

Substance Abuse

Refusal Skills

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PURPOSE OF GROUP: to learn and practice drug/alcohol refusal skills

MATERIALS NEEDED: pens/pencils for each group member
piece of paper for each group member
print p. 4 of guide; cut out each scenario

1.

-Facilitator can open group by telling group members that they will be learning **substance abuse refusal skills** today.

-Refusal skills are strategies that help you say “no” when you are in situations in which you are offered or tempted by drugs/alcohol

-You can ask group members, “Why are refusal skills important to learn?”

-They are important because peer pressure can lead to relapse!

a. It’s imperative that you are **prepared for situations in which you are offered drugs/alcohol or you are surrounded by people who are using/drinking**

b. These types of situations are stressful, and you may experience cravings, so it is helpful to have a plan in place

c. The more you practice saying “no”, the more prepared you are for the “real world”!

-You’ll obviously want to do your best to avoid high-risk situations, but it’s inevitable that you are going to run into an old friend or be in a situation in which you are tempted...

2.

-The following are **drug refusal skills & techniques**:

-Say “no” immediately!

a. Do not stumble or hesitate. You can make it the very first word that comes out of your mouth!

-Be clear and firm- no means no!

a. Avoid statements such as, “Not today” or “Maybe later”

b. Avoid excuses, such as “My girlfriend will get upset” or “I have to get to work early tomorrow”

c. Be assertive (not aggressive!)

-Suggest an alternative, such as something else to drink

-Change the subject if you feel uncomfortable

-If the person persists with their offer, tell them to stop!

a. If you are uncomfortable with this, you can try repeating the same short statement (i.e. “No thanks, I don’t want anything”) - eventually, they will get the message!

-If you start to question yourself, just remember *why* you are saying no in the first place!

a. Why are you trying to remain sober? Who would you be letting down if you said “yes”? What could happen if you said “yes”?

*You can ask group members to come up with more refusal skills & techniques

-As mentioned earlier, it’s very important to be firm. You don’t want to leave the door open!

-For example, if you tell someone, “Maybe later” or, “I have to get to work early tomorrow”, you are just leaving the door open for them to ask you about using/drinking the next time they see you...

3. Group members will now participate in **role-plays** to **practice refusal skills**.

*Ask for volunteers to participate in the role-plays. Scenarios are listed on p. 4 of this guide. You can choose the scenarios that are appropriate for your age group. The volunteers can add more details to the scenarios

*After each role-play, encourage group members to give feedback

3a. After the role-plays, you can ask the volunteers (who were using the refusal skills) the following questions:

-How did you feel during the role-play?

-How effective do you think you were? Did you feel like your message was being heard?

4. Group members will now participate in an activity in which they will further practice refusal skills.

*Give each group member a pen/pencil & piece of paper. Ask them to write down some situations in which they might be offered drugs/alcohol. Then, ask them to write down how they would respond to the situations

-Example:

a. Situation: My old drinking buddy, Mike, will likely call me to go to the bar with him when football season starts again

b. My response: I don't drink anymore. I'll be watching the game at my house- you are welcome to come over, but I won't be serving any alcohol

*Allow group members to share what they write down

*If you have time, you can do more role-plays using their scenarios

4a. After the activity, you can ask group members, "What do you think the biggest challenge will be when you try these refusal skills in the 'real world'?"

5. Facilitator can conclude group by encouraging group members to **come up with at least one "go-to" response they can use when declining alcohol/drugs.**

-It might help to have something prepared ahead of time, especially if you're not used to saying "no"

-It can be something short, such as, "No thanks. I don't want anything" or it can be something a little more detailed, such as, "No thanks. I've stopped completely for health reasons"

*Allow group members to share the "go-to" response(s) they've come up with

Role-Play Scenarios

*You're at a party, and some of your friends are playing a drinking game. Someone leaves the game, and one of your friends keeps asking you to come take their place.

*You're at a restaurant, and your date asks you to drink with them. Shortly after, the waiter reads the drink specials and asks what you two are having. Even after you just ask for water, your date tries to order you a drink.

*You're hanging out with some of your friends at a house. They're all smoking weed, and they want you to join.

*You run into someone you used to use with. They invite you to go out with them later.

*You're playing "truth or dare" with your friends. They dare you to take some of the pills in your parents' medicine cabinet.

*One of your classmates is telling you to ditch your last class and get high with him/her outside school.