the pressures or influences that may move someone into risky behaviours with substances, gaming, or gambling. Ask for volunteers to stand and move (when they want) to the area that best represents where they are. Teachers should join in.

Inevitably there will be youth and adults in the two more worrisome categories and that's the area we'll explore for the remainder of the lesson: How do we support the building of resilience in our peers and friends?

### Part 3

The last part of the lesson is a reflection on our role in supporting our friends and peers to be resilient in the face of the influences/pressures/conditions that are competing to move us to risky behaviours with substances and activities.

Without judgement, explain that there are people in the room who may soon begin, or are already on, an unhelpful journey with one or more of the substances and/or activities, and the last part of the lesson is a reminder that there's an alternative journey, one that's more helpful, where we can continue to, or for the first time, take some steps to build resilience against some of the conditions that can challenge our good health.

Lay down the **Helpful Firsts slides** on opposite ends of the circle and briefly explain each with a brief example.

- Cried on the shoulder of a friend
- Been the shoulder to cry on for a friend
- Said no to something you didn't want when pressured to say yes
- Supported others to say no to something they didn't want when there was pressure to say yes
- Supported someone to seek help from a professional
- Asked for help from a professional by yourself
- Asked for advice during a tough time
- Given advice during a tough time
- Made a tough change to your habits
- Supported others when making a tough change to their habits
- Been told that someone admires something about you
- Told someone else what you admire about them

Students have learned about the unhelpful conditions and influences that lead us to try substances and become involved in some unhealthy behaviours. We're going to concentrate on the Helpful Firsts now. Go back to Move into the Circle questions with:

- Looking at the slides on the floor, move into the circle if you've already been involved with one of them for the first time.
- Move into the circle if you've gone back for seconds with any of them.
- Move into the circle if you're feeling proud about any of them.

## Check-out

There are five slides on the floor which help surface feelings about the class. The teachers remind students not to stand on or near a slide if they don't mean it. We want authentic responses, without judgment. Examples of slides are:

- The class was fun.
- The class was boring.
- The class helped me learn new stuff.
- The class didn't teach me anything new.
- I felt comfortable during the class.
- I felt uncomfortable during the class

If you sense safety in the room, feel free to quickly probe and ask students some quick questions about why they chose to stand where they were. The activity can also be done "Move into the Circle" style.

## Moving Forward

- Research drinking ages and laws around consumption of substances in different countries and compare them. Decide on the laws they would enact if they were in government.
- Present or show a video on adolescent brain development and the role of the prefrontal cortex. Share how different substances can impact this crucial stage of cognitive development. See [mentalhealthliteracy.org](https://www.mentalhealthliteracy.org) for videos on brain development.
- Have students practice refusal skills and reflect on how it feels.
- Invite students to develop a risk situation for their classmates to respond.



**Tobacco**



**Cannabis**





**Alcohol**



# **Prescription Drugs**



# **Gambling**



# **Problem Gaming**





# **Advertising/ Marketing**



# **Social Media**



# **Family Influence**



# Peer Influence





# **Pop Culture Influence**



**Loneliness**



**Boredom**



**Trauma**





# **Attention Seeking**



**Stress**



# **Tradition/ Ritual**



**Very Resilient**





**Somewhat  
Resilient**



**Not Very  
Resilient**



# Zero Resilience



**Cried on**  
the shoulder  
**of a friend**





**Been the  
shoulder  
to cry on  
for a friend**



**Said no to  
something  
you didn't  
want when  
pressured to  
say yes**



Supported  
others to **say**  
**no** to something  
they didn't want  
when there was  
**pressure to**  
**say yes**



Supported  
someone to  
**seek help  
from a  
professional**





Asked for  
**help from a  
professional**  
by yourself



Asked for  
**advice during  
a tough time**



**Given advice**  
during a  
tough time



Made a tough  
**change to**  
**your habits**





**Supported  
others**

when making a  
**tough change  
to their habits**



Been told that  
someone  
**admires**  
**something**  
**about you**



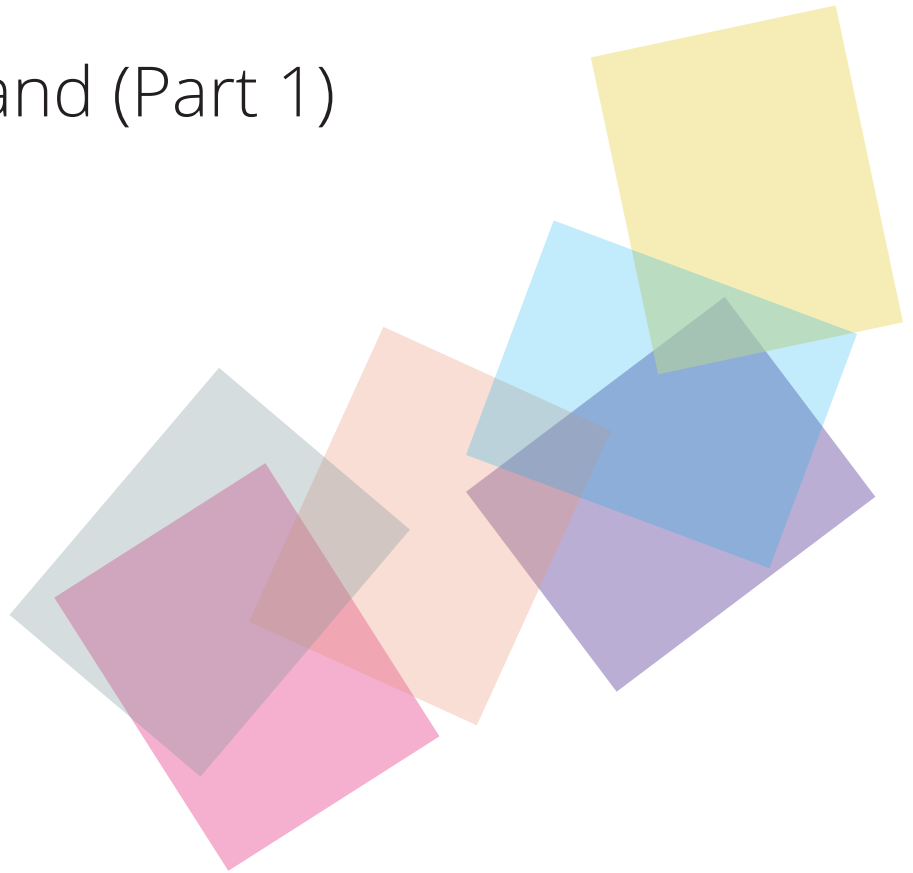
Told someone  
else what you  
**admire about  
them**



# From the Ground Up

A health promotion and harm reduction curriculum resource to address youth substance use, gaming, and gambling

## 9.5 Drug Land (Part 1)







# Grade 9: Lesson 5—Drug Land (Part 1)

## Outcome

- Synthesize the fundamentals of drug education related to use of alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, cannabis, including the short- and long-term risks and signs of concern along the continuum of use.

