

Nashiyan Virudh Curriculum

For Diploma Courses

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Introduction

Project Overview

Based on extensive fieldwork, we document that youth underestimate the addictiveness of opioids—increasing their likelihood of experimentation and consequently addiction. Collaborating with an internationally-renowned filmmaker, we developed a series of short

documentary films which profile real recovering users—tracing their initiation, addiction journey, personal and family impacts, and recovery challenges. We complement these films with expert videos explaining the biology of addiction, short quizzes, discussion materials, worksheets and interactive activities to create a comprehensive stand-alone curriculum package. The package was reviewed and approved by a government-appointed SCERT committee. We piloted and evaluated the curriculum in collaboration with the Department of School Education through a randomized trial covering 9,600 students across 78 government schools. We find substantial improvements in student beliefs, along with overwhelmingly positive feedback from teachers and principals. This package offers a scalable, and cost-effective drug prevention solution.

Training Objectives

This training has been designed to equip teachers with the knowledge and tools needed to effectively implement the drug prevention curriculum, in Punjab, led by the SCERT. The session will begin by introducing the work of J-PAL and its South Asia office, including its evidence-based approach to tackling social challenges. Teachers will then be introduced to the goals and importance of this specific project, which focuses on preventing drug use among school students through engaging, real-life stories (documentary videos) and classroom-based discussions.

The training will provide a detailed overview of the intervention package, including videos, quizzes, post-screening discussions, role-play activities, and worksheets. Teachers will also receive the complete implementation schedule and clear, step-by-step instructions on how to conduct each activity in their classrooms. Ground rules for respectful participation during training will be set at the beginning to ensure a smooth and collaborative learning environment.

Teachers will be encouraged to ask questions, share concerns, and clarify any doubts they may have about the intervention or their role. An interactive activity will be conducted to give teachers hands-on experience with the materials and help them feel more confident. Additionally, a short general knowledge survey will be administered to gauge baseline understanding. The session will conclude with a brief overview of logistics and practical aspects, including material distribution, classroom setup, and reporting procedures.

Target Audience

This training is designed for nodal teachers of high and senior secondary government schools who will be leading the implementation of drug prevention curriculum in the schools. The teachers will implement this package one in two weeks for all students studying in class 9th to 12th.

About CEGA- Center for Effective Governance (University of California, Berkeley)

Based at UC Berkeley, the Center for Effective Global Action (CEGA) is a hub for interdisciplinary research on global development. CEGA's network of over 165 researchers and 65 scholars from LMICs—identifies and tests innovations designed to reduce poverty and facilitate development. CEGA researchers use rigorous methods as well as novel measurement tools—including wireless sensors, mobile data, and analytics—to evaluate complex programs. CEGA has over a decade of expertise coordinating multiple large-scale research initiatives. CEGA's experience running the USAID-funded Development Impact Lab (DIL) and the Gates/DFID-funded Agricultural Technology Adoption Initiative (ATAI) demonstrate CEGA's capacity to generate high-quality research and play an effective research coordination and dissemination role. Launched in 2013, DIL is a network of universities focused on developing, evaluating, and scaling innovations that accelerate poverty reduction and drive sustainable development. Over six years, DIL has partnered with USAID to curate a portfolio of innovative development solutions that now reach millions of people around the world. DIL has worked with over 35 USAID M/B/IOs to sponsor research competitions, pair investigators with project opportunities, and translate our results through policy-maker engagement, spin-off companies, and partnerships for scale-up.

About J-PAL South Asia at Institute for Financial Management and Research

Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) is a global research center working to reduce poverty by ensuring that policy is informed by scientific evidence. Anchored by a network of more than 870 researchers at universities around the world, J-PAL conducts randomized impact evaluations to answer critical questions in the fight against poverty. J-PAL South Asia, based at the Institute for Financial Management and Research (IFMR) in India, leads J-PAL's work in the South Asia region. J-PAL South Asia conducts randomized evaluations, builds partnerships for evidence-informed policymaking, and helps partners scale up effective programmes.

Motivation: The Importance of a Drug Prevention Curriculum

High levels of opioid use have created a public health crisis of epic proportions in Punjab. The problem is wide-spread but particularly severe among young males from low-income rural backgrounds (Kalra and Bansal 2012, Lal and Singh 1979).

Among youth, drug use typically begins with experimentation. Extensive fieldwork by our research team (discussed below) reveals youth dramatically underestimate opioids' addictive

potential. Because of this, they view experimentation as less risky than it actually is. Correcting these flawed beliefs can prevent initial drug experimentation and subsequent addiction.

Secondary school education can play an important role in shaping these beliefs. In other countries, drug awareness is an important part of the secondary school curriculum. Punjab can adopt this approach—intervening to shape students’ beliefs before they have a chance to begin experimenting with drugs.

Background: Extensive Fieldwork on Causes of Drug Use (400 interviews)

We spent six months conducting extensive background fieldwork on the conditions that lead to drug use among youth, with a focus on heroin (*chitta*). We surveyed ~300 secondary school students. We also conducted in-depth qualitative interviews with ~100 recovering drug users (both from government OOATS clinics and private clinics) and health staff and psychiatrists.

One very striking pattern that emerged from this fieldwork was the widespread prevalence of misbeliefs among youth. Many individuals consistently under-estimated the addictiveness of drugs (i.e. heroin) in three key respects:

- i. Students think trying *chitta* just once or a few times is not enough to become addicted;
- ii. Students think that if a person is in the early stages of addiction, they can stop themselves from using again if they have enough willpower.
- iii. Students think that if a person goes to rehab once, then they are cured from addiction forever.

