

Addiction- Take a Stand

Subject and Grade Level: 8-12
Time: Four 50-minute class periods

Guiding Question: Why do people suffer from addiction?

Overview

People have always suffered from addiction, but the recent rise of addiction to opiates has become a public health emergency impacting teens and adults around the country. This lesson is based around the documentary film “Straight Forward”, produced by WisEye, which traces the stories of five young people in Wisconsin who struggled with opiate addiction and have now found recovery. Their honesty and candor about the circumstances surrounding their struggles with substance use provide viewers with unique insight into the path from addiction to recovery. These humanizing stories help break down the stigma associated with addiction and reveal the real people behind the epidemic. *Because students, their friends, and family may be struggling with addiction, encourage students to be honest, respectful, and compassionate during these discussions. The topic of addiction may be sensitive and personal. Be sure to provide information about who in your school can help students who are struggling with addiction, abuse, or other sensitive issues contained in this lesson. *Note that all teachers and other school personnel are mandatory reporters on issues of child abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse.*

Objectives

Knowledge

- Students will understand the mechanisms that create addiction.
- Students will identify the risk factors for addiction.

Skills

- Students will listen and speak with civility and respect about a challenging topic.
- Students will use reasoning and evidence to support their opinions about controversial issues.

Dispositions

- Students will develop compassion for those suffering from addiction.
- Students will see the need to support peers and family members who struggle with a variety of challenging situations.

Wisconsin Model Academic Standards

- E.12.9 Defend a point of view related to an ethical issue such as genetic engineering, declaring conscientious objector status, or restricting immigration.
- E.12.16 Identify and analyze factors that influence a person's mental health.

Wisconsin Disciplinary Literacy Standards

Production and Distribution of Writing(9-12)

- 4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Speaking and Listening Comprehension and Collaboration (9-12)

- Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Materials

- Teacher copy of “Take A Stand” activity.
- Student copies of “What is Addiction”, a National Institutes of Health publication. (PDF)
- WisEye Documentary film “[Straight Forward: The Truth About Addiction](#)” (50 minutes).
- Referral information for resources in your school to support struggling students. (Teacher created based on your school context)
- Student copies of “Final Reflection” assignment (p.5 below)

Plan of Instruction/Lesson Procedures

Day 1

1. Introduction: Take A Stand (30 minutes) *This activity is designed to activate students existing knowledge and impressions about issues related to addiction. Because students, their friends, and family may be struggling with addiction, encourage students to be honest, respectful, and compassionate during these discussions. Be sure to preface this activity by instructing students to maintain the privacy of their friends and family members by using general language like “someone I know” rather than talking about people by name or providing identifying information.*

Ask students to stand up and move to the front of the room if they agree, the back of the room if they disagree, with each the following statements. These statements do not have right or wrong answers, but students should be prepared to support their opinions with reasoning.

Read the first statement and after students “take a stand”, have them pair up with someone standing close to them, who shares their opinion, and discuss their reasoning. Then ask a selection of students to share their reasons, making sure to provide some time for both positions.

1. The experiences that a person has during childhood have lasting impacts on the choices they make later in life.
2. If you see a friend making bad choices, you should confront them directly.
3. A person struggling with addiction doesn’t have enough will-power or self-control to change their habits.
4. A person struggling with substance use has made bad choices in their life.
5. A person who is addicted to drugs should be arrested and punished because their actions are illegal.

2. Homework: What is Addiction? Assign the “What is Addiction” handout as homework. Ask students to annotate (underline and write notes in the margins) as they read. On a separate piece of paper, they should identify four pieces of information that were new or surprising.

Day 2

3. Discuss Homework (5-15 minutes) If time allows, divide students into pairs or groups to discuss the things that stood out from the reading, and develop two lingering questions to share with the class. Allow each group an opportunity to share their questions, and discuss as appropriate.

4. Watch Video (39 minutes) While students watch the film, each will pay close attention to one of the people profiled in the film, taking notes about their experiences and making observations about their lives. Prior to watching, number all students 1 to 5 and assign their subject as indicated below. End the film at the 39-minute mark.

- 1 = Adele
- 2 = Allen
- 3 = Dexter
- 4 = Shelby

5 = Kisha

Day 3

5. Revisit lingering questions (10 minutes) Ask students if the documentary helped answer any of their “lingering questions”. Discuss as a class, as appropriate.

6. Create Narrative (15 minutes) Divide students into groups corresponding to their number. Each group should discuss the experience of the person they profiled based on their notes. Then create a short narrative summarizing how the subject became addicted, how addiction impacted their life, and what resources they have used to find recovery. Each group member should record prepare to share this narrative with their classmates in the next step.

7. Jigsaw (20 minutes) Ask each group to number off, and re-form new groups which are now composed of students who have profiled different subjects from the film. Adjust the groups as necessary if the numbers don’t come out just right. In these new groups each student will take a turn sharing the narrative they created. Once each member has shared, ask each group to discuss the following prompts:

- Does anyone disagree with how your classmates characterized the story of their subject?
- How are the life stories and experiences of the subjects in the documentary similar and different?
- Can you imagine a way that each of these people could have avoided addiction? What resources would have helped them?

8. Resources (10 minutes) Brainstorm as a class and provide additional information about resources in your school and community for those suffering from addiction or abuse. Provide a handout with the names of people in your school who can support students in these situations, as well as the best way to contact them.

***Be sure to explain to students that by law all teachers and other school personnel are mandatory reporters on issues of child abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse. This law aims to protect young people and ensure that they receive the support they need in situations of abuse.**

Day 4

9. Wrap up (10 minutes) Show the final 10 minutes of the documentary, which discusses brain development, narcan, and profiles an addiction recovery high school in Madison, called Horizon High School.

10. Revising your Opinions (30 minutes) Ask students to consider how their ideas about addiction have changed after learning more and watching the documentary. Lead students in another “Take a Stand” activity using the same questions, allowing them to explain if their ideas have changed and why.

Assessment

Assign students to write a reflection discussing perspective on this statement “The experiences that a person has during childhood have lasting impacts on the choices they make later in life.” ***Note that all teachers and other school personnel are mandatory reporters on issues of child abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse.**

Take A Stand (Teacher Copy)

1. The experiences that a person has during childhood have lasting impacts on the choices they make later in life.
2. If you see a friend making bad choices, you should confront them directly.
3. A person struggling with addiction doesn't have enough will-power or self-control to change their habits.
4. A person struggling with substance use has made bad choices in their life.
5. A person who is addicted to drugs should be arrested and punished because their actions are illegal.

After watching the documentary film and discussing issues related to addiction with your classmates, reflect on the following prompt, providing specific reasons and evidence for your opinion based on the documentary, reading, and relevant personal experiences. Your reflection may range beyond the issue of addiction, but should draw on the documentary and readings to demonstrate your learning.

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“The experiences that a person has during childhood have lasting impacts on the choices they make later in life.”