## Guiding Question

- What are the enabling and protective factors associated with higher risk use of alcohol and cannabis?

## Student Goals

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to

- consider the influences on their alcohol use; both protective and enabling factors
- reflect on the difference between messaging about alcohol in advertising and the reality of the consequences of alcohol use

**Estimated Time:** 1 hour

## Materials

- Categories of Alcohol Use slides
- Alcohol Consumption slides
- Check-out slides

## Facilitation Tips

- Not everyone will be able to volunteer in the Lesson 5 (Part 1) activities with a typical class size. That doesn't mean students won't be participating at all—many will walk themselves through the activity internally. Teachers also have the option of dividing the class in two, finding a second space and more teachers/facilitators and providing more opportunities for students to outwardly participate. They could also create two concentric circles where the inside circle participates actively and the outside circle is asked to reflect on what they see.

- Students may share stories during the session that can raise concerns for teachers about the health of the student, or the health of other students. Teachers must explain to students that they have a “duty to report”—to break confidentiality—if they hear anything that makes them believe a student is at risk of harming themselves, harming someone else, or being harmed by someone.
- Like other lessons, Drug Land has the potential to surface intense emotions because of past or ongoing trauma involving substance use. Drug Land should not be run on a day when school supports are not available (e.g., school counselor, social worker). It’s also important that the activity does not shame youth who are using drugs.
- Non-judgemental language often necessitates validation of where a student is and then a compassionate approach. Consider the difference between “Oh no, that’s a risky thing to be doing at your age” and “Of course, the pressures are so heavy to use, and if you ever want to have a conversation about it I’m here for you.”

## Background

Drug Land is a two-part lesson designed to create an awareness of the conditions that can influence the way we use alcohol and cannabis. The activity surfaces the protective factors that help students maintain a lower risk relationship with alcohol or cannabis, but also surfaces the enabling factors that may push a student into a higher risk relationship with both drugs. **Alcohol is the focus for Part 1 of the lesson, with cannabis the focus of Part 2.**

Convincing young people about the harmful impacts of alcohol and cannabis can be a challenge, but there is one primary fact youth should know:

**The longer you can delay using both alcohol and cannabis, the less likely you are to have an unhealthy relationship with both drugs. Delaying initiation and regular use of alcohol and cannabis until the brain can more fully develop can be a challenge but is beneficial for our health.**

Some students may be shy about participating. Remind everyone that it’s okay to sit back and listen. It can be helpful for a student who is shy but wants to participate to have them stand up and do it in tandem with another youth, or with the teacher.



# Check-in

As quickly as possible, go around the room and have each person name a different type of alcohol or brand name of alcohol. We'll use the results of this later in the lesson.

## Activity

### Part 1: Alcohol

On the floor are eight **Categories of Alcohol Use slides**, arranged from non-drinker to alcohol dependent:

1. **Non-Drinker:** You don't drink. Maybe you did but stopped. Or maybe it's because of religious, cultural, health or other personal reasons.
2. **Social Drinker:** You'll have a drink on special occasions, maybe a couple times each year and usually with family.
3. **Weekend Drinker:** You'll have a couple of drinks on the weekend, but you don't get drunk and it's not every weekend.
4. **Regular Drinker:** You're drinking every day, but never more than one or two drinks, and never trashed.
5. **Occasionally Trashed:** You drink to get drunk, occasionally.
6. **Accidentally Trashed:** You never planned to get drunk, but it happened.
7. **Regularly Trashed:** You drink to get drunk, usually on the weekend.
8. **Alcohol Dependent:** You have a dependency on the drug.

Briefly describe each category and explain that students will have a chance to share where they are by standing on the one category, or multiple categories, that best describe their alcohol use. As the activity unfolds, teachers should refer to areas on the floor as higher risk and lower risk. The repetition will help everyone understand that there is a scale of risk associated with drinking, with some areas more concerning than others.

**Lower risk areas: 1-3**

**Higher risk areas: 4-8**

- The teacher should go first and take themselves back to the average age of the students in the class, and describe which category or categories best described them at that age, and if they feel comfortable, why they were there. The teacher can briefly move forward in time, describing where they were at various ages, until present day, and sharing—if they feel comfortable—what moved them from place to place, finally disclosing where they are now. This kind of sharing can help build rapport with students and will demonstrate that everyone is encouraged to participate. If a teacher is uncomfortable with some part of this, it might be enough to disclose where you were in younger years and stop there, with a message that it has changed since then.
- Ask for a volunteer to go next, and to stand on the category or categories that best represents their own alcohol use now. When we say categories, a student may say they are mostly a social drinker, but occasionally will get trashed, so they may have a foot on two slides. Wherever they choose to stand, ask if they're comfortable sharing why they're there.
- Next, ask the youth to stand where they think they'll be during the years up until legal drinking age, and to explain why.

The job of the teacher during this phase of the activity is to gently try to probe to find out what factors may increase use, and what factors may decrease use or keep a student in one area. We're looking for the conditions that drive riskier use, but also the conditions that protect or keep them in a lower risk area of alcohol use.

- Optional question: Ask the youth about when they had their first unsupervised drink, and if they can remember what they drank, and if they enjoyed it. Teachers should always remind students that sharing is optional and to only share what they feel comfortable sharing. Why would we ask this question? It's not to record it and share it with anyone, but it helps build a better picture of alcohol use in our communities.
- Next, ask the youth to move to where they think they will be when they are legal drinking age. Repeat the question, except now they've graduated and moved on to work, or college or university, or they're at home to raise a family, etc.
- Next, ask about where they may be later in their 20s, and into their 30s, 40s, and onward. As the youth respond to new scenarios, ask them to explain their rationale for moving categories or for staying put. Throughout these questions the teacher may be asking, *Where do you think you'll be?* and *Where do you want to be (at a certain stage of your life)?* Add some more playful questions at the end, like, *Where do you think you'll be on your 100th birthday?*

If youth disclose higher risk drinking patterns, it's okay to offer up support in front of everyone.

A simple statement like:

**I really appreciate your honesty, and if you ever want to chat about the way you use alcohol I'm here and can connect with others for support.**

Once enough of the class has had a chance to get up, or everyone who is willing to volunteer, you can do a quick debrief with a simple question, like:

**Were you surprised where everyone was? Were you surprised where everyone thinks they'll be?**

There is a reason why we want to ask these questions. It can be beneficial for a youth to hear that their peers are not drinking as much as they perceived (breaking social norms). As well, youth who stand in a higher risk area may be surprised that most of their peers are in a lower risk area, and want to remain in that safer area, and that may initiate some reflection for the students standing in the higher risk areas.