For example, in our surveys, 54% of students see experimenting with heroin as only slightly risky, 52% believe overcoming heroin addiction is primarily a matter of “willpower”, and 58% believe an addict cannot relapse after undergoing treatment once.

These misperceptions make *chitta* experimentation appear relatively harmless to students. For example, recovering users in rehab clinics consistently report beginning drug use either socially with friends (due to peer pressure) or during personal crises—intending only temporary use. Instead, they found themselves quickly addicted and unable to stop. In these cases, people began doing drugs, in part, because they under-estimated the dangers of experimentation.

Figure 1. Theory of Change



While drug use has complex underlying causes—including unemployment and lack of opportunity, mental health challenges, and readily available supply—addressing the belief distortions mentioned above presents “low hanging fruit” for policy-makers. By correcting beliefs, we can reduce the likelihood of experimentation, and therefore ultimately drug use and addiction.

Key Beliefs to be Targeted through a Drug Prevention Curriculum

1. **Addictiveness:** Heroin is extremely addictive; even using it once can lead to addiction.
2. **Willpower:** Quitting heroin is not simply a matter of willpower alone.
3. **Recovery process:** People who try to quit addiction relapse many times; rehabilitation involves a lifelong process of recovery.
4. **Gateway drugs:** Milder drugs like tobacco, alcohol, afeem (opium), pills, and prescription drugs are often precursors to experimentation with harsher substances (e.g. heroin) and therefore should be avoided.
5. **Origin:** Most people addicted today began with the intention to use drugs only temporarily—often triggered by peer pressure, mental health challenges, personal crises, or a need to boost performance at school or work. It is important to recognize these situations of vulnerability and not turn to "temporary" experimentation since that all too easily leads to addiction.
6. **Impact:** Addiction’s impacts—physical, medical, financial, and social—are broad and extend beyond individuals to their families and communities. Experimenting with drugs not only puts one’s own life at risk, but also the wellbeing of loved ones.

‘Edutainment’ Curriculum as the Solution

What is the best way to change beliefs through a curriculum? Evidence shows that simply providing factual information (e.g. through direct education) does not produce long-run internalized belief change (Graeber et al., 2024). In addition, scare tactics, such as the DARE campaign in the U.S. are widely perceived as having been ineffective (Ennett et. al., 1994). Consistent with this, Punjabi secondary school students report that existing anti-drug messaging is unappealing and does not resonate with them.

In contrast, a large body of work demonstrates that engaging videos, especially those that feature narrative stories of real individuals can effectively change beliefs and behaviors. For example, a range of such “edutainment” interventions targeting behaviors such as unprotected sex, HIV testing, domestic violence, and female business investment have shown significant multi-year impacts (Dellavigna and La Ferrara 2015, Banerjee et al., 2019, Riley 2019, Orkin et al., 2020, Bernard et al., 2023). Especially notable is the highly impactful “Tips from a Smoker” series, developed by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in the U.S., which features videos of recovering tobacco addicts. These videos are credited with over a million smoking cessation attempts (McAfee et al., 2017; Murphy-Hoefer et al., 2020). Inspired by this approach, we have developed a film-based curriculum which aims to change student beliefs through videos, educational content, and supporting activities.

The Curriculum Package

The curriculum package contains the following elements:

1. **9 professionally produced documentary films.** Each 10-minute film profiles one recovering user, tracing their initiation, addiction journey, impacts on life and family and the difficulties of recovery. The films have high quality cinematography and feature appealing b-roll village/home footage and interviews with friends and family. Each film includes animated bookends—an introduction reinforcing the six themes (highlighted in

section above) and a short conclusion connecting the specific narrative to the six key themes.

2. **2 expert videos.** These are complementary films featuring experts providing factual information on the science of addiction including the biological impacts of drugs on the brain and body. One film is for students, and the other is designed for parents.
3. **Student quizzes.** Each film is accompanied by a short three question quiz taken by students at the end of the showing. This improves student engagement, encourages students to reflect on the content of the film and improves content retention.
4. **Discussion questions.** Each film is accompanied by a set of suggested discussion questions, a resource for teachers to facilitate classroom discussion.
5. **Posters.** Each documentary film has an accompanying “movie-style” poster, featuring the film’s protagonist and selected quotes from the video relating to the six themes. These can be displayed in hallways to reinforce the message of the films in between film screenings.
6. **Interactive activities.** In order to promote student engagement, we have developed a set of optional interactive activities for students (such as role plays) to be implemented at teachers’ discretion.
7. **Worksheets:** The curriculum is accompanied by factual worksheets for students to complete, aimed at enhancing their understanding of etymology, biology, impact, and legal aspects.

Behind the Scenes: The process of creating these films

Our documentaries were produced through an intensive collaboration with an internationally-renowned Chandigarh-based documentarian. We identified nine recovering drug users across the state, each of whom features in one film. This required finding relatable, charismatic individuals with good communication skills, who were willing to publicly share their personal trauma and addiction story, and whose family members were also willing to appear on camera. The selection process ensured that the nine subjects reflect Punjab’s diversity along a range of dimensions, including wealth, rural/urban settings, gender, and dialect.

