

“Pros & Cons” Decisional Balancing Reflection

Goals

- To provide an assessment tool for youth to reflect on the benefits and harms of using substances as well as the benefits and harms of quitting or reducing use.
- To introduce the concept of stages of readiness as well as emphasizing goal-oriented strategies to reduce harm.

Senior 1-4 Education Curriculum Connections

This activity contributes to the following Student Specific Learning Outcomes:

Family Studies

- *S1 5.1.3 Identify behaviours that promote health and wellness.*
- *S1 5.1.4 Define, classify and determine personal values and goals.*
- *S1 5.1.5 Examine how decisions affect one’s well-being.*

Guidance Education GLOs under Personal/Social Component.

Physical Education

- *K.4.S1.B.4 Identify examples of potentially dangerous situations and effective strategies for avoidance/refusal.*
- *S.5.S1.A.4 Apply problem solving strategies to respond appropriately to issues related to substance use and/or abuse.*
- *K.5.S2.D.1 Analyze issues concerning the use and abuse of legal and illegal substances.*
- *K.5.S2.D.2 Evaluate the legal aspects and consequences of substance use and abuse and addiction.*
- *S.5.S2.A.4 Analyze effective responses to problems regarding substance use and abuse by self or others.*
- *11.SU.3 Examine factors that influence decisions regarding substance use and abuse.*
- *11.SU.4 Use reliable information in making healthy decisions for helping self and/or others regarding substance use and abuse.*

Have Ready

- Reflection Activity handout (see below)
- Flipchart paper and markers, or chalk/white board

Activity Introduction

- There is a need for youth who are actively engaging in substance use to reflect on their own level of use, their reasons for using, as

well as explore their motivations for quitting or cutting down on substance use.

- When we think about making changes most of us don't really consider all "sides" in a complete way. Instead, we often do what we think we're "supposed" to do, avoid doing things we don't feel like doing, or maybe just feel overwhelmed and give up thinking about it at all. Thinking through the pros and cons of both changing and not making a change is one way to help us figure out if we're ready to make a change. This can also help us to "hang on" to our plan in times of stress or crisis.

Instructions

- Ask youth, "**Think about your substance use and what the positives and negatives are.**" They can write all the reasons they can think of in each of the boxes on the handout.
- Let youth know they will not be asked to share their page with anyone.
- It's helpful to be honest about what the positive benefits of using substances are as well as the negative consequences of using are. For example, a person can put that a positive of smoking pot is that it is fun and a negative is that it costs too much money.
- It's also important to be honest about what someone would gain as well as lose by quitting. A positive about quitting pot could be helping with physical issues such as an ongoing cough or memory problems. A negative is that it may have been helping with sleep.
- Pass out the worksheet and give youth time to fill it out.

Sample Sheet for Marijuana

Best about Using <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fun • More Friends • Helps get through your day • Coping/helps deal with trauma • Helps with Sleep 	Worst about Using <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$\$\$ • It has to "work" • Triggers suicidal feelings • Kicked out of school • Unsafe situations • Physical Health issues
Best about Quitting/Cutting Down <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get off street 	Worst about Quitting/Cutting down <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boredom

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decreased suicidal feelings • Return to school • Sleeping/eating improve • Safety • More money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of friends • Flashbacks • Sleep • Miss being high • Loss of social status
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Debrief

- Ask youth, **“When looking at your completed sheet, what do you notice?”** Youth may say some sections are harder or easier to fill in. Acknowledge that deciding to continue using or choosing not to use can be really complicated.
- **When trying to decide if you are ready for change, it is not the amount of points made in each section, but how much weight or importance that you put on those points.**
- However, even if you may not be ready to cut down or quit, you can still make small changes and set goals to get ready for bigger changes. For example, if you are worried about not sleeping well without pot, you can try to look for other strategies that can help with sleeping even while still using.

Additional Activities

Ideally, this activity can be followed by:

- Identifying Strengths Reflection
- Drug Trivia Game

Decisional Balancing Sheet

<p>Best things about using</p>	<p>Worst things about using</p>
<p>Best things about quitting/cutting down</p>	<p>Worst things about quitting/cutting down</p>