By keeping the probing light, and even a bit playful, you'll likely have better engagement with the youth and hear more authentic responses. (See Sample Q&A at the end of the lesson.)

Next, ask the class questions about **help-seeking**. Ask a student if they think it's in-bounds or out-of-bounds of a friendship to say something when you think a friend is moving into riskier drinking territory. And at what point on the scale of drinking do you start to get concerned and want to say something? What are the signs that someone may be having an issue with their alcohol use?

Make sure to share with the circle what the science says about alcohol:

**The longer you can delay using both alcohol and cannabis, the less likely you are to have an unhealthy relationship with both drugs. Delaying initiation and regular use of alcohol and cannabis until the brain can more fully develop can be a challenge but is beneficial for our health.**

## Part 2 : Relationships with Alcohol

Once everyone has finished, ask the circle to think back to the fun time check-in and all the brands and names of alcohol that were mentioned. If everyone or almost everyone was able to name a brand it's not surprising given how much alcohol advertising is out there—and considering how the the alcohol industry markets to specific groups, even those who are at a higher risk of experiencing harm. (The teacher can also show how tactics are similar to those historically used by the tobacco industry. The intent would not be to demonize alcohol, but to show how the alcohol industry benefits from consumption of a harmful product.)

Ask for volunteers to share what they think the industry is trying to tell people about what their life will be like if alcohol is part of their life. Lay out the **Alcohol Consumption slides** to reveal what the alcohol industry is telling us about alcohol, but also the reality of what is happening to people who misuse alcohol:

- **More Sex**
- **More Parties**
- **More Friends**
- **Wild Times**
- **More Popular**
- **More Normal**
- **More Money**
- **Other Good Stuff?**

We want to ask youth if the slides on the floor tell the whole story about what a person's life is like if they drink, and if the answer is no, to explain why not. We're not asking this question to demonize alcohol, rather create some awareness that the industry is trying to do one thing—sell more alcohol. Students will hopefully provide a bit of a reality check to what's on the slides, but if anything is missing, the teacher will flip the slides over to reveal another side to the story with the points below:

- **Injuries** (An increase in motor vehicle crashes, drownings, violence, falls, and suicide attempts.)
- **Disease** (An increase in cancers, heart disease, diabetes, and other illnesses.)
- **Sexual Violence** (Alcohol is a factor in many sexual assaults.)
- **Addiction** (The earlier you start using—especially the risky use of alcohol—the greater the chances of dependence issues.)



- **Other Drugs** (The earlier you start using alcohol—especially the risky use of alcohol—the greater the chances of using other drugs.)
- **Less Money** (The industry just wants your money, and they don't care about your gender identity, your sexual identity, your race, or anything, they just want you to buy more alcohol.)
- **Mental Health** (There are brain development problems with youth drinking, linkages with depression and alcohol as self-medication, problems and drama in relationships.)
- **Other Bad Stuff?** (Potential for FASD if pregnant and there may be other thoughts in the group.)

Having a healthier relationship with alcohol, delaying initiation, and avoiding risky use may reduce the chances of the consequences happening, but there is never a “no-risk” area, because even being a non-drinker is not zero risk if you're around people who are drinking.

## Check-out

There are five slides on the floor which help surface feelings about the class. The teachers remind students not to stand on or near a slide if they don't mean it. We want authentic responses, without judgment. Examples of slides are:

- The class was fun.
- The class was boring.
- The class helped me learn new stuff.
- The class didn't teach me anything new.
- I felt comfortable during the class.
- I felt uncomfortable during the class

If you sense safety in the room, feel free to quickly probe and ask students some quick questions about why they chose to stand where they were. The activity can also be done “Move into the Circle” style.

# Moving Forward

- Have students create honest ads that include information about the consequences of alcohol use.
- Ask students to map their community for places that sell alcohol and prominent alcohol ads as well as noting their proximity to schools, daycares, and playgrounds.

## Sample Q & As

### Student 1

**Facilitator: Okay, where are you now?**

Youth: Non-drinker.

**F: Have you ever had a drink?**

Y: Yes, every Christmas Dad gives me a sip of his beer.

**F: Do you like it?**

Y: No, it's terrible.

**F: Okay, so you're 14 now. You've got several years until you're legal drinking age in Nova Scotia. Where do you think you'll be if we checked in when you're in high school, like 16 or 17 years old?**

Y: Non-drinker.

**F: For real?**

Y: Yes.

**F: Why?**

Y: Uhm, I've seen what it can do to people, and I just don't want to be anywhere else but here.

**F: That's cool. So now you're 19. You're legal! Where are you?**

Y: Non-drinker.

**F: So, you're not even curious about what it might be like to be trashed?**

Y: Nope.

**F: What if all your friends are doing it?**

Y: I don't care.





**F: Okay, so, a question. You must have seen some alcohol advertising out there. You probably know that the industry spends millions of dollars to get you to drink, and you're saying no. And you're saying no to peer pressure too. What's your "force field?" What's protecting you from all the pressure to drink?**

Y: I've seen people get wasted and I've seen stupid stuff happen. I like to be in control. I just don't want to do it.

**F: Okay, so just a few more questions. What about when you're in your 20s?**

Y: Non-drinker.

**F: 40s?**

Y: Non-drinker.

**F: 60s?**

Y: Non-drinker.

**F: 100-years old!**

Y: Okay, I might have one drink!

**F: Haha, Okay, you're off the hook. Thanks.**

## Student 2

**Facilitator: Okay, where are you now?**

Youth: Between Social Drinker and Weekend Drinker.

**F: Can I ask you when you had your first drink?**

Y: I was 11.

**F: Was it supervised or unsupervised?**

Y: Supervised.

**F: It's cool that you're so honest, thanks. Okay, so you're 14 now ... you've got several years until you're legal drinking age. Where do you think you'll be if we caught up with you when you're 16 or 17?**

Y: I think in between Occasionally Trashed and Regularly Trashed.

**F: So that's where you think you're going to be, but is that where you want to be?**

Y: Not really, but I think there will be a lot more peer pressure.

**F: That's fair enough, so happy birthday. You're now legal drinking age. Where are you?**

Y: I think I'll still be between the two trashed categories.

**F: What about after graduation?**

Y: I'll be in university, and I think I'll be Regularly Trashed! Cuz of the parties, but, I mean, it's also tough because I want to do well in school.