The production of each film involved a careful multi-step process combining our academic research with the documentarian’s creative strengths. In the first step, the film-maker’s researcher conducted extensive background interviews with the subject, their family and associates to fully understand the subject’s journey. Next, we used this to create a structured narrative outline, ensuring prominent coverage of all six themes. This informed the filming

stage: usually 20-30 hours of footage were shot for each film, at multiple locations to maintain visual engagement and interest. This footage was then carefully edited down to create a 10-minute film.

We contracted with specialized teams to create the animated clips which accompany each film. The research team scripted the material and hired separate professionals for animation production and voice-over narration. We also contracted a separate designer to create distinctive film posters.

Post-production: Government review process

The films were reviewed by a special DOE committee appointed by the government. The committee included a teacher, a child psychologist, a de-addiction expert, and a representative from a local youth-focused NGO, in addition to members of the Department of School Education. The committee's remit was to ensure the content was appropriate and minimize any risk of harm or triggers. The committee provided excellent feedback, which was incorporated into the films. The final versions of the films were approved in July 2024.

Session Schedule

Week 1/2	Baseline Assessment
Week 3/4	Documentary Video 1: Vishwashjeet
Week 5/6	Documentary Video 2: Jarnail
Week 7/8	Interactive Activity 1: Peer Pressure
Week 9/10	Expert Video: Gurpratap Pannu
Week 11/12	Documentary Video 3: Manpreet
Week 13/14	Worksheet 1
Week 15/16	Documentary Video 4: Kanwal
Week 17/18	Documentary Video 5: Shahbaz
Week 19/20	Interactive Activity 2: Pledge +Worksheet 2
Week 21/22	Documentary Video 6: Amritpal
Week 23/24	Documentary Video 7: Karan
Week 25/26	Worksheet 3
Week 27/28	Documentary Video 8: Karnail
Week 29/30	Documentary Video 9: Prince
Week 31/32	Endline Assessment

Curriculum Implementation

Documentary Video Screening

Objective: Ensure smooth technical readiness for the video screening.

1. Download the video and support materials (quiz, worksheets, interactive activities, etc) through the google drive video link as soon as the link is shared with you. Please ensure the content is saved where it can be easily accessed during multiple screenings planned for all students in 9th to 12th grades.
2. The maximum size of the class for one screening is 50. If there are smaller sections of less than 25 students, please feel free to merge the sections for sessions.
3. Once you download the materials, ensure downloaded video is supported by media player/projector setup (video and audio check) and you are also able to display the written materials (in PDF formats) on the screen.
4. Ensure that one class period is reserved in the timetable of students (9th to 12th grades) once in two weeks. Accordingly, book or ensure the audio-visual room availability for the scheduled class periods.
5. Reach out or coordinate with school staff if any assistance is needed (Example-computer teacher or someone with knowledge setting up the projector screen).

Screening Session

[STEP 1] Quick check before the session

1. Check the availability and functioning of the required equipment- audio and visual system
2. Teachers must let the students know that they have to bring a pen and a notebook with them since they'll be writing answers to the quizzes after the screenings.
3. Uninterrupted power supply is required. If due to electricity cut the video is stopped in-between. Ensure the screening is scheduled again.

[STEP 2] Arranging Students in a Class

Objective: Create a conducive environment for attentive viewing and student participation.

[NOTE] *It is advised that teachers ask students to maintain a separate notebook for this curriculum.*

1. Seat students in a way that they all have a clear view of the screen and audible sound (including the ones sitting at the back). Ensure that the student seated at the back has a clear view and can hear the sound
2. Ensure the room is quiet and free of distractions to ensure minimum disturbance.
 - a. All students must be seated in the classroom before the screening begins. [No student is left out of the class.]
 - b. The Nodal/Assigned teacher must be present in the screening room throughout the whole screening session ensuring discipline and silence in the classroom.
 - c. Try to minimize any external interruption during the screening, if someone enters the ongoing sessions, the video must be paused immediately, rewound, and replayed from that point once the staff member has left.
 - d. It is advisable to close the doors for screening to ensure clarity in audio during the screening session.

[STEP 3] Introduction & Video Screening (5 + 15 Mins.)

Objective: Set context and prepare students for the video content.

1. Refer to the following script to introduce the students about the session. Before the video, they understand the agenda of the session, motivation for it and what to expect in terms of learning. [Deliver the introduction in a clear and calm manner]

“Today, we’ll watch a short documentary that tells the real-life story of a person who struggled with addiction and how they overcame it. As you watch, pay attention to how their beliefs and the misinformation they had about drug use and addiction affected their life, their family and surroundings, and how difficult the recovery process was for them.”
2. Encourage students to note down or remember anything they find interesting during the video
3. Screen the scheduled video for the day. (15-17 mins)

[STEP 4] Documentary Quiz

Objective: Reinforce key messages from the video and check comprehension.

1. **Setting up the Quiz:** Display the quiz sheets to each of the students. Ensure that every student has a notebook and pen/pencil to write their answers in.
2. **Facilitating the quiz**
 - a. Give clear instructions:
 - i. Answer all questions based on the video
 - ii. Every question is compulsory. No question is to be left unanswered.
 - b. Read out the questions aloud in the class at once. Add simple explanations, if required.
 - i. Now you may ask the students to start answering the quiz questions.
 - ii. Clarify the question **without prompting answers** if any student is having difficulty in understanding.
 - iii. Allow students 5-7 minutes to answer the quiz.
 - iv. Take round to ensure students have answered all the questions
 - c. Once students have completed the quiz, ask for student volunteer to share their answer in front of the class

[Sample Response:] Quiz: Vishwasjeet

1. When Vishwasjeet was locked in his house, did this stop him from getting chitta?

No, it did not stop him from getting chitta. He still found a way through his friends to get chitta even when he was locked inside his house. This shows how strong addiction can become and how it takes control over a person's actions.

