

**THE  
FACTS.  
YOUR  
FUTURE.**

# **TEACHER GUIDE**

**Lesson 1:  
Defining Choices**

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[TheFactsYourFuture.org](http://TheFactsYourFuture.org)



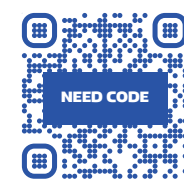
# OVERVIEW

## Before You Begin

This guide is intended for use when administering “*The Facts. Your Future. Substance Use and Abuse Curriculum*” in a classroom setting. This curriculum is designed to help teachers and schools meet the Florida Substance Use and Abuse Standards (HE.912.SUA) and is intended for high school students, grades 9-12.

Prior to teaching this lesson, it is recommended that teachers and instructors have reviewed the following:

- “*The Facts. Your Future. Drug Facts for Teachers*”



- Fentanyl
  - Alcohol
  - Marijuana
  - Vaping
  - Prescription Drugs
- “*The Facts. Your Future. Substance Use and Abuse Curriculum*” Teacher Guide.
  - *The Facts. Your Future.* drug videos located at [TheFactsYourFuture.org/the-drugs](https://TheFactsYourFuture.org/the-drugs).







One in four teenagers believe that prescription drugs can be used as a study aid.

It is also recommended that teachers and instructors have referral information available for organizations that provide substance use and abuse counseling and treatment services to teens who may need it. This information is located in “*The Facts. Your Future. Drug Facts for Teachers*” and at the end of this guide.

Below is a list of equipment and resources needed to facilitate “*The Facts. Your Future. Lesson 1 – Defining Choices:*”

- Computer
- Internet access
- Screen large enough for multiple participants to view the resources and videos
- Access to the *The Facts. Your Future.* drug videos
- Access to Kahoot! (optional)

For each lesson, a sample script is provided for the teacher/ instructor along with a list of required and recommended tools and resources.

## Overview

In Lesson 1, students will learn the facts about drugs and alcohol, their associated risks, and their use among Florida teens. The facts will be used to dispel myths such as “everyone is doing it.” Instead, teens will learn that most high school students do not use substances such as alcohol and marijuana. Additionally, students will gain an understanding of the influences in their lives and how they impact their decision-making as it relates to substance use. Using this information, students will begin building the skills needed to help them refuse drugs and alcohol.

## Learning Objectives

At the end of Lesson 1: Defining Choices, students will be able to:

1. Decipher between the facts and myths about substance use.
2. Assess and understand the risks and impacts of substance use.
3. Identify the influences in their lives and how those impact their decisions.
4. Apply the skills learned to their defining choices such as the choice to use or not use drugs and alcohol.

## Standards

Lesson 1 addresses the following Substance Use and Abuse Florida Health Education Standards:

- HE.912.SUA.1
- HE.912.SUA.2
- HE.912.SUA.3
- HE.912.SUA.4
- HE.912.SUA.5

## Timing

Each lesson is 30 minutes long. This curriculum is designed with built-in flexibility allowing teachers the ability to adapt the material to the time frame they have in which to deliver the content. Recommendations are provided for guidance about how to implement each lesson.

## What's Included

Included in this lesson are the following instructional and supplemental materials:

- **Teacher Guide** – This guide includes recommendations for implementation, learning objectives, video links, samples of the student worksheets, and supplemental activities included in Lesson 1.
- **Kahoot Survey: The Facts. Your Future. Lesson 1 - Fact Finder Survey** – Fact Finder Survey is pre-loaded and publicly available at [kahoot.com](https://kahoot.com). If your school has an account, simply follow the instructions provided in the guide (see below).
- **Videos** – QR codes linking to all videos are included in the Teacher Guide. Also, supplemental videos have been included to provide teachers with additional flexibility.
- **“Just Say No” Drug Fact Sheet** – This downloadable and printable resource provides the facts about each of the five drugs highlighted in this lesson: fentanyl, alcohol, marijuana, vaping, and prescription drugs.
- **Student Worksheets** – Lesson 1 includes several student engagement activities and worksheets. These resources can be downloaded and printed for classroom distribution.

Florida is experiencing a major increase in fake prescription pills laced with fentanyl, one of the most dangerous drugs we've ever seen, causing overdoses and death.





Teachers should incorporate the facts about fentanyl into substance use and abuse education materials, and when possible, encourage parents and caregivers to talk with teens about the risks of fentanyl.

- **“You Decide” Card Game** – This is a scenario-based card game designed to help students apply what they have learned in Lesson 1, combining their knowledge of drug facts and risks and known influences in their life. Downloadable and printable cards are included for classroom use.

### Key Concepts

- The facts versus myths about teen substance use.
- Understanding how the teenage brain works and how it influences choices about risky behavior and drug use.
- Understanding the risks and the future implications of substance use.
- Defining choices, what influences these choices, and the starting point for making defining choices – the facts.
- Identifying the influences in a teen’s life and how these impact defining choices.

### Key Terms

- **Defining Choices** – Choices you make today that will impact your present and your future.
- **Influences** – Something or someone that affects your choices and behavior.



Alcohol, especially binge drinking, can cause irreversible damage to parts of the brain with lifelong effects. The brain’s prefrontal cortex assists in decision-making and controls the ability to reason. It’s not fully developed until the age of 25.