**F: It sounds like there might be a difference between where you think you'll be and where you want to be.**

Y: Yeah, I'd like to be maybe a weekend drinker, or even a social drinker, but it might be tough.

**F: Because of the peer pressure? Because it might be difficult to stay in and study if everyone's partying, or show up at a party and not drink?**

Y: I don't know. I don't know what it will be like.

**F: No problem. But how does peer pressure impact you now?**

Y: I'm actually good. I don't let people pressure me. But like I said, maybe there's more peer pressure in high school, and then even more in university.

**F: What about after school, into your 20s and 30s?**

Y: I want to go back down to being a Social or Weekend Drinker, especially if I have a job or I have a family.

**F: Will it be difficult to dial it back especially if you're been in those higher risk areas for so long?**

Y: Maybe I'll still get drunk now and then, but I have to be calm, because I've got a job, and maybe a family, and I want to be careful how much I drink in front of them.

**F: Thanks so much for the honesty.**



# 1. Non-drinker

You don't drink.  
Maybe you did but stopped. Or maybe it's because of religious, cultural, health, or other personal reasons.



## **2. Social Drinker**

You'll have a drink  
on special occasions,  
maybe a couple times  
each year and  
usually with family.



# **3. Weekend Drinker**

You'll have a couple of drinks on the weekend, but you don't get drunk and it's not every weekend.





## **4. Regular Drinker**

You're drinking every day, but never more than one or two drinks, and never trashed.



# **5. Occasionally Trashed**

You drink to get  
drunk, occasionally.



# **6. Accidentally Trashed**

You never planned  
to get drunk,  
but it happened.



# **7. Regularly Trashed**

You drink to get drunk, usually on the weekend.





# 8. Alcohol Dependent

You have a  
dependency on  
the drug.



**More Sex**

# **Sexual Violence**

**More Parties**

# Injuries

**More Friends**

# **Mental Health**



**Wild Times**

**Disease**

**More Popular**

# Addiction

**More Normal**

# Other Drugs

**More Money**

**Less Money**



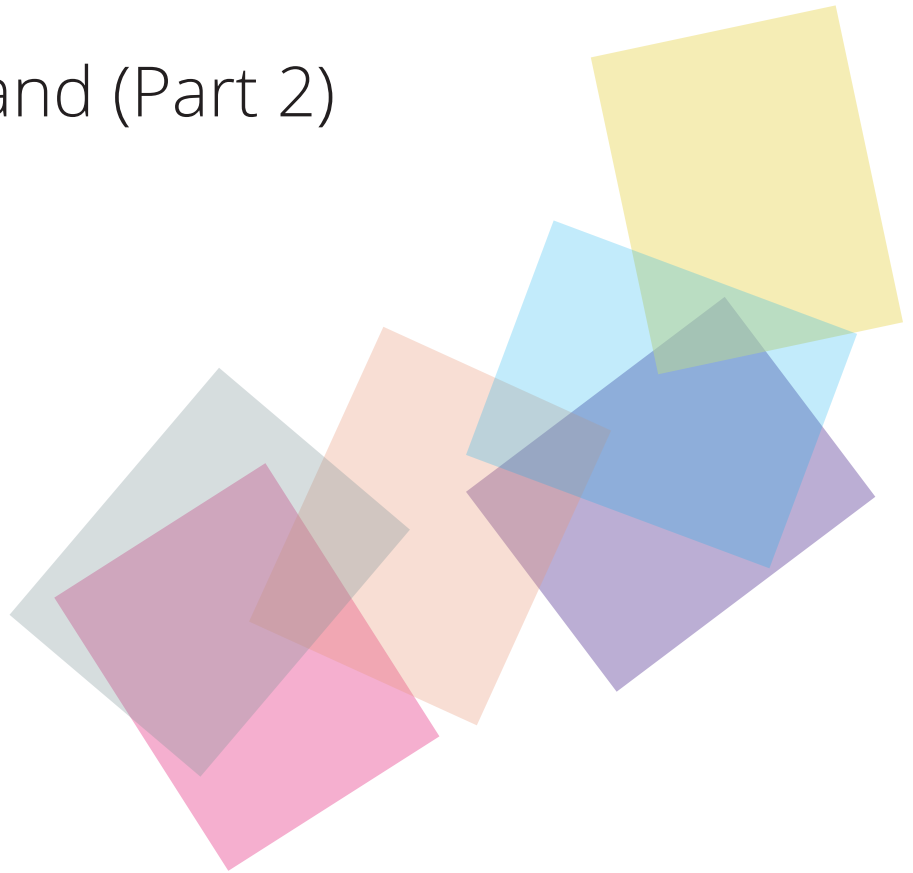
**Other Good  
Stuff?**

**Other Bad  
Stuff?**

# From the Ground Up

A health promotion and harm reduction curriculum resource to address youth substance use, gaming, and gambling

## 9.6 Drug Land (Part 2)





# Grade 9: Lesson 6—Drug Land (Part 2)

## Outcomes

- Recognize the impact that substance use and gambling can have on mental health issues, including depression and anxiety.
- Synthesize the fundamentals of drug education related to use of alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, cannabis, including the short- and long-term risks and signs of concern along the continuum of use.

## Guiding Question

- What are the enabling and protective factors associated with higher risk use of alcohol and cannabis?

## Student Goals

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to

- reflect on the consequences of alcohol and cannabis use in their own lives, their families, and communities
- consider influences on their cannabis use; both enabling and protective factors

**Estimated Time:** 1 hour

## Materials

- Drug Land slides (printed double-sided with cannabis use on the other side of the alcohol slides)
- SAM slide
- Consequences slides (plus Happening and Not Happening slides)
- Check-out slides

## Facilitation Tips

- Not everyone will be able to volunteer in the activities with a typical class size. That doesn't mean students won't be participating—many will walk themselves through the activity internally. Teachers also have the option of dividing the class in two, finding a second space and more teachers/facilitators and providing more opportunities for students to participate.
- Students may share stories during the session that can raise concerns for teachers about the health of the student, or the health of other students. Teachers must explain to students that they have a “duty to report”—to break confidentiality—if they hear anything that makes them believe a student is at risk of harming themselves, harming someone else, or being harmed by someone.
- Like other lessons, Drug Land has the potential to surface intense emotions because of past or ongoing trauma involving substance use. Drug Land should not be run on a day when school supports are not available (e.g., school counsellor). It's also important that the activity does not shame youth who are using drugs.

## Background

Drug Land is a two-part lesson designed to create an awareness of the conditions that can influence the way we use alcohol and cannabis. The activity surfaces the protective factors that help students maintain a lower risk relationship with alcohol or cannabis, but also surfaces the enabling factors that may push a student into a higher risk relationship with both drugs.