2. Vishwasjeet lost his basketball career due to drugs. Think about your own dreams and goals. Write down one important goal or dream that you have. How would drug use interfere with achieving it?

My dream is to become a teacher when I grow up.

If I get into drugs, I won't be able to study properly or focus in class. I might fail my exams or get into trouble, and schools may never allow me to teach. How can I guide or teach others if I make bad choices myself? Taking drugs would only take me far away from my dream.

[STEP 5] Post-screening Discussion

Objective: Encourage reflection, correct misbeliefs, and engage with students.

1. Inform Students about the discussion. Nodal teacher may use the following script:

“The video we just watched showed us a real story; not an actor, but someone who has actually lived through these experiences. Now we will take a few minutes to talk about the video. About what we have learned and what our doubts are. Before we start, I want you to know that this is a safe space. There are no right or wrong answers here. Everyone can share openly, and we will listen to each other with respect.”

2. Use the discussion question (given in the curriculum package) to carry out the post-screening discussion.
 - a. Read each question aloud and make students understand the question. Add simple explanations, if required.
 - b. After reading a question, address the whole class to think about possible responses and give them some time to think about it.
 - c. Make a mental note of the students’ responses. Summarise the key points made by students and use them to guide the discussion.
 - d. Refer to the suggested prompts provided in the discussion question sheet to respond to the student responses.
 - e. Ensure that every discussion question is discussed.
 - f. If students have any questions or need further clarification, please address them.
[YOU MAY REFER TO RESOURCES IF YOU DON’T HAVE IMMEDIATE ANSWER]
3. Ensure that the discussion session allows every student a chance to respond and ask their doubts, especially quiet students.
 - a. Ensure that there is equal participation from girls and boys.
 - b. To ensure equal participation, ensure student responses are from each row.

Interactive Activities

1. Student Worksheets

Objective: For Longer Retention of Correct Beliefs

To reinforce key learning about drug use and its consequences through written, reflective, and scenario-based activities. These worksheets help internalize concepts discussed in videos and classroom activities by encouraging personal connection, critical thinking, and guided writing.

Worksheet 1: Personal Values & Consequences of Drug Use

[Activity 1] What Matters the Most

Objective: Help students identify what they value in life and reflect on how drug use can impact those things.

Instructions:

1. Display Worksheet 1 on the screen.
2. Ask students to think silently for 1 minute: “What are the three things you value most in life?” [They can use the prompts in the picture for reference, also they should feel free to mention anything matters to them beyond the list mentioned]
3. After one minute, ask students to write each answer inside one of the three balloons.
4. Once all the students have filled out the balloons, go to the next page.
5. Now, encourage the students to think about how drug consumption can affect the three most important things in their life. Give them 5 minutes to think (without any discussion among their peers)
6. After five minutes, ask the students to write the responses in the second column on “How can drug consumption affect the three things that matter to them the most?”
7. Once all the students have noted their responses, ask 2-3 student volunteers to read their responses out loud in the class
8. During the activity, walk around the classroom to support students individually if required.

[Activity 2] Drugs Affect Everything

Objective: Understand how drug use can impact various areas of life (body, mind, relationships, finances, law).

Instructions:

1. Move to the next page on the screen
2. Use the text in the worksheet, to explain the students the five types of harm and their real-life effects.
3. Clarify difficult words as needed and use simple local explanations if required.
4. Ensure the students understand the text provided and encourage them to ask clarification questions if they have any.
5. Ask them to note all five types of harms in their notebooks.
6. Now, read out each story one by one and ask students to identify which type of harm is the particular story hinting towards [THERE CAN BE MORE THAN ONE TYPE OF HARM}.

7. Students should write name of the story character and type of harm in their notebooks
8. Once all the stories and harm are covered, request student volunteers to say out loud the responses to each story one by one

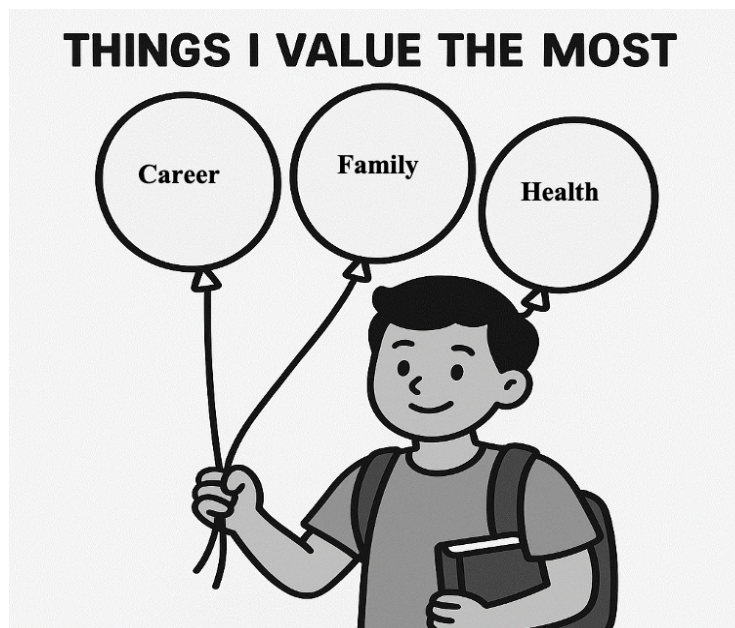
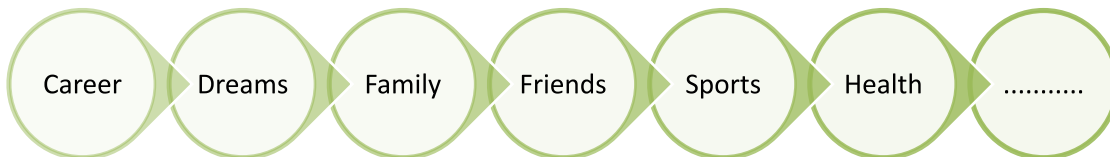
[Sample Response] Worksheet 1