# INTRODUCTION

## Overview

In this section, students will be introduced to the concept of *defining choices* and the foundation to make these choices – the facts.

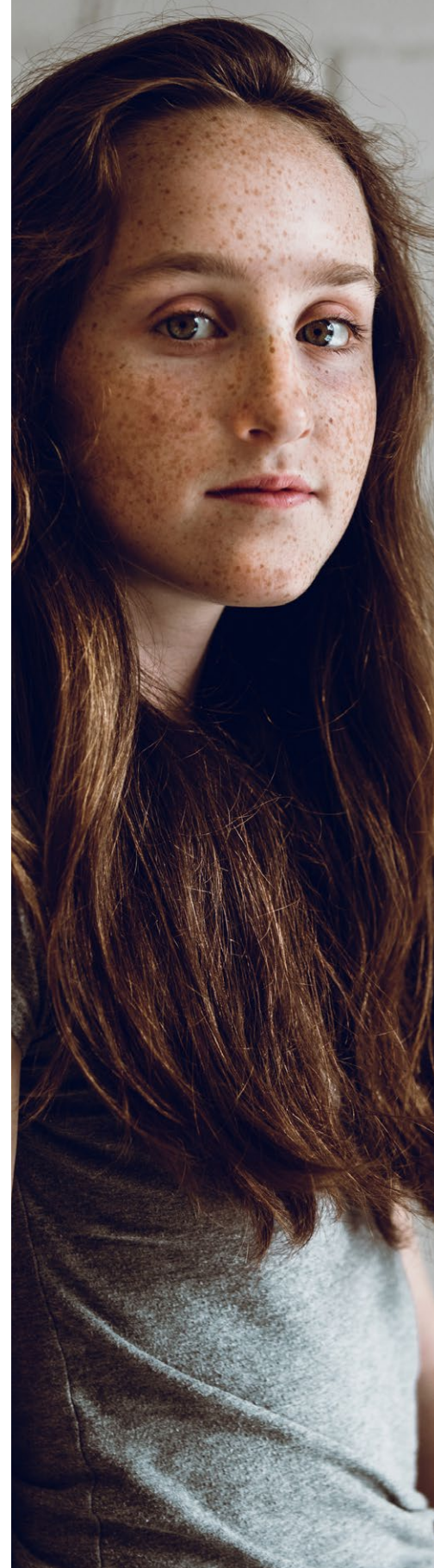
- **KEY TAKEAWAY:** Every day, we are faced with many choices whether we are aware of them or not.
- **TIME:** 3 minutes
- **RESOURCES NEEDED:**
  - Teacher/Instructor Script

## TEACHER/INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT

You’re faced with decisions every day.

- What will I wear today?
- Do I want pizza or a salad for lunch?
- Do I study for Friday’s test now or wait until the night before?
- Should I send this text?
- Do I skip practice today?
- Should I go to that party on Friday night?
- Am I going to drink at the party?

Some of these decisions have real-time consequences and impact. Other times, the impact of your decision isn’t realized until tomorrow, next week, or even years from now.





Some of the most common and dangerous prescription pills include opioids, benzodiazepines, and amphetamines.

Regardless of when you realize the impact of your decisions, now or later, all your decisions define you at some level. Collectively, they tell a story about who you are, who you want to be, and how you want others to see you.

And, to make decisions, you need accurate information – facts.

- To decide what to wear, you need to know what you have to wear, if it fits, if it's clean, etc.
- To decide what to eat, you need to know if you have access to what you want to eat.
- To decide when to study for a test, at a minimum, you should know what will be covered on that test.
- To decide if you should send a certain text, you should assess whether it's true, helpful, important, necessary, and kind (THINK).
- To decide if you can skip practice, you should know how it will impact your team, if there's an upcoming game, if you're sick and need to rest, etc.
- To decide if you should go to the party on Friday night, you may want to know who's going to be there, if you'll be comfortable there, if you're allowed to go, etc.
- To decide if you're going to drink at the party, you should know how alcohol affects a teen's brain and body, how it could impact other important things in your life – your family, school, next week's game, etc.; that if you drink, you may not have a way to get home, and other consequences of underage drinking.

# THE FACTS

## Overview

In this section, students will participate in a pre-survey to assess what they currently know about teen substance use, review the facts and risks associated with substance use, and learn how these facts establish the foundation for refusal skills.