Convincing young people about the harmful impacts of alcohol and cannabis can be a challenge, but there is one primary fact youth should know:

**The longer you can delay using both alcohol and cannabis, the less likely you are to have an unhealthy relationship with both drugs. Delaying initiation and regular use of alcohol and cannabis until the brain can more fully develop can be a challenge but is beneficial for our health.**

Some students may be shy about participating. Remind everyone that it's okay to sit back and listen. It can be helpful for a student who is shy but wants to participate to have them stand up and do it in tandem with another youth, or with the teacher.



# Activity

## Part 1: Cannabis

Remind students of the previous session on alcohol by laying out the Drug Land slides, alcohol use side up (cannabis side hidden). Today's session is similar, but includes information about cannabis. Include as many volunteers for the activity as time allows.

Next, is the moment of the big reveal where you flip over each alcohol use slide to reveal a cannabis use equivalent. On the floor are now eight categories of cannabis use. With alcohol we used "drinker" throughout the activity, but cannabis can be smoked, consumed as an edible, or inhaled with a vaping device, so we say "user."

1. **Non-user:** You don't use cannabis.
2. **Occasional User:** You'll use cannabis very rarely - only on special occasions - maybe a couple times each year.
3. **Weekend User:** You'll have cannabis sometimes on the weekend, but not a lot.
4. **Regular User:** You use cannabis every day, but not throughout the day, just once at some point - perhaps before you crash.
5. **Occasionally Stoned:** Every once in a while you get really stoned.
6. **Accidentally Stoned:** You never planned to get stoned, but it happened.
7. **Regularly Stoned:** Unlike the regular user category, you get stoned more than once a day.
8. **Stoned 24/7:** You have a dependency on the drug—you're using cannabis and getting stoned throughout the day.

In this lesson, there are fewer questions than included in the alcohol activity. You're more interested in where the youth are, and why. And where their use might go in the future, and why. As was the case when talking about alcohol, the teacher should try to surface the reasons why a person chooses not to use cannabis, as well as the reasons why a person chooses to use cannabis.

- **Where are you now, and why?**
- **Where do you think you want to be in the future, and why?**
- **How different is your position on this spectrum of use between the two substances (alcohol and cannabis) and why?**
- **Is there anything else you want to say about your use or non-use of cannabis now and into the future?**

## Part 2 : Happening/Not Happening

Alcohol and cannabis are widely used drugs, and their use is linked to many consequences—especially when they're consumed in riskier ways (binge drinking, large amounts of cannabis). This part of the lesson will surface a range of consequences associated with them. The task is for students to create a reality check for their community by sorting the **Consequences slides** into two categories: Happening and Not Happening.

- injuries
- other drug use
- the hangover
- brain development problems
- unplanned pregnancy
- intimate partner violence
- prenatal problems
- alcohol poisoning / greening out (cannabis overdose)
- violence
- STIs
- child pornography
- effed-up relationships
- down in the dumps
- I'm hooked
- self-harm
- work & school
- unprotected sex
- you're under arrest
- sexual assault
- it's all-over social media
- you pissed in my flowerpot?

The slides will go down on the floor one-by-one on either side of the circle, one designated Happening and the other Not Happening. The teacher can ask a volunteer or volunteers to manage laying down the slides and arranging them so they're all still visible. The teacher will quickly read each slide and, if needed, provide some elaboration (definitions can be found with slides), and perhaps ask some questions, for example:

**Car Crashes:** Have you ever heard about car crashes when the driver is drunk or high? If people say yes, the slide is placed to the Happening side.

By the end there will be a group of consequences that students acknowledge are happening—that are a reality in their community. This allows the teacher to ask some final questions:

- **Are people your age who use alcohol or cannabis aware of all of these consequences every time they use?**
- **Which of these consequences do you think does the most harm?**
- **How do you feel that a drug causing so much harm is so easy for people—including children—to access and use?**





Remember, when you see alcohol advertising and media depicting cannabis use, that the industry is not telling you the whole story.

### Part 3: SAM

Co-use of alcohol and cannabis at the same time (within a three-hour period) escalates almost all the health risks associated with either drug used on its own. The acronym we use for this type of co-use is called SAM—Simultaneous use of Alcohol and Marijuana.

The SAM slide is laid down. The teacher now says, without judgement, that for anyone in the room who knows they are co-using and are SAM, their risk of consequences is increased—more so than if they were using a single drug. Let students know that support is available if they want to talk about their drug use.

## Check-out

There are five slides on the floor which help surface feelings about the class. The teachers remind students not to stand on or near a slide if they don't mean it. We want authentic responses, without judgment. Examples of slides are:

- The class was fun.
- The class was boring.
- The class helped me learn new stuff.
- The class didn't teach me anything new.
- I felt comfortable during the class.
- I felt uncomfortable during the class

If you sense safety in the room, feel free to quickly probe and ask students some quick questions about why they chose to stand where they were. The activity can also be done “Move into the Circle” style.

## Moving Forward

- Ask students to write the transcript of, or act out and record, a fictional street reporter stopping people to ask about their cannabis use including why they use and what keeps them from higher risk use.
- Ask students to write a short story in the format of a cautionary tale involving one of the consequences of use mentioned in this lesson.

# Consequences Slides

**Alcohol poisoning / greening out** – when someone drinks or uses too much they can have severe side effects. In the most severe cases the person can die, especially from alcohol poisoning.

**Brain development problems** – regular drinking and cannabis use among children and younger youth can impact brain development

**Child pornography** – there are cases of children and youth taking pictures or videos of themselves naked while they're drunk or high and sending them to friends; that's child pornography; if a person passes along the image or video it's also child porn

**Disease** – years of drinking and/or using can increase the chances of a serious chronic disease, like heart disease and some forms of cancer

**Down in the dumps** – a person may feel happy while impaired, but often feels sad when finished using

**Effed-up relationships** – there is often more drama among friends and family when alcohol and/or cannabis are being used

**I'm hooked** – regular drinking and/or cannabis use increases the chances of developing an addiction

**Injuries** – alcohol and cannabis increase the chances of injury; many drownings, car crashes and falls happen when alcohol or cannabis are involved

**Intimate partner violence** – when drugs, especially alcohol, are part of an intimate relationship (all different genders, not just boyfriend and girlfriend) there is an increased risk of violence in the relationship

**Isolation** – sometimes youth become more withdrawn if alcohol and/or cannabis become a regular part of their life

**It's all over social media** – it's common for pictures and videos of drunk and/or high youth to be posted on Facebook which sometimes leads to regret and embarrassment

**Losing interest in stuff** – youth who start to drink or use cannabis often lose interest in things they love (sports, music, etc.)

