

Alcohol and the Developing Brain



Discovery
EDUCATION



GRADE
RANGE
5–7

DIGITAL EXPLORATION | CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

ASK, LISTEN, LEARN: REFUSAL ROLE PLAY

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Brainstorm refusal strategies in response to a scenario involving underage drinking.
- Collaborate to write a short script.
- Participate in role play.
- Evaluate the effectiveness and authenticity of refusal strategies.

Overview

In this activity, students review the [Ask, Listen, Learn: Alcohol and the Developing Brain Digital Exploration](#) and consider the refusal strategies used by Alex to say “NO” to underage drinking. They collaborate in small groups to react to various scenarios with either a refusal strategy, an acceptance of a positive alternative, or a helpful strategy to keep a friend from making an unhealthy choice. The class assesses the effectiveness of the strategies and discusses how they might be improved to be more successful.

Activity Duration

45–60 minutes

Essential Questions

- What strategies can I use to effectively respond to peer pressure?
- How can I develop a mindset for avoiding unhealthy situations and peer pressure?

Materials

- Scenarios (included in this activity, cut into strips)
- Quarter sheets of paper (for student responses)
- Paper
- Pencils

Procedure

1. Have students briefly summarize the *Ask, Listen, Learn: Alcohol and the Developing Brain Digital Exploration* (if they have not already done so).

2. Ask "How did Alex avoid putting herself in a situation where she might be pressured to drink underage?" Engage students in conversation about the refusal strategies they observed in the module. Review that portion of the module and ask questions, if needed, to help students categorize the refusal strategies. Possible categories include the following (Note that these categories are from the module. Students may include categories of their own.):
 - Divert the attention and change the plans
 - Stay honest and think of the future
 - Be a good friend and keep your cool
 - It's OK to pass the blame to mom and dad
3. Tell students it's easiest to avoid illegal risky behaviors such as underage drinking when they keep themselves in healthy situations and develop a positive mindset to make the best choices they can. Today, they will apply that perspective as they work together to develop, practice, and refine different ways to say "NO" to underage drinking.
4. Divide students into groups of three or four.
5. Explain the following:
 - Each group will receive a strip of paper with a scenario described on it. Some groups will have the same scenario.
 - Students will work with their group members to brainstorm at least one way they could respond to the scenario, much as Alex did in the module.
 - Students should consider how they might refuse, suggest a positive alternative, or support a friend in saying "NO" to underage—and illegal—drinking.
 - Students should also consider how they can include information about how alcohol affects the developing brain and body and, as a result, their behavior.
 - Groups will then collaborate to write a short script in which they will role play their refusal strategy. Every member of the group should be a part of the role play.
 - After writing the script, students will have time to practice and then perform their skit for the rest of the class.
 - Encourage students to demonstrate that they are confident in their decision to say "NO" to underage, illegal drinking as they act out their skit. If necessary, engage students in a quick conversation about what that might look like. Examples may include making eye contact, speaking firmly, standing straight and tall, arms folded across chest or hands on hips, or putting a hand up in a "back off" gesture.
6. Hand out one scenario to each group. Invite students to read the scenario with their group, discuss the situation, and raise their hands if they have questions. Address students' questions as needed to clarify the scenarios and directions. Allow about 15 minutes for students to write and practice their scripts. Circulate around the room to offer suggestions and answer questions as needed.

7. Regroup students and provide time for each group to read their scenario aloud and perform their skit.
8. After each group presents their skit, conduct a 2–3 minute debrief session in which students share their thinking about the effectiveness of the refusal strategy. Record students' thoughts and ideas for each skit. Use the following questions to guide the discussion:
 - a. How effective would this strategy be in real life?
 - b. Would the strategy be easy and safe to use?
 - c. How would I improve the strategy or adjust it for my own use?
9. Ask, "Why do you think we did this activity today?" Engage students in a discussion. Ask questions as needed to help them recognize how these kinds of activities can help them avoid situations in which they may be asked to drink underage and empower them to respond confidently in situations like those described in the scenarios.
10. Collect and display the scenarios and students' scripts so students may revisit them on their own time. Encourage students to add new ideas and approaches to the display as they learn more about the effects of alcohol on the developing brain and body.

Additional Resources

- [Ask, Listen, Learn: 10 Ways to Say "NO" Infographic](#)
- [The Science Behind the Effects of Alcohol on Your Brain](#)
- [Healthy Decisions for the Whole Body](#)
- [Informed Students Make Better, Healthier Decisions](#)
- [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Peer Pressure](#)
- [North Dakota State University: Talking to Children About Peer Pressure](#)
- [6 Tactful Tips for Resisting Peer Pressure To Use Drugs and Alcohol](#)

National Standards

National Health Standards

Grades 3–5

- 2.5.3 Identify how peers can influence healthy and unhealthy behaviors.
- 4.5.1 Demonstrate effective verbal and nonverbal communication skills to enhance health.
- 4.5.2 Demonstrate refusal skills that avoid or reduce health risks.
- 4.5.4 Demonstrate how to ask for assistance to enhance personal health.
- 7.5.3 Demonstrate a variety of behaviors to avoid or reduce health risks.
- 8.5.2 Encourage others to make positive health choices.

National Health Standards

Grades 6–8

- 2.8.3 Describe how peers influence healthy and unhealthy behaviors.
- 4.8.1 Apply effective verbal and nonverbal communication skills to enhance health.
- 4.8.2 Demonstrate refusal and negotiation skills that avoid or reduce health risks.
- 4.8.4 Demonstrate how to ask for assistance to enhance the health of self and others.
- 7.8.1 Explain the importance of assuming responsibility for personal health behaviors.
- 7.8.2 Demonstrate healthy practices and behaviors that will maintain or improve the health of self and others.
- 7.8.3 Demonstrate behaviors to avoid or reduce health risks to self and others.
- 8.8.2 Demonstrate how to influence and support others to make positive health choices.

Common Core State Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Role Play Scenarios

Directions: Cut the scenarios into strips before distributing to students.

Your parents are going out to dinner and a late movie tonight. Your friends want to come over while they are gone. You are worried they may pressure you to drink alcohol, but you don't want to because you don't want to anger or disappoint your parents.

You are spending the night at a friend's house when his older sister invites you to try alcohol with her and her friends.

Some older kids show up at the basketball court with alcoholic beverages. They offer you and your friend one. You want to leave, but your friend says, "I don't want to look like a baby."

You go out to dinner with a friend and her parents. The parents invite you to taste their alcoholic beverage. Your friend says, "It's okay. I do it all the time."

You are at a party with several friends. You see a friend encouraging your best friend to drink alcohol. You know he doesn't want to drink because it's illegal to drink underage and he doesn't want to get in trouble.

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