**KEY TAKEAWAY:** You don't know what you don't know.

**TIME:** 10 minutes

**RESOURCES NEEDED:**

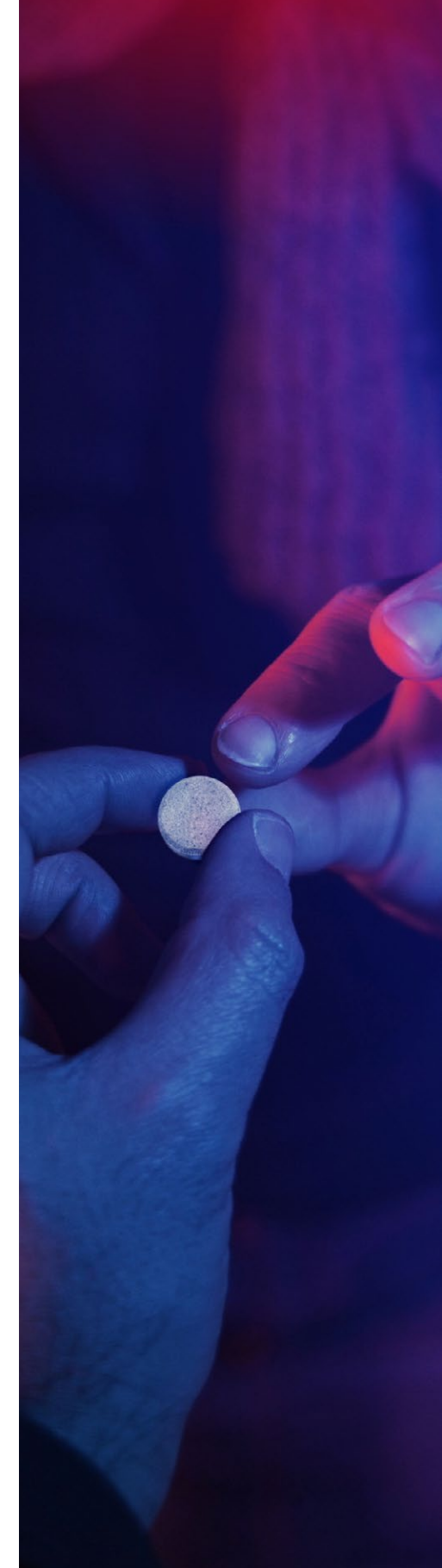
- Teacher/Instructor Script
- Pre-Survey: Kahoot "The Facts. Your Future. Lesson 1 - Fact Finder Survey"
- *The Facts. Your Future.* Introduction Video
- "Just Say No: Drug Fact Sheet"

## On Screen

Kahoot "TFYF Lesson 1: Fact Finder Survey" Introduction Slide

## TEACHER/INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT

Let's start at the beginning – the facts. Every decision starts with some sort of information about the world. We hope this information is accurate, but often we rely on our experience or secondhand information to establish something as a fact. This can lead to making decisions that aren't the best. We've all been there.







Not only does marijuana use cause impaired short-term memory, perception, judgment, and loss of motor skills, but heavy marijuana usage in teens can permanently decrease IQ. High doses of marijuana can also be linked to depression, anxiety, suicide, and even provoke a psychotic episode.

So, how do you know the information you're receiving is accurate? When it comes to drugs, we have access to tons of data from doctors and researchers. These data are scrutinized and evaluated for accuracy and must meet certain standards for reliability. This isn't foolproof, yet when trusted organizations come to the same conclusions independently and consistently over time, we have some level of confidence in that information.

### Bell Ringer Activity: Fact Finder Survey

- **Purpose:** The purpose of this activity is to know the facts about substance use among Florida teens.
- **Method:** Teacher-led discussion and student survey
- **Instructions:**
  - Teacher asks the students each question.
  - Student Response Options:
    - Students shout out their responses and teacher can capture them on the board.
    - Students are called on to respond individually.
    - Students use a Kahoot survey to respond (see below for instructions).
- **Kahoot Instructions:**
  - Click <https://create.kahoot.it/share/the-facts-your-future-lesson-1-fact-finder-survey/24a23855-ad8d-4012-9531-1adb5e83152d>
  - In the left-hand navigation menu, click the Start button.
  - Select "Classic Mode" and have students follow the prompts on screen to take the survey.

### TEACHER/INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT

**Teacher Note:** Teachers can follow the prompts in Kahoot to advance through the survey. The questions in bold below are shown on screen.

Before we assess the facts about drugs, let's see what you already know.

1. **In the state of Florida, \_\_\_\_\_ % of students your age drink alcohol.**
  - a. 80
  - b. 10 (correct answer)
  - c. 95
  - d. 25

The fact is only 10% of students your age use alcohol. In the entire state of Florida, 62% of high school students say they have never had a drop of alcohol, ever, for any reason. As far as regular use, 90% of high school students do not regularly drink alcohol or hadn't had any in the past 30 days when surveyed. (Source: FYSAS, 2022)

2. **In the state of Florida, \_\_\_\_\_ than 20% of students your age use marijuana in any form - smoking, vaping, edibles?**
  - a. Less (correct answer)
  - b. More

18% of students your age (high school students ages 14-18) use marijuana. In the entire state of Florida, 82% of high school students reported they have never had any marijuana, ever. (Source: FYSAS, 2022)

3. **Sharing prescription medication can be safe:**
  - a. If you are experiencing the exact same issue that the person was when they were prescribed it
  - b. If it's prescribed to a family member
  - c. Never (correct answer)

When fentanyl is added to other drugs, it makes them more powerful, more addictive, and more dangerous.

**Drug dealers add fentanyl to pills that resemble common prescription medications such as Xanax, Adderall, and Oxycontin.**

Doctors consider a variety of things about an individual person before they make their expert decisions about what medication and what dose to prescribe. It can be medically harmful, even fatal, to share medication.

Sharing prescription medication is illegal, regardless of the reason. It is illegal to share even just one pill of any kind of prescription medication, but sharing certain controlled substances is a 3rd-degree felony. If this happens on school property, it carries even bigger consequences.