**Other drug use** – regular use of alcohol and/or cannabis increases the chances of experimentation of other drugs

**Prenatal problems** – when a pregnant person drinks or uses cannabis during pregnancy there is an increased chance of the baby being born with developmental disabilities



**Self-harm** – many cases of suicide and self-harm happen when alcohol and/or cannabis are involved

**Sexual assault** – alcohol and other drugs are very often a factor in sexual assaults

**STIs** – alcohol and cannabis use increases the chances of sexually active people getting sexually transmitted infections because people are less likely to have safer sex

**The hangover** – the headache, nausea, and fatigue that a person feels after being drunk or high

**Unplanned pregnancy** – like the STIs example, alcohol and cannabis can increase the chances of an unplanned pregnancy

**Unprotected sex** – like STIs and unplanned pregnancy, drinking and/or using cannabis can increase the chances of unprotected sex

**Violence** – drugs, especially alcohol, are often a factor in violent acts

**Work & school** – regular drinking and/or using can sometimes impact performance in school and at work

**You pissed in my flowerpot?** – vandalism and public mischief often increases when alcohol and/or cannabis are involved

**You're under arrest** – many crimes are committed when someone is impaired; not to mention it being illegal to drink or use cannabis under the legal age



# 1. Non-drinker

You don't drink.  
Maybe you did but  
stopped. Or maybe  
it's because of  
religious, cultural,  
health, or other  
personal reasons.

# 1. Non-user

You don't use  
cannabis.

## **2. Social Drinker**

You'll have a drink  
on special occasions,  
maybe a couple times  
each year and  
usually with family.

## 2. Occasional User

You'll use cannabis very rarely—only on special occasions—maybe a couple times each year.



# **3. Weekend Drinker**

You'll have a couple of drinks on the weekend, but you don't get drunk and it's not every weekend.

# 3. Weekend User

You'll have cannabis sometimes on the weekend, but not a lot.

## **4. Regular Drinker**

You're drinking every day, but never more than one or two drinks, and never trashed.

## 4. Regular User

You use cannabis every day, but not throughout the day, just once at some point—perhaps before you crash.

# **5. Occasionally Trashed**

You drink to get  
drunk, occasionally.

# 5. Occasionally Stoned

Every once in a while you get really stoned.

# **6. Accidentally Trashed**

You never planned  
to get drunk,  
but it happened.

# 6. **Accidentally Stoned**

You never planned  
to get stoned,  
but it happened.



# **7. Regularly Trashed**

You drink to get drunk, usually on the weekend.

# 7. Regularly Stoned

Unlike the regular user category, you get stoned more than once a day.

# 8. Alcohol Dependent

You have a  
dependency on  
the drug.

## 8. Stoned 24/7

You have a dependency on the drug—you're using cannabis and getting stoned throughout the day.

**injuries**



**other  
drug use**





**the hangover**



**brain  
development  
problems**



**unplanned  
pregnancy**



**intimate  
partner  
violence**





# **prenatal problems**



**alcohol  
poisoning /  
greening out  
(cannabis  
overdose)**



**violence**



**STIs**





**child**

**pornography**



**effed-up  
relationships**



**down in the  
dumps**



**I'm hooked**





**self-harm**



**work &  
school**



**unprotected  
sex**



**you're  
under arrest**





# **sexual assault**



**it's all-over  
social media**



**you pissed  
in my  
flowerpot?**



# Happening





**Not  
Happening**



**SAM**



# From the Ground Up

A health promotion and harm reduction curriculum resource to address youth substance use, gaming, and gambling

## 9.7 Collateral Damage





# Grade 9: Lesson 7—Collateral Damage

## Outcomes

- Synthesize the fundamentals of drug education related to use of alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, cannabis, and other substances, including the short- and long-term risks and signs of concern along the continuum of use.
- Practise speaking about concerns regarding substance use and gaming/gambling in self or others.

## Guiding Question

- What happens to the people and relationships around someone who is using substances, gaming, or gambling a lot?

## Student Goals

By the end of this lesson students should be able to

- list the many ways in which substance use, gaming, or gambling can impact the different facets of someone's life
- list consequences of alcohol use and reflect on how significant they are
- consider the duty of the alcohol industry in communicating consequences of use to the public

**Estimated Time:** 1 hour

## Materials

- Parts of My Life slides
- Consequences slides
- Happening and Not Happening slides

## Facilitation Tips

- Students may disclose personal or familial substance use or gaming/gambling. Let them know, in the moment, that you're open to talking with them more about that, and/or connect with them after the session to offer support or referral.
- Remind the class about the expectations of sharing the space and confidentiality before soliciting personal stories and opinions.
- Self-disclosure is a tool. Different teachers will have varying degrees of comfort talking about their own experiences, but some level of personal sharing builds trust. Make sure not to go too far with the disclosure, though. Keep it short and related to the message of the lesson.

## Background

This lesson is a chance to surface the consequences of substance use, and a pattern of gaming or gambling, on your life. Although the lesson is about more than just the impact on those around you, it's still helpful to explain the idea of collateral damage so the students understand that behaviours have consequences beyond ourselves.

## Check-in

Everyone please form a circle (standing if possible).

Move into the circle if you've ever broken anything, but kept it a secret. Or you thought you kept it a secret, but someone found out.

For whoever stepped in, and understanding the rules of confidentiality, now's the time to share what you damaged (but no pressure).





# Activity

## Part 1: Collateral Damage

What is collateral damage? Imagine you're the main character in a movie. Most of the movie is about you, but there are other characters in the movie, and they're impacted by what happens to you. It's the same thing in real life. If you have a pattern of gambling, you're the main character, but family and friends will be impacted by your gambling too. The impact on others is called collateral damage.

On the floor are slides that reflect different aspects of your life. When a volunteer gets up to stand by one, we ask them to imagine they have an issue with gaming or gambling, or a use issue with tobacco/vaping/alcohol/other drugs. The idea is for the individual and the whole circle to reflect on how their life and the lives of others are impacted by your behaviour.

Youth choose their own issue first and then stand on the different categories and disclose what they think will change or happen. For example, when they stand on money, what will happen if they have a dependence on alcohol? They will have less money, they will ask others for money, they may steal money, and they may do things they don't want to do to make money (vulnerable to sexual exploitation). The **Parts of My Life slides**/categories are:

- Family Relationships
- Friendships
- Intimate Relationships (optional unless they have experienced/observed stuff)
- Job
- Money
- School
- Health (mental, physical, emotional, etc.)
- After School Activities

With larger classes, the teacher can ask a few people to go at the same time and perhaps generate conversation in the class.