Activity 1: What matters the most

What are the three things you value most in your life?

[Write your answers in the three balloons below.]

[You can choose from the examples given below or think of other things that are important to you—even if they are not shown here.]



How do you think drug consumption can affect these three valuable things?

	Things you value the most	How can drug consumption affect these?
1	Career	1. I won't be able to focus on studies. 2. My marks may go down. 3. I might miss classes or drop out. 4. I could lose job opportunities in the future.
2	Family	1. My family might feel hurt, worried, or ashamed because of my actions. 2. I could lose their trust and respect over time. 3. Create daily tension, arguments, and sadness at home. 4. The bond with parents and siblings could weaken, and I may feel alone. 5. Will ignore the needs of my family and do not help them financially. 6. My actions will bring shame to my family.
3	Health	1. I can fall seriously ill. 2. It can damage my brain, lungs, and heart. 3. I may become weak and tired all the time. 4. I can catch disease like HIV, Hepatitis-c 5. Addiction can even lead to death.

Activity 2: Drugs don't just affect one part of your life — they touch everything.

[Instructions: Read out carefully]

Drugs are chemical substances that can harm the body, mind, relationships, goals, and future. Understanding these harms can help you make better choices and protect yourself and those around you.

Type of Harm	What It Means	Real-Life Effects
 Physical Harms	Drugs damage important organs and weaken your body.	● Liver and kidney failure ● Lung damage and cancer ● Infections like HIV/AIDS from needle sharing ● Weaker immune system ● Risk of overdose and death
 Psychological Harms	Drugs disturb your thoughts, emotions, and brain function.	● Mood swings and irritability ● Anxiety, paranoia, and hallucinations ● Memory loss and poor focus ● Depression and hopelessness
 Financial & Occupational Harms	Drugs cause money problems and ruin studies or job chances.	● Spending all money on drugs ● Borrowing, stealing, or turning to crime ● Frequent hospital bills ● Job loss and poor performance ● Fines and legal fees

 Familial & Social Harms	Drugs create problems in family and social life.	● Broken trust and constant fights ● Emotional pain for loved ones ● Neglecting family duties ● Loss of friendships and support ● Feeling isolated or rejected by society
 Legal Harms	Using drugs can lead to arrest and lifelong consequences.	● Getting caught and arrested ● Court cases, fines, and jail ● Permanent criminal record ● Being suspended from school ● Losing jobs, scholarships, and travel chances

You will now read five short stories of young people dealing with different challenges related to drug use. After reading each story, write which type of harm is shown in the empty boxes adjacent to it— is it physical, psychological, financial, familial/social, or legal?

[Please note that there may be more than one harm involved in these incidents.]

Stories	Type of Harm?
<i>Kabir, 17, was caught at a party with illegal substances. He was taken to the police station. Though it was his first offense, it went on his record. He lost a scholarship opportunity and had to attend counseling sessions. One wrong decision changed his future.</i>	Legal Harm Occupational Harm
<i>Rohan, a talented football player in Class 11, started taking pills he got from a friend to “boost his energy.” At first, he felt stronger, but soon he began getting dizzy during practice and even fainted once. His stamina dropped, and his body started giving up on him. The coach had to pull him out of the team.</i>	Physical Harm Occupational Harm

<i>Aman, in Class 12, was working a part-time job to save for college. But he started spending more and more money on substances. Soon, he was borrowing from friends, lying to his parents, and eventually lost his job due to poor performance and late arrivals.</i>	Financial Harm Familial Harm
<i>Simran, once cheerful and talkative, slowly became quiet, moody, and aggressive. Her classmates noticed she was skipping group work, staying isolated, and seemed anxious all the time. She had started using drugs to escape stress. Instead, it took a toll on her mind and emotions.</i>	Psychological Harm Social Harm
<i>Neha's parents noticed she stopped eating meals with them and avoided conversations. She got into fights with her younger brother and lost touch with her cousins. Once a fun presence at home, she now seemed like a stranger. Drugs had created a wall between her and her loved ones.</i>	Familial & Social Harm

Worksheet 2: Understanding Root Causes of Drug Use

[Activity 3] Unlocking the FACTS

Objective: Teach students the five key risk factors that increase the likelihood of drug use.