(Source: Know the Law, V2023)

- 4. Physical consequences of substance use are \_\_\_\_\_ in teens as they are in adults**
- a. the same
  - b. different (correct answer)

Your brain, just like every other part of your body, is still developing and likely isn't done until your mid-to-late twenties. This has nothing to do with your intellect, maturity, or responsibility. You can't control this; you can't make your brain develop any more than you can make yourself taller. When we introduce substances to a developing brain, it changes how that brain forms. Substances can still harm a fully formed brain, but they can't permanently change how it's built like they can in a developing brain.

- 5. Your health can be damaged by \_\_\_\_\_ drinking.**
- a. excessive
  - b. any amount of (correct answer)

Drinking can damage learning, memory, mental health, and brain development. It can also cause liver disease, cancer, cardiovascular disease, and other organ damage.

(Source: CDC)

Alcohol also lowers inhibitions. The part of the brain that grows last is the part that is responsible for decision-making and caution. This means that inhibitions are already low in your teen years, and alcohol makes them even lower. So teens can make choices and take risks that they would otherwise never make or take – like drinking and driving

and other unsafe situations. This is true for adults, too, but especially for teens because of where your brain is in its stage of development.

(Source: National Institute of Health)

Heavy drinking and binge drinking have more severe impacts on a person's health, but even occasional drinking as a teen can have serious consequences such as:

- Injury or death from accidents, violence, overdose, or poisoning
- Impaired brain development and function
- Substance use disorders or addiction
- Increased risk of mental health disorders or complications with pre-existing mental health disorders
- Increased stress, anxiety, depression, or suicidal thoughts
- High-risk sexual activity, unsafe sex, and unplanned pregnancy
- Reduced academic performance and motivation and increased likelihood of dropping out of school
- Legal problems or criminal involvement
- Fractured family relationships

- 6. If a drug is legal, then it is safe.**
- a. True
  - b. False (correct answer)

A drug being "legal" does not mean it cannot cause damage. Misuse, overuse, or combined use can have negative consequences.

- 7. Vaping is safe because the vaping liquid contains natural ingredients.**
- a. True
  - b. False (correct answer)

Vaping liquid contains a combination of chemicals and solvents. It can also include heavy metals such as nickel, tin, and lead. When the heavy metals enter the lungs, they can have adverse effects, including heart issues, disruptions in brain function, and even death.



Opioids include painkillers such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, oxycontin, codeine, and morphine. Opioids are highly addictive and can often lead to using other more dangerous drugs.

The stakes are high – because teens in Florida and throughout the U.S. are suffering from mental health challenges that can lead to substance abuse.

**Teacher Note:** Teachers may consider taking this discussion deeper with the following discussion prompts or moving to “*The Facts. Your Future. Introduction Video.*”

### Teacher Discussion Prompts

1. Are you surprised by the answers? Why or why not? It’s common to hear – and for many to think – most teens are using drugs, drinking alcohol, and using marijuana; however, when high school students in Florida were asked about their alcohol and drug use in an anonymous survey, they indicated the opposite.  
(Source: FYSAS, 2022)
2. What do you think influences us to believe “everyone is doing it” even though student-reported data indicate most are not? Social media, trends, conversations, and what we see and hear in music, movies, and television can make substance use seem more prevalent than it is. Sometimes teens think it will make them fit in better with their peers or like to give the perception they are risk takers, etc. So, they may talk about it, but may not actually be using it.

### TEACHER/INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT

- Now, let’s review some additional facts about the following drugs: fentanyl, alcohol, vaping, marijuana, and prescription drugs, and how they affect a teen’s brain.

### Video: “The Facts. Your Future. Introduction”



To access and play “*The Facts. Your Future. Introduction*” Video, visit:  
**Need a print-friendly URL**

### RESOURCE: “JUST SAY NO: DRUG FACT SHEET”

It is recommended that this resource be downloaded, printed, and distributed to students to accompany the video, “*The Facts. Your Future. Introduction.*”

It includes information (e.g., facts, photos, risks) about the following drugs:

- Fentanyl
- Alcohol
- Vaping
- Marijuana
- Prescription Drugs (Opioids, Amphetamines, and Benzodiazepines)

A QR code is included that will take students to [TheFactsYourFuture.org](https://TheFactsYourFuture.org) for more information about each drug and additional resources.



To access and download the “Just Say No: Drug Fact Sheet,” visit:  
**Need a print-friendly URL**

### Additional Videos

To provide even more detail to students about various drugs and alcohol topics, consider playing the videos in the playlist below. These include: fentanyl, alcohol, vaping, marijuana, and prescription drugs.

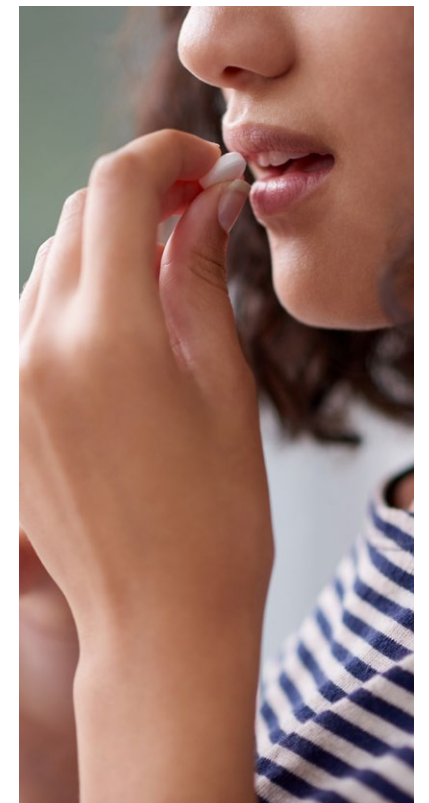


To access and play *The Facts. Your Future. Lesson 1* video playlist, visit:  
**Need a print-friendly URL**