## Part 2 : Consequences

Place the **Consequences slides** on the floor, face down. These slides include 20 well-established consequences of alcohol use. Volunteers imagine they are the parent/caregiver of a teenager, and then get up and turn one of the slides over and read it—acknowledging that it’s something that will happen/can happen to their future child (conflict with the law, addiction, unplanned pregnancy, etc.). Teachers may have to quickly elaborate on the consequence (e.g., sexual assault; we know that with many sexual assaults, alcohol use is often present).

Once the slides are all turned over, ask one volunteer to get up and be the mover—who listens to the group (hands up please!) as they **rank the consequences** with the **worst** (by consensus) on one side of the circle, to the **least bad** on the opposite side of the circle. Try to do this quickly, saving debate for after the rough sort. Note different perspectives that could be because of someone’s gender or any other factor that might raise awareness of a different lens for looking at the consequences. For example, with a consequence like conflict with the law, the perspective may be different between a white youth and a youth of African or Indigenous ancestry because of racism in the justice system.

Media literacy is an important skill to raise as we move to the end of the lesson. Bring forward the idea that we are sold stuff that can hurt us, and alcohol ads do not do a good job telling us about the consequences. We should think carefully about alcohol marketing and advertising and what the only goal of this industry is—to profit for shareholders. Questions from the teacher will help surface some thoughts.

- **How does the alcohol industry show us these negative consequences in their advertising?**
- **How do you feel that a drug causing so much harm is so easy for people—including children—to access and use?**

Alcohol is highlighted in Part 2 because it’s the most often used drug by youth and adults. It is important to **note** that problem gaming and gambling, and drugs, can have similar consequences. Teachers can ask the class if anyone wants to share any knowledge of which consequences may be similar, and **which may be** different depending on the drug, or problem gaming or gambling.

Ask students to quickly do a second sort, which is to quickly move all the slides to one of two piles:

- **Happening:** Students have heard about this consequence happening in their community, maybe even to people they know.
- **Not Happening:** They’ve never heard of the consequence happening in their community.



The consequences in the Happening pile are a reality check for students—these things are happening, and alcohol is connected.

End the conversation with the idea that all the consequences are predictable and preventable.

### Are they worth preventing?

End this portion of the class on a positive note by asking a few students how they feel their lives and the lives of others might be different if we navigate these harmful substances and habits in a healthier way.

## Check-out

There are five slides on the floor which help surface feelings about the class. The teachers remind students not to stand on or near a slide if they don't mean it. We want authentic responses, without judgment. Examples of slides are:

- The class was fun.
- The class was boring.
- The class helped me learn new stuff.
- The class didn't teach me anything new.
- I felt comfortable during the class.
- I felt uncomfortable during the class.

If you sense safety in the room, feel free to quickly probe and ask students some quick questions about why they chose to stand where they were. The activity can also be done “Move into the Circle” style.

## Moving Forward

- Students can create an ad or awareness campaign (in any medium) warning youth of some of the harms associated with substance use or problem gaming/gambling that were listed in this activity.
- Students can research famous people with histories of substance use/problem gaming or gambling and summarize, listing or categorizing the effects on them and those around them.



# Family Relationships



# Friendships





# **Intimate Relationships**



**Job**



**Money**



**School**





**Health**  
(mental,  
physical,  
emotional)



# Hobbies

(sports, arts,  
etc.)



**injuries**



**other  
drug use**





**the hangover**



**STIs**



**brain  
development  
problems**



**unplanned  
pregnancy**





**partner  
violence**



# **prenatal problems**



**losing  
interest in  
stuff**



**isolation**





**overdose**

(e.g. alcohol  
poisoning)



**violence**



**child  
pornography**



**messed up  
relationships**





# **depression & anxiety**



**disease**



**addiction or  
dependence**



**self-harm**





**work &  
school**



**other**



**unprotected  
sex**



**conflict with  
police**





# **sexual assault**



# reputation damage

(e.g. on social  
media)



**vandalism/  
mischief**



# From the Ground Up

A health promotion and harm reduction curriculum resource to address youth substance use, gaming, and gambling

## 9.8 How to Care







# Grade 9: Lesson 8—How to Care

## Outcomes

- Practice speaking about concerns regarding substance use and gambling in self and others.
- Examine the negative impact of stereotyping and stigma upon help seeking behaviour.

## Guiding Question

- How can we move from judgment to empathy for those who use substances or game/gamble?

## Student Goals

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to

- reflect on and discuss their own judgements around substance use and gaming/gambling and consider the societal stigma toward substance use and gaming/gambling
- connect with their own experiences with substance use and gaming/gambling in their family and community and consider how this has impacted them thus far

**Estimated Time:** 1 hour

## Materials

- sticky notes
- People at the Meeting slides (double-sided)

## Facilitation Tips

- In **Part 1** of the activity, if any of these examples are too close to home for students that you know of, exclude or edit them to be a little different.
- Some students like to know what the upcoming topic is. This could be for interest or so they can be prepared for it, but let them know if they ask.
- In **Part 2** of the activity, remind everyone of the “stay put” option if you’d rather people didn’t know what you were thinking.
- If a student discloses something to you during or after the class you may have a “duty to report” this to child protection authorities. Students should be informed of this at the beginning of the lesson. A report must be made if you feel the young person may be at risk of harming themselves, harming someone else, or being harmed by someone. Your school administrator or school counsellor can be a confidential support during the reporting process.

## Background

Many students come into our classrooms with ideas of what someone with a substance use problem looks like. This may be from a family member or friend who struggles with substance use, TV or movies depicting gambling or substance use, or even comments made by family or friends about people in the community. In many cases, these stories, without enough context, can lead to harmful stereotypes and a lack of public support and empathy for people who struggle with substance use, gaming, or gambling.

The goal of this lesson is to explore these preconceived notions about people who struggle with substance use and introduce the complex stories that can lead people to these challenging places in life. We will end by a no-pressure move into the circle which will allow students to share their own experiences. As a teacher, is it helpful to know that the earlier you can identify the need for help, and the earlier support or treatment can be accessed, the more successful the outcomes—including less collateral damage.

Try to connect with other student supports at the school prior to this lesson; it will be helpful to have some local support resources on hand. Before the lesson, consider the students in your class and give a heads up to any who you know have personal experience with substance use in the family. This is an important activity for them to take part in but it may be more challenging for them than some others.



## Check-in

Play a few rounds of “animal draw.” Everyone gets a **sticky** note and gets 15 seconds to draw an animal (teacher names the animal); it goes fast! Everyone then shows their drawing to those around them and points out what might be funny looking or rushed. The purpose of the activity is to have a little fun and push students to show some vulnerability with each other.