Instructions:

1. Display Worksheet 2 on the screen.
2. Write the acronym FACTS on the board.
3. Explain each factor (Family/Social Influence, Age of First Use, Curiosity/Craving, Trauma/Stress, Surroundings).
4. Ask students to recall any examples from videos or real life that match these risks.
5. Review the Harjot scenario.
6. Ask students to write a letter advising Harjot using FACTS (factors affecting drug use and addiction) to explain the dangers of drug use.
7. During the activity, walk around the classroom to support students individually if required.

Roles & Responsibilities:

Teacher:

1. Encourage empathy: “Imagine Harjot is your close friend.”
2. Guide students in linking FACTS to their advice clearly.
3. Support weaker writers with structure prompts like: “Dear Harjot, I understand how...”

[Sample Response] Worksheet 2

Activity 3: Unlocking the FACTS: What Really Leads to Drug Use

Addiction doesn't just happen—it's influenced by many factors. Use the word FACTS to remember five key risks:

F	Family History
If parents or relatives have struggled with addiction, your risk is higher due to both genes and home environment	
A	Age of First Use
The earlier someone starts using drugs or alcohol, the more likely they are to get addicted. Teen brains are still growing, which makes them more vulnerable.	
C	Craving
Drugs can cause strong urges to use them again and again, even if the person doesn't want to	
T	Tolerance
Over time, the body needs more of the drug to feel the same effect—leading to more use and more risk.	
S	Surroundings
If friends, family, or the environment normalize drug use, it feels more acceptable—even when it's harmful.	

Activity- Your friend, Harjot, has recently moved to Ludhiana from your village/town in Punjab. While settling into his new school, he has made new friends who often pressure him to try substances like alcohol and tobacco at social gatherings. They tell him that "it's normal here" and that he should loosen up and enjoy himself. Harjot feels torn—he wants to fit in but is also aware of the risks involved.

Your goal is to write a letter offering advice, helping Harjot understand the key risks associated with substance abuse using FACTS knowledge

Response:

Harjot,

I hope you're doing okay in your new school. I know it can be hard to adjust, especially when you're trying to make new friends. You told me some of them are asking you to try alcohol and say it's "normal." That must feel confusing.

We learned something in school recently that I wanted to share with you. It helped me understand why trying drugs or alcohol even once can be dangerous.

People who start using at a young age can get addicted more easily. Our brains are still growing, and that makes us more at risk. Once someone starts, they might feel like they need to use it again and again. Even if they want to stop, it becomes hard.

Also, the more someone uses it, the more their body gets used to it. Then they need a bigger amount to feel the same effect, and that makes it even more harmful.

If someone in the family has had problems with addiction, it can make the risk higher, too. And when the people around you say things like "everyone does it," it becomes harder to say no.

But I want you to know that saying no is not a bad thing. It shows that you care about your life and future. Real friends will respect your choices. You don't need to take harmful things just to be accepted.

I'm proud of you for thinking carefully. You're strong, and you're doing the right thing.

Worksheet 3: Psychological Drivers & Resisting Pressure

[Activity 4] Decoding Decisions – Match the Cause to the Effect

Objective: Understand psychological reasons why teenagers try drugs and how they can affect behaviour.

Instructions:

1. Display Worksheet 3 on the screen.
2. Read the short scenarios aloud in the classroom.
3. Instruct students to read out the short scenarios.
4. Ask students to match each case to the correct psychological factor(s): Peer Pressure, Curiosity, Boredom, Media Influence, or Attention Seeking.
5. Allow for multiple correct answers and ask students to justify their matches.
6. During the activity, walk around the classroom to support students individually if required.

7. Help clarify abstract concepts like “media influence” or “attention seeking.”

[Activity 5] Say YES to Life, Say NO to Drugs

Objective: Build internal motivation and practical resistance strategies through reflection and writing.

Instructions:

1. Read the “Lies vs. Truth” chart aloud with the class.
2. Ask students to reflect quietly.
3. Discuss the benefits of saying ‘No’ in such situations.
4. Guide students to complete the reflection sentences:
 - a. “I choose to stay away from drugs because...”
 - b. “My dream is to become... and drugs will only...”
 - c. “When I feel stressed, I will... instead of using harmful substances.”
5. Instruct students not to say answers aloud in class. They are just supposed to write answers in the given space on the workbook.

Summary for Teachers

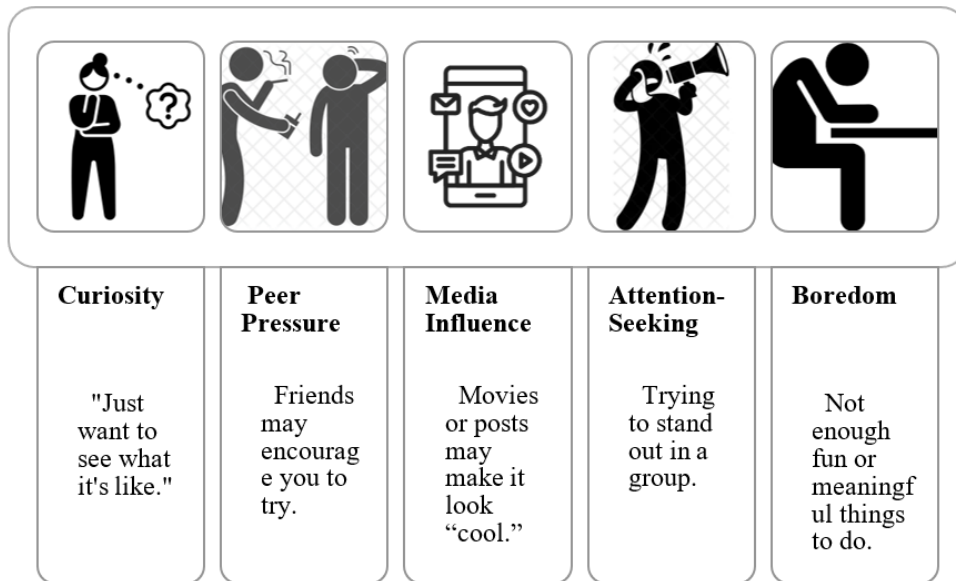
Worksheet	Goal	Your Role
Worksheet 1	Identify personal values and link them to drug risks	Encourage reflection and gently guide students
Worksheet 2	Understand root causes of drug use (FACTS)	Support critical thinking, encourage advice-giving
Worksheet 3	Explore psychological drivers and affirm positive choices	Explain concepts clearly, validate emotions, build confidence to say NO