If you would like to include supplemental video content in Lesson 1, consider the following videos from the National Institute of Health (NIH):

- **Teen Brain Development:** [thefacts.fyi/brain](https://thefacts.fyi/brain)
- **The Reward Circuit: How the Brain Responds to Natural Rewards and Drugs:** [thefacts.fyi/drugs](https://thefacts.fyi/drugs)
- **The Reward Circuit: How the Brain Responds to Marijuana:** [thefacts.fyi/marijuana](https://thefacts.fyi/marijuana)

Six out of 10 fentanyl-laced pills contain a potentially lethal dose of the drug.



Just because some drugs use the word “prescription” does not mean they are safe. Prescription drugs come in various forms including tablets, capsules, and liquid. Tablets and capsules can be different colors and shapes, depending on the specific medication and its dosage.





If you're a high school teacher or school staff member who has ever tried talking to students about drug and alcohol use, you may have been met with eye rolls and blank stares. It can be challenging to have these conversations and know when it's your place to intervene. It's easy to assume parents have this covered at home, but as an educator, you can play a critical role in helping students make smart choices. Talking to students about drugs and alcohol could save their life.

# INFLUENCES

## Overview

In this section, students will learn that in addition to knowing the facts, there are other factors that impact our decisions, known as **influences**. Students will consider the influences in their life and examine their impact on the decisions they make.

**KEY TAKEAWAY:** We have multiple influences in our life that impact our decisions.

**TIME:** 7 minutes

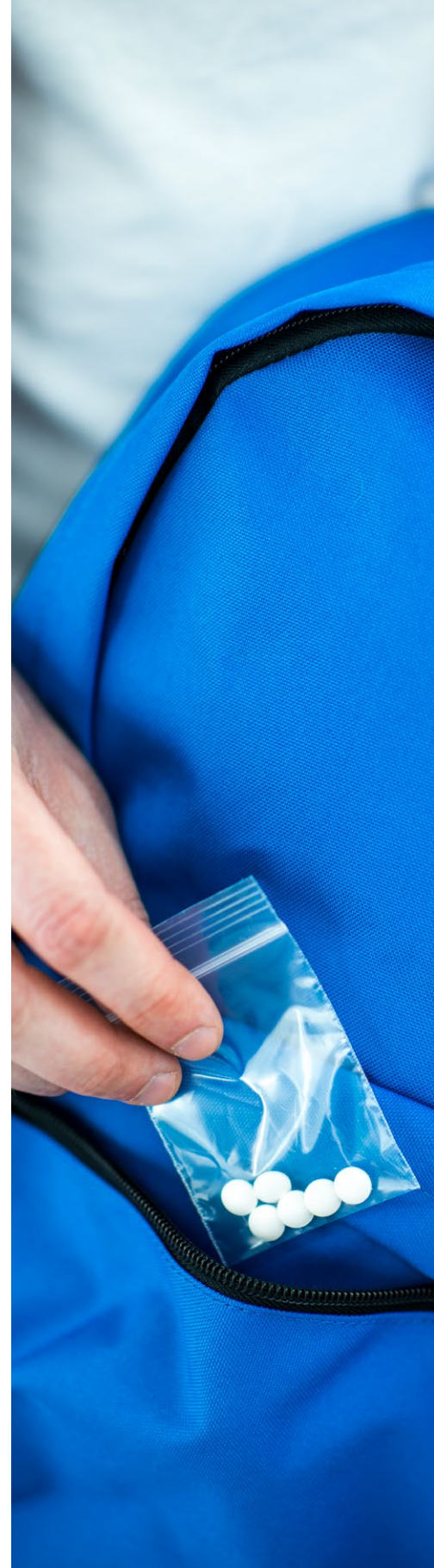
**RESOURCES NEEDED:**

- Teacher/Instructor Script
- Activity: "What Influences You?" Worksheet

## TEACHER/INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT

It's important to know there are other factors that impact your decisions – **influences**. There are some influences in your life that you are very aware of, such as family and friends. There are others you may be unaware of such as social media influencers, advertisements, or stress. You may even follow people – influencers – on social media who are paid to influence your decision-making.

The influences in your life can impact your *defining choices*, both positively and negatively. We've already mentioned a few possible influences in a teen's life. Let's review those and any others you can think of.





1. What influences the decisions I make daily?
2. What influences the decisions I make about my future?

**Teacher Note:** Consider using the following discussion prompts in conjunction with the “What Influences You?” student worksheet. Ask students to verbally identify what influences them and then write their list of influences in the “What Influences You?” worksheet to help reinforce this concept.

- Think about the different types of influences in your life and list them. Then, ask yourself:
1. Am I aware or unaware of this influence in my life?
  2. Does it influence me positively, negatively, or some of both?
  3. How much does it influence me?
  4. Can you think of an example of how a particular influence has impacted a decision in your life – whether big or small?