## Activity

### Part 1: The Support Meeting

In the centre of the circle, create a circle using the slides, which represent individuals at a support meeting for people with a substance use problem. Ask students if they have heard of AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) or NA (Narcotics Anonymous) meetings, often represented in pop culture. Explain to the students that these meetings are popular support programs for people recovering from harmful substance use. The programs view the most harmful versions of substance use as a disease you will have for life, but one that you can recover from. There are AA and NA meetings held throughout Nova Scotia and every participant in them has a history with alcohol or other drug use.

Each slide contains some basic characteristics of the person, things you may know by looking at the person or talking to them for a few minutes. Ask students to be honest about their initial feelings looking at this circle of people.

- **Do any of these people make you feel a certain way (angry, sad, disappointed, etc.)?**
- **How do you think people would react if this person was intoxicated in the community?**
- **What do you think your family would say about these people?**
- **Would you want to help any of these people? Would you not want to help anyone in particular?**

Next, the teacher will flip over the slides to reveal a little more about this person's story. But remind students that this is still not the whole picture of who this person is and what brought them to the meeting. Ask the students if this information changes how they feel about these people. Go through the same questions you asked with the first round.

## People at the meeting:

- 22-year-old ex-hockey player, opiate dependent (drafted and then injured, can't play anymore)
- 46-year-old mother of 2, alcohol dependent (lost her 3rd child, marriage ended)
- 27-year-old unhoused man, gambling addiction (came out as trans, family unsupportive)
- 52-year-old firefighter, cannabis and alcohol dependent (trauma from a horrific experience at work)
- 19-year-old university student, alcohol and cocaine dependent (parents are alcohol dependent, started using drugs at 12)
- 64-year-old grandparent, alcohol and gambling addiction (abused as a child, wife recently died)
- 31-year-old, never had a job, cannabis and gaming addiction (social anxiety, depression, hasn't left home in months)

Make the point that nothing about these people changed, but the empathy we have for them did change. When we see someone with a substance use issue it is important to think about them as people with complicated stories and experiences that may have led them to use alcohol and drugs.

Harmful substance use is a disease that people struggle with over time, much like mental health disorders or chronic illnesses. Ask the students to name and briefly explain what they know about celebrities or athletes who have come forward with their substance use, mental health challenges, or chronic illnesses. Make the point that these people are often applauded and publicly acknowledged for knowing when they need help, the effort they spend recovering or dealing with their issue daily, and for combating stigma. What might have happened to them if they continued to suffer in silence? Stigma and judgment around substance use can contribute to more people staying quiet for longer, not seeking help.

Share with the class that the circle is actually even bigger than this. There are also meetings called Al-Anon and Nar-Anon that are for people who have been affected by someone's drinking or drug use. Every person has a web of people around them who are also impacted, like we mention in the collateral damage lesson, and they need support too.



## Part 2 : Real Connections

In the first part of the lesson we've looked at some hypothetical people in some hypothetical situations, but it's likely there's enough of us in the room that have connections with real people who have struggled (and maybe continue to) with substance use and problem gaming and gambling.

Ask everyone if they're okay if we take a baby step into some sharing, without any details being shared, with the reminder that no one is under any pressure to share anything. If there's agreement, have everyone stand up and try some quick Move into the Circle statements:

- **Move into the circle if you've known any families that have been impacted by substance use or problem gaming and gambling.**
- **Move into the circle if any of your friends have been impacted by someone's substance use or problem gaming/gambling.**
- **Move into the circle if your own family (immediate and more distant) has been impacted by someone's substance use or problem gaming and gambling.**

It's likely that lots of people will move into the circle. Make the point that this reflects how common these stories are in our communities.

- **Move into the circle if you admit that you've been judgmental of someone's substance use or problem gaming and gambling without knowing all the details behind their involvement.**

Make the point that it's likely some of us don't think about what is behind a person's unhealthy behaviours. It's easy, sometimes, to judge.

Explain to the class that every individual in the support group we looked at in Part 1 had to ask for help or accept help that was offered to them by someone else.

- **Move into the circle if there is someone in their life who is in recovery from their substance use or problem gaming and gambling.**
- **Move into the circle if there is someone in their life who needs help with substance use or problem gaming and gambling but has not yet received it or been open to it.**

Leave space for comments by any students who would like to say something at this point.

## End with these two points:

- It can be hard to watch people we care for struggle with substance use or problem gaming and gambling, especially if there are barriers to getting help. As someone in grade 9, it may seem particularly hard to help people in your life get help for these problems but there are support people in your school who can help you with this. Ask any adult in the school you trust and they can connect you with help.
- When we become helpers for our friends and family, it is also important to remember to take care of ourselves because it is easy to feel drained or helpless when faced with these very big challenges.

## Check-out



There are five slides on the floor which help surface feelings about the class. The teachers remind students not to stand on or near a slide if they don't mean it. We want authentic responses, without judgment. Examples of slides are:

- The class was fun.
- The class was boring.
- The class helped me learn new stuff.
- The class didn't teach me anything new.
- I felt comfortable during the class.
- I felt uncomfortable during the class.

If you sense safety in the room, feel free to quickly probe and ask students some quick questions about why they chose to stand where they were. The activity can also be done "Move into the Circle" style.

## Moving Forward

- Have students write or draw about the things they do when they are feeling very drained. There can sometimes be a pressure for our self-care to look a certain way, but what makes us feel recharged again can be very personal and specific.
- Invite your school social worker, SchoolsPlus team, or community organizations to present on substance use and gaming and gambling related supports in the community; including treatment and support groups. Create a step-wise map of how someone struggling with addiction can get help and what it will look like.

**22-year-old**

ex-hockey player,

**opiate**

**dependent**

drafted and then  
injured,  
**can't play  
anymore**



**46-year-old**

mother of 2,

**alcohol**

**dependant**

lost her  
3rd child,  
**marriage**  
**ended**

**27-year-old**

unhoused man,

**gambling**

**addiction**

came out as  
trans,

**family**  
**unsupportive**

**52-year-old**

firefighter,

**cannabis**

**and alcohol**

**dependant**

trauma from a  
**horrific**  
**experience**  
**at work**

**19-year-old**

university

student,

**alcohol and**

**cocaine**

**dependant**

parents  
are alcohol  
dependent,  
**started using  
drugs at 12**



**64-year-old**

grandparent,

**alcohol and**

**gambling**

**addiction**

abused as a  
child,

**wife recently  
died**

**31-year-old,**  
never had a job,

**cannabis  
and gaming  
addiction**

social anxiety,  
depression,  
**hasn't left  
home in  
months**