[Sample Response] Worksheet 3

Activity 4: Decoding Decisions: Match the Cause to the Effect!

Curiosity is natural—it's how we learn and grow. But sometimes, it can lead to risky choices, like trying drugs for the first time. When we try something new, our brain's reward system gives us a feel-good signal. This is what makes adventure, excitement, or even a dare feel thrilling.

Now, we will discuss the common psychological factors that lead to teenage students like you experimenting with drugs.



Match the real-life situation to correct psychological factors

[Please note that more than one factor can influence a teenager at the same time]

Gurpreet, an 11th-grade student, follows influencers who post glamorous pictures of parties and drug use. Seeing how carefree and exciting their lives appear, he starts believing that trying substances might make him feel the same way.	Curiosity Media Influence
Harpreet, a 10th-grade student, spends most of his time alone at home. With nothing exciting to do, he starts experimenting with substances just to pass the time, unaware of how quickly it can turn into a habit.	Peer Pressure Boredom
Simran, a 9th-grade student, is at a party where her friends are passing around alcohol. They tease her for refusing, saying, "Come on, don't be boring!" She feels pressured to fit in and takes a sip, even though she never planned to drink.	Media Influence Peer Pressure
Jaspreet, a 10th-grade student, overhears his classmates talking about how a certain drug makes them feel "relaxed and happy." He wonders what it's like and, despite knowing the risks, decides to try it just once—thinking it won't harm him.	Attention-Seeking Curiosity

Navjot, a 12th-grade student, feels invisible in her friend group. She notices that the "cool kids" who experiment with substances get more attention. Hoping to stand out, she starts using drugs, thinking it will make her more interesting.	Boredom Attention-Seeking Peer Pressure
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Activity 5: Say Yes to Life, Say No to Drugs!

You are at a powerful stage in life—full of dreams, energy, and potential. But sometimes, things like stress, curiosity, or peer pressure can lead young people down risky paths, like using drugs or alcohol. Starting drugs early can increase the chances of addiction and cause long-term harm. That’s why prevention is better than cure—and you have the power to prevent it!

Lies You Might Hear (Don’t Fall for Them!)

People who want to trick you might say	The Truth:
<i>“It’s just once, nothing will happen.”</i>	Even one try can cause addiction.
<i>“You’ll feel amazing, all your stress will go away.”</i>	You might feel "excited" for a few minutes—but the crash later is worse.
<i>“You’ll become stronger and smarter.”</i>	Drugs can harm your brain, liver, lungs, and even cause death.
<i>“Everyone does it—don’t be boring!”</i>	People who push drugs often just want your money—or your weakness.

Every time you say NO, you:

-  Protect your health
-  Keep your mind sharp
-  Stay strong for your goals
-  Focus on studies
-  Stay in control of your choices

It's not always easy, especially when someone close offers you drugs. But remember:

Saying NO doesn't make you weak—it shows how strong you are!

Activity: **Write It Out:** Students complete sentences to reflect and build positive habits:

1. I choose to stay away from drugs because **I care about my health, my family, and my future. I want to live a happy life and make good decisions.**
2. My dream is to become **a teacher** and drugs will only **distract me and destroy my chances of success.**
3. When I feel stressed, I will **talk to someone I trust, go for a walk, or listen to music** instead of using harmful substances.

2. Role Play: "Say No to Drugs"

Objective

To empower students to recognise and resist peer pressure through realistic role-playing scenarios. Students will practice refusal strategies while understanding how drugs can impact real-life challenges such as financial stress, social pressures, and personal relationships.

Prerequisite:

- Ensure that the teacher has the instruction manual, which includes the curriculum package along with handouts and scripts for the role-play scenarios.

Overview

Activity Type	Classroom-Based Group Role Play
Group Size	3–4 students per group
Number of Scenarios	3
Total Duration	~30–45 minutes
Materials	Printed role play scenarios (optional), refusal strategy discussion handout

Steps and Basic Information

[Step 1] Introduction to the Activity (2–3 mins)

Teacher Script:

"Good morning/afternoon, class! Today, we're going to talk about peer pressure and how it can influence our decisions, as well as ways to cope with various challenges life throws at us." "Peer pressure is when we feel influenced by our friends or classmates to do something, even if we know it's not the right choice." "It's important to make healthy choices and stand up for ourselves, even when it's hard." Peer pressure can be faced in any situation, such as financial concerns, exam stress, personal relationships, career stress, etc.