Instead of focusing on morality, start with the facts about the impact of drug and alcohol use on a teen’s health. Try to avoid hyperbolic scenarios that teens may easily dismiss because they’re unrelatable and judgmental. Stick with the science and discuss long-term effects.

## Activity: “What Influences You?” Worksheet

- **Purpose:** This activity helps students think through the influences in their life and how they impact their choices.
- **Method:** Teacher-led discussion and student reflection
- **Instructions:** Download the “What Influences You” Worksheet by visiting <https://tfyf.fyi/worksheets>. See worksheet for additional instructions.

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An **influence** is the effect a person or thing has on another, and it can be positive, negative, or even both. For the exercise below:

## WHAT INFLUENCES YOU?

column. If the influence affects you both positively and negatively, write it in both columns.

1. Think about a decision you’ve made in the past. It can be as simple as what you chose to wear today or as complex as where to go to college. Write that decision in the “Decision” circle. (Example: Do I study for Friday’s test or go out with friends?)
2. Think about who or what influenced that decision. Write the influence down in the positive or negative column.
3. Does each influence affect you equally? In the small circles next to each influence you wrote, rank each one to see what affects your decision the most, with 1 being the most influential and 10 being the least influential.
4. Write about the impact you think these influences will have, or have had, on the decision you wrote in the “Decision” circle.

Positive Influences	Decision	Negative Influences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Family (Grandma)</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Playing soccer</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Parents’ approval</li> <li><input type="radio"/></li> <li><input type="radio"/></li> </ul>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; text-align: center;"> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;">Do I go to the party at my cousin’s house Friday night when I know there will be alcohol?</p> </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Family (Cousin)</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Instagram</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Self-esteem</li> <li><input type="radio"/></li> <li><input type="radio"/></li> </ul>
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="border-top: 1px solid black; width: 30%;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px 5px; background-color: #00796b; color: white;">Impact</div> <div style="border-top: 1px solid black; width: 30%;"></div> </div>		

I think the positive influences in my life outweigh the negative ones, so I will likely not go to the party, or if I do, I will not drink.

**EXAMPLES OF INFLUENCES:**

- Family
- Hobbies/Interests
- Media (e.g., advertisements)
- Pressure to Perform
- Friends
- School
- Values
- Religion/Faith
- Coaches/Teachers
- Sports
- Likes/Dialikes
- Celebrities
- Trusted Adults
- Social Media
- Influencers

Fentanyl is contributing to higher teen overdose rates, despite overall declines in drug use.



Those who begin drinking in their youth are **seven times** more likely to be in an **alcohol-related crash**.

**Teacher Note:** Examples are provided to help students think through the concept of positive and negative influences.

#### Examples: Positive Influences

- While on an app on your phone, a pop-up ad for delicious-looking healthy food shows up. You pay little attention to it, but all of a sudden you have a craving for a salad.
- You may aspire to be an artist and your ideas and creativity are influenced by a specific genre of art. As you develop as an artist, you may begin to see these influences show up in your designs.
- Your soccer team has a goal to make it to the state finals. You all commit to each other to avoid alcohol to stay healthy and safe so as not to jeopardize the team's chances.

#### Examples: Negative Influences

- A new, potentially harmful social media challenge emerges across the country, and you are compelled to join in.
- At a family reunion, some of your older cousins are smoking/vaping/drinking and ask you to join them. They tell you it's not a big deal because there are lots of people around and the adults are all doing it too.
- You and your friends are really nervous about finals and are having trouble staying focused. They encourage you to try a "pill" that will give you more energy and focus to study.

### TEACHER/INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT

- How do you assess all of this in real-time when you need to make a quick decision?

Like anything, it takes practice over time. And while you're learning, a good first step in decision-making is to simply slow down and think before acting.

When you take a minute to think before making a decision, try asking yourself these simple questions:

- Why do I want to do this?
- What are my other options?

- What will the consequences of my decisions be today? Tomorrow? In a year?
- Is this decision best for me?
- How will my decision affect others?

Again, this takes time and practice. But one thing that helps these skills develop is understanding the reasons behind your decisions and the consequences of them, whether positive or negative.

When it comes to drugs, you may have already made up your mind. You have heard and believe drugs will hurt you and potentially damage your future. Case closed.

Some of you have seen the impact of drug and alcohol use on a friend or family member. This impact could have been minimal, and it seemed like no big deal leading you to think that drug and alcohol use is no big deal. Maybe the impact was devastating, and you are passionate about making sure you and others do not use drugs or alcohol.

Some of you like risks, and if an adult says "no," you say "yes," even if that means trying drugs and alcohol.

