



Discussion Guide for

CRACK

NOTES TO THE LEADER

Crack is the most potent form of one of the most addictive drugs, cocaine. It is smokable cocaine prepackaged in small, ready-to-smoke amounts. Also known as "rock," crack has been described as one of the most addictive drugs ever sold. It is so easy to manufacture that dealers are able to offer a dose at prices affordable to almost anyone. Crack is made by mixing cocaine hydrochloride crystals with other substances to create a solution that is heated, cooled and dried to form a paste purer, more concentrated, and more potent than powdered cocaine. The substance is then cut into chips called crack or "rocks," which are sold by dealers in tiny plastic vials for a relatively inexpensive price.

The "high" or euphoria produced by crack is so intense and the depression that follows so powerful that even first-time crack users develop a craving for the drug. Crack can also cause sudden death, even from the very first use, due to heart failure and strokes and can trigger a schizophrenic-like psychosis.

Many users - some taking the drug for the first time - are unaware of the extremely dangerous and addictive properties of the drug. They may slip almost unaware into the nightmare of drug addiction. That's

why it is so important that potential users and those who come in contact with them learn the truth about crack.

This program is designed to bring some of that truth to light. It examines cocaine and its most deadly form crack and the detrimental effects that crack can have on the mind and body. It provides real facts about crack that can be used in the effort to prevent the drug's use.

ABOUT THE FILM

The film opens with the narrator introducing the viewers to crack and its dangers. She gives the U.S. statistic – the percentage of 8th graders who tried cocaine was 2.3% in 1991 and 4.5% in 1995. In Canada, we were unable to determine a comparative statistic. Provincial statistics should be available from your local Boards of Health. Canada seems to be following similar patterns as those in the United States in that overall use of cocaine by students has increased from 1993 to 1995, but remains lower than the percentages seen from 1997 to 1987.

The narrator gives a description of powdered cocaine and its more potent form - crack and then gives an overview of the topics covered in the film: physical and psychological complications; major effects of withdrawal; effects on unborn children; and intervention and prevention.

As the film profiles crack, a doctor discusses some of the major physical risks that a person who uses crack is taking, many of them deadly. A drug treatment counselor then describes the cycle of dependence that crack use can create almost immediately, including how crack use can affect a person's behavior and cause cocaine psychosis.

A police officer points out the relationship between use of the drug and other criminal activity. When an addict cannot get the drug that is wanted the addict may turn to robbery and even murder. The film shows an addict being prosecuted and placed in a jail cell, emphasizing the legal effects of using crack.

Viewers also learn how difficult it can be for a person to quit using crack once addicted and the damaging effects that crack use can have on an unborn child.

The conclusion of the film consists of things the viewer can do to help fight crack use, whether it is getting help for an addict, reporting suspected drug activity to the police, or simply setting a good example in one's own life.

THE PRESENTATION

0 - 5 MINUTES - INTRODUCE YOURSELF

Briefly explain that the purpose of your presentation is to give the facts about crack cocaine use and its impact on a person's life.

5 - 15 MINUTES - SHOW THE FILM

Show Crack to give your audience a better understanding of the serious effects of using this highly addictive drug.

15 - 50 MINUTES - DISCUSSION

Engage your audience in a discussion about the film and present questions provided in this guide. Encourage your audience to participate by sharing experiences and asking questions.

50 - 55 MINUTES - CLOSE

Distribute any pamphlets or supplemental materials. Tell your audience about the available school and community resources for dealing with cocaine/crack abuse. Finally, encourage them to share what they've learned from the presentation with their friends and family.



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QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Q. What is crack?

A. Crack is smokable cocaine prepackaged in small, ready-to-smoke amounts and sold at a lower price than that of powdered cocaine, making it immediately more affordable.

Q. How does crack differ from regular cocaine?

A. Cocaine hydrochloride consists of white powdered crystals that are usually sniffed through the nostrils, or smoked ("freebasing") in order to achieve a more powerful "high". Preparation of cocaine crystals for freebasing once required the use of a flammable solvent to free the pure cocaine base from its hydrochloride salt. Crack is smokable cocaine that allows the user to "freebase" without having to process the cocaine.

Q. Why is crack more dangerous than snorted cocaine?

A. Crack is more concentrated than cocaine because a greater amount is absorbed into the brain sooner and the high is immediate. It's more potent than powdered cocaine and more likely to result in addiction. Crack users can become addicted within weeks or even days after their first use, while snorters of cocaine may maintain casual use over years.

Q. What is the cycle of psychological dependence that crack creates?

A. A few seconds after smoking crack, the user experiences a very intense high that lasts only about 10 or 15 minutes, at most. This period is followed by a severe crash, accompanied by overwhelming feelings of depression and dependency. The cycle of ups and downs reinforces a craving for the drug enabling a chemical dependency to develop in a very short time.

Q. What are some of the major physical dangers involved in crack use?

A. Heating crack releases vapors which are inhaled and then absorbed into the bloodstream affecting the brain within seconds. This can cause a dangerous rise in blood pressure, heart rate and body temperature, a stroke or a heart attack brought about by a narrowing of the arteries, or an abnormal and ineffective beating of the heart which can be deadly. Crack can also cause tremors, convulsions, nausea, vomiting or a failure of the respiratory system.

Q. How does cocaine use by a pregnant woman affect her unborn child?

A. Cocaine use by a pregnant woman increases the risk of miscarriage, premature and stillbirth and giving birth to a baby already addicted to crack. Babies exposed to cocaine in the womb are often born undersized and with small heads. Some have serious, physical deformities. Others may have chronic behaviour problems that can inhibit their schooling and social development.

Q. What resources are available in your community to help a person overcome an addiction to crack?

A. (Answers may vary depending on your particular area.) Help may be sought from a doctor, local Board of Health or Mental Health unit, a hospital, a drug treatment program, mental health or substance abuse counselors which can be found in your local health pages. More information can be obtained from the following sources:

Kids Help Line
1-800-668-6868

Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse
613-235-4048

Health Canada
613-957-5995

Parents Against Drugs
416-395-4970

PRIDE Canada
1-800-667-3747

PROVINCIAL ADDICTION AGENCIES:

BRITISH COLUMBIA:

Alcohol and Drug Services Clinic: 800-663-1441

ALBERTA:

Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission, Youth Services: 403-422-7383 (Edmonton) 403-297-4664 (Calgary)

SASKATCHEWAN:

Alcohol and Drug Services, Myers Recovery Centre: 306-766-7910

MANITOBA:

Addictions Foundation of Manitoba: 204-944-6235

ONTARIO:

Addiction Research Foundation: 800-387-2916

DART INFO LINE

(Drug & Alcohol Treatment Information Line): 1-800-565-8603

NEW BRUNSWICK:

Regional Addiction Services: 506-452-5558

NOVA SCOTIA:

Drug Dependency Services: 902-424-5623

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND:

Addiction Services of P.E.I. - Adolescent Program: 902-368-4273

NEWFOUNDLAND:

Department of Health - Addiction Services: 709-729-0623

PROGRAMS DETAILS

LENGTH:

10 minutes

SUBJECT AREAS:

Cocaine/Addiction

AUDIENCE LEVELS:

Adult

ORDER NUMBER:

2-5136SG

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