

## Gateway Drugs Vignette

### Define Gateway

- A gateway is an opening that can lead in many directions, many paths emerge.
- Tobacco, Alcohol, Marijuana are the three gateway drugs.
- If these are used, you are more likely to try/use other drugs. Studies show that 90% of people who have ever tried cocaine used all 3 gateway drugs before. More than 50% followed the progression of cigarettes...alcohol...marijuana...cocaine
- The earlier you start, more likely to use other drugs AND more likely to develop dependence.
- Because tobacco and alcohol are legal for adults, there is a false belief that it must cause fewer problems. But alcohol and tobacco cause huge problems. As a matter of fact, alcohol kills more underage drinkers than all other drugs combined. Tobacco kills the most overall- 1200/day.

Let's look at each separately.

### Tobacco

- Is a plant (cigarettes, pipe tobacco, chew)
- Contains over 4000 chemicals, 69 of which are carcinogenic.
- 40% tobacco, 60% other additives (Show ingredient bucket)
- In US, 5000 people your age try tobacco first time each day. 3000 become regular smokers. Why? Nicotine is addictive drug (physically, mentally) (Show tar jar, healthy and diseased lungs)

### Alcohol

- Active ingredient- ethanol
- Ethanol works much like ether, anesthetic to put brain to sleep
- Central nervous system depressant
- #1 drug used by teens
- At least 50% of all car crashes, suicides, drownings, crimes of violence, unplanned sex, worsening school performance, other trauma—alcohol.
- At least 25% of all hospital visits in US- alcohol. (Activity Sheet- rates)
- (Show healthy and diseased livers)
- Define binge- 5+ boys, 4+ girls in one sitting
- Alcohol poisoning kills by: Causing unconscious victim to choke on vomit  
Hypothermia  
Cardiac Arrest  
Depress respiratory system  
Brain damage
- Don't let friends "sleep it off". Alcohol levels continue to rise after stop drinking.
- Alcohol can be a matter of life or death.

## **Marijuana**

- Main ingredient- THC- tetrahydrocannabinol
- 400 chemicals, many cause lung cancer
- Major gateway to other drugs, form “habit” of smoking with tobacco, then marijuana, then meth
- Tolerance is built
- Lack of concentration, motivation

## **OTC/Prescription Drugs**

- Some think they are safe because they came from the store or doctor
- Issues: access (medicine cabinets, internet, TV ads)
- 1 in 5 teens- vicodin (addictive narcotic pain reliever)
- 1 in 10 teens- oxycontin
- 1 in 10 teens- Ritalin
- We are not talking about kids mistakenly taking the wrong dose, we are talking about drug abuse
- Increases blood pressure, heart rate, organ damage, addiction, difficulty breathing, seizures, death in some cases.
- Problem: we are all becoming more familiar with lots of drugs (show ads)