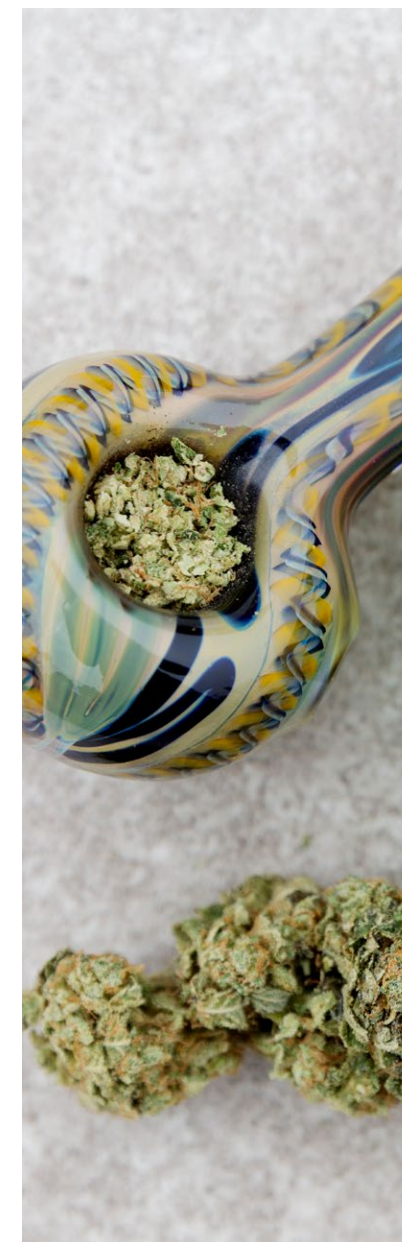
Some of you don't see the big deal and think of drugs and alcohol as something you may or may not try depending on the situation.

And the other reality is that some of you have already tried drugs and alcohol and may be actively using.

Here's the point: All these factors impact your decisions including your decision to avoid, try, stop, or continue using drugs and alcohol.

Previous drug prevention programs have used scare tactics and other methods, such as encouraging teens to "just say no." *The Facts. Your Future.* campaign was designed to provide you with accurate information – the facts – to help you start building the confidence and skills you need to make *defining choices*. In other words, we want you to know *the why* behind "just say no."

People who use marijuana frequently as teens had up to an **eight-point drop in IQ** even if they quit in adulthood.





For many teens, cigarette smoking has been replaced by electronic cigarettes or vaping. Vape pens/e-cigarettes come in various shapes and sizes. Some look like regular cigarettes, while others are discreet. The vape juice or e-liquid comes in small bottles or cartridges and can be found in many different flavors.



# DEFINING CHOICES

## Overview

In this section, students will practice applying what they have learned so far to the decision-making process. They will learn to assess both the short- and long-term impacts of their decisions and how this assessment can determine whether the choice they are facing is a defining one.

**KEY TAKEAWAY:** There are choices we make today that impact our future.

**TIME:** 10 minutes

- RESOURCES NEEDED:**
- Teacher/Instructor Script
  - Activity: "You Decide" Card Game
  - Activity: "Decision-Making Exercise" Worksheet

## TEACHER/INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT

So what? We all have decisions to make. That's life. Do I really need to put so much thought into each one? Maybe not, but perhaps we can all agree that **defining choices** need to be considered more carefully, especially when talking about putting a substance in your body.

How do you know when a decision you make today can impact what happens tomorrow or sometime in the future? You may not always know the answer. At the same time, there are some ways to examine the impact of a particular choice.





The long-term effects of prescription drugs can vary, including: blackouts, paranoia, severe memory issues, mood swings, trouble breathing, and potential death.

First, let's consider that for most decisions, there are short-term and long-term effects. *Defining choices* often impact you over a longer period of time. This may be realized immediately, or it may take time before you see the impact.

You may think it's no big deal to drink a few beers at a party. Is this a *defining choice*?

If there is no immediate consequence, you may think the answer is "no." But if you know that the earlier in life you begin drinking, the more likely you are to develop an addiction to drugs and alcohol, then knowing this fact might make this a *defining choice* for you.

If, after deciding to have a few beers, you cause a car accident because you were driving drunk and you get a concussion, you have the short-term injury and pain leaving you potentially unable to do some things you were excited about in the short term. And, you may also have a longer-term effect on your brain that isn't realized until later in life.

Maybe you have no physical injuries from the car accident, but it leaves an impression on you that changes how you view drug and alcohol use.

In each of these outcomes, the initial decision to drink a few beers at a party was the *defining choice*.

We have talked about facts, influences, and the consequences of *defining choices*. Let's talk more specifically about your future and the *defining choices* you can make.



While some pills are medically prescribed for specific health reasons, misuse of prescription drugs can happen due to their availability in a student's home or the home of a family member.

## Teacher Discussion Prompts

1. What do you plan to do when you get out of high school?  
*Example responses: work, college, military, travel*
2. Do you think about what you are doing today, the choices you are making, and what you want to do in the future?
3. Do you think about how the choices you make today will impact your future?

**Teacher Note:** Acknowledge that teens often do not think about the long-term consequences of their actions.

4. What are some of the short- and long-term implications of substance use on each of the following:
  - a. Friendships
  - b. School
  - c. Activities such as sports
  - d. Work
  - e. Plans after high school

## TEACHER/INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT

- Alright, let's try an activity to apply this to specific scenarios you may face.

### Activity: "You Decide" Card Game

- **Purpose:** This activity helps students think through scenarios related to substance use and how they might respond.
- **Method:** Individual or group card game
- **Instructions:** Divide students into small groups and give one set of cards to each group. See cards for student instructions.

**Teacher Note:** Key takeaway: Help students make the connection that one choice can have life-changing consequences for themselves and others.

Vape liquid isn't water. It's an addictive, toxic combination of industrial chemicals and artificial additives.

### "You Decide" Worksheet Option

This is an alternate option to the "Your Decide" Card Game. Please allow more time for this option.

- Download the "You Decide" Teacher Scripts and Worksheets by visiting [tfyf.fyi/worksheets](http://tfyf.fyi/worksheets).
- Distribute one or more of the five scenario worksheets to each student.
- Follow the instructions on the "You Decide" Teacher Script to walk students through the "You Decide" Activity.

## TEACHER/INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT

- Let's take what we've practiced in the scenario card game and apply it to a decision you need to make.

### Activity: "Decision-Making Exercise" Worksheet

- Purpose:** The purpose of this activity is to help students critically think about a decision they are considering.
- Method:** Student reflection
- Instructions:** Download the "Decision-Making Exercise" Worksheet by visiting <https://tfyf.fyi/worksheets>. See worksheet for additional instructions.

Since the teenage brain is still developing, regular marijuana use can harm the brain's ability to learn and process new information.

**THE FACTS. YOUR FUTURE.**

## DECISION-MAKING EXERCISE

Sometimes it's hard to know if or how the decisions we make today will impact us in the future, whether that's in an hour, tomorrow, or a year from now. When the choices we make impact us over a long period of time, they can be *defining choices*. There are times defining choices are obvious and other times, not so much. Let's practice a decision-making skill that can be applied to many decisions you will make in life.

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**YOUR DECISION**  
What am I trying to decide?

**Decision**

Do I hang with this new group of friends I met who vape and try to get me to skip band practice all the time? I really like them.

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**POSSIBLE CHOICES**  
What are two possible choices I could make related to this decision?

Choice 1

I go to band practice daily and hang out with my friends in the band.

Choice 2

I skip band practice and hang out with this new group of friends.

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**THE EFFECTS**  
What are the short- and long-term effects of each choice I am considering?

	Short Term	Long Term	
<p style="text-align: center; background-color: #0070c0; color: white; font-weight: bold;">Choice 1</p> <p>I go to band practice daily and hang out with my friends in the band.</p>	<p>I feel confident and prepared when it is time to perform. I have supportive friends in the band.</p>	<p>I become an accomplished musician and am offered a college scholarship to study music.</p>	<p style="text-align: center; background-color: #0070c0; color: white; font-weight: bold;">Choice 2</p> <p>I skip band practice and hang out with this new group of friends.</p>
	<p>I start vaping.</p> <p>I am not prepared for performances and am embarrassed when called on to play.</p>	<p>I develop lung damage and other health issues from vaping.</p> <p>I can no longer play my instrument.</p>	

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

What or who in my life is influencing this decision and how? How much does this influence me?

Positive Influences

My love for music

Wanting to be recognized for my accomplishments

Friends with my same interest

The Choice I Made

I chose to go to band practice daily and hang out with my friends in the band.

Negative Influences

Boredom

Wanting to fit in

Frustration with band director

Stress to perform

Is this a defining choice for your life?

YES     NO

Learn more about making smart choices: [TheFactsYourFuture.org](https://TheFactsYourFuture.org)

Mixing energy drinks with alcohol can mask its depressant effects, which may lead to drinking more alcohol and increase potential health risks.

## Conclusion

Not all decisions require this level of thought, yet building decision-making skills help to set the foundation for other important skills in life such as how to cope with stress, setting boundaries with family and friends, and refusing to use drugs and alcohol (i.e., refusal skills). With any decision, especially the defining choice of whether you will use drugs and alcohol, it's important to start with the facts. Understand the risks and impacts of your decision, not only now, but in the future.









# How to Get Help

If you know someone has issues with continued substance use, seek professional help. A doctor can screen for signs of drug use and related health conditions and suggest possible next steps. Other more immediate resources include:

## 988 Florida Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Call, text, or chat 988 to be connected to trained counselors who will listen, provide support, and connect you to additional resources if necessary.

[MYFLFAMILIES.COM/  
SUICIDEPREVENTION](https://www.myflfamilies.com/suicideprevention)

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## CORE Network

A long-term substance use disorder recovery program designed to establish a coordinated system of care for those seeking treatment for substance use disorder.

[FLCORENETWORK.COM](https://www.flcorenetwork.com)

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## ISave Florida

Drug overdose is a nationwide epidemic and an increasing number of Floridians are losing their lives to overdose - you can help save a life with naloxone.

[ISAVEFL.COM](https://www.isavefl.com)

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## Local Services

If you or someone you know is in need of substance abuse and/or mental health services, our local managing entities can help you locate available programs.

[MYFLFAMILIES.COM/  
SAMH-GET-HELP](https://www.myflfamilies.com/samh-get-help)

# Addressing Prevention with Your Students

## Listen

A student may come to you for advice, or you may notice concerning changes in behavior. Refrain from judgment. Listen, and try to learn more about what's going on.

## Talk early and often

Regular conversations about the risks of drugs and alcohol can help. Know your school's prevention plan, and address substance use in different ways throughout the year.

## Start with the science

Discuss the mental and physical health impacts of drugs. Focus on the harm substance use can do to academics and relationships.

## Practice

Consider taking time to role play various scenarios about coping with stress, what to do if a friend offers you drugs or alcohol, or what to do if a friend needs help.

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**The Facts. Your Future.** is a multifaceted initiative led by Florida's First Lady Casey DeSantis to heighten youth understanding of the dangerous and life-altering effects of substance use.

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Get more facts  
about **Teens and  
Drug Misuse**

[TheFactsYourFuture.org](https://TheFactsYourFuture.org)