We will do a small interactivity session together to understand what peer pressure is. How does it influence our decisions? and how we should deal when we are faced with such situations. In this, we will do a small role play where you are faced with peer pressure. The role play will be done with three selected groups of students. In each of the groups, there will be five students. Then we will see how the students in these groups deal in a situation where they are faced with peer pressure.

[Step 2] Group Formation (2–3 mins)

1. Divide the class into 3 or 4 groups, each consisting of 3–4 students.
2. Ensure a mix of boys and girls if possible.
3. Encourage everyone to participate.

[Step 3] Introducing Scenarios (2 mins per group)

1. Select the first group to perform.
2. Explain the scenario and instructions to the students (Use the scenario script for introduction)
3. Ask students to spend 2 minutes discussing and preparing their role play.
4. Role-play by 1st group: 5 mins [*Ideally, students should come up with dialogues by themselves and perform on their own. If students are not able to perform role play themselves, we can support them with the scenario scripts attached.*]
5. Display the script on the screen with the dialogues of the Scenarios to the students.

[Step 4] Student Role Play Performances (5 mins per group)

1. Allow each group 3–5 minutes to perform.
2. Encourage creativity, expression and students to come up with their dialogues and thoughts.
3. Applaud each group to build confidence.

4. Instruct students: During each performance, maintain a respectful attitude towards the performing group and manage transitions between groups.

Note: Repeat these steps 3 and 4 for Scenario 2 and Scenario 3 with other groups.

[Step 5] Refusal Strategy Discussion (5–10 mins)

Objective: Reinforce learning by discussing how characters in the role plays could or did say “No.”

Instructions:

1. Display the handout with refusal strategies on the screening
2. Ask students: “What did the character do to say NO?”
3. Introduce key refusal strategies: (Use the handout attached for this).
 - a. Say No firmly
 - b. Give a reason or excuse
 - c. Walk away confidently
 - d. Suggest an alternative
 - e. Use humour
 - f. Seek support from a trusted friend or adult

Discuss:

1. What worked well in each role play?
2. What could have been done differently?
3. What could you do if you were faced with such a situation of peer pressure? (Taking hints from the discussion handout for role-play.

Summary for Teachers

Step	Task	Your Role
Step 1	Introduce the activity	Build excitement, set tone
Step 2	Form groups	Ensure inclusion and clarity
Step 3	Introduce scenarios	Provide instructions or scripts
Step 4	Oversee performances	Keep time, encourage creativity
Step 5	Facilitate discussion	Highlight refusal strategies and learning

Script Scenario 1: Exam Stress

Today we're going to do a small role-play about something many of you might have felt: exam stress. When exams are around the corner, it's completely normal to feel tense, anxious, or even a little overwhelmed.

At times like these, our friends can have a big influence on us. Sometimes, they support us in positive ways like helping us study or motivating us. But other times, they might suggest things that aren't good for us, like taking pills or drinking alcohol to relax.

They might say things like, 'Just try it once, you'll feel better.' That's an example of peer pressure when friends push you to do something you normally wouldn't do.

In this role-play, you'll see one student who's feeling really stressed about exams. A group of friends tries to convince them to take something to feel less stressed. Now that students have a choice should they listen to their friends and take the risk? Or should they stay focused and find a healthier, safer way to deal with the stress?

While watching, think about what you would do in that situation. If you were in their place, how would you respond? What choice would you make?"

Script Scenario 2: Financial Stress within the Family

This next role-play is about a different kind of pressure that some students might face—not just exam stress, but stress that comes from problems at home.

Sometimes, families go through financial troubles, and that can affect how a student feels. It can cause worry, sadness, and a lot of emotional stress.

During such tough times, friends might try to help, but not always in the right way. Some might say, 'Let's go drink, it'll help you forget everything for a while.' It may sound like they're trying to cheer you up, but this is also peer pressure.

In this role-play, you'll see one student who's dealing with stress because of financial problems at home. Their group of friends is encouraging them to drink and escape their worries. Now, the student has a choice: should they go along with their friends, or stay strong and deal with their problems in a better, healthier way?

Script Scenario 3: Invitation to a party

This role-play is about a situation that many young people come across: getting invited to a party where they might feel a bit uncomfortable or unsure.

Parties can be fun, a chance to relax and enjoy with friends. But not every party is a good or safe place. Sometimes, there might be things happening there like drinking or drugs, that not everyone is okay with.

In this role-play, you'll see a group of students inviting their friends to a party that sounds exciting. But some students aren't so sure. They've heard that some risky things might happen there, and they don't feel comfortable going. Still, their friends keep pushing them to come, saying things like, 'Come on, don't be boring,' or 'You'll miss out if you don't come.' That's peer pressure.

As you watch, think about how you'd feel in that situation. What would you do if your friends were trying to convince you to do something you weren't okay with? This is about learning to listen to yourself and making choices that feel right for you, even when others are trying to change your mind.

3. Pledge – "Say No to Drugs, Say Yes to Life"

Objective

To conclude the curriculum on a powerful, collective note that reinforces students' personal commitment to stay drug-free, and to promote peer accountability and pride in choosing a healthier life. This session marks a symbolic and emotional closure to the intervention, with the potential to leave a lasting impact.

Instruction: Display the pledge on the screen

[Step 1] Introduce the Purpose of the Pledge (2–3 mins)

Teacher Script: You all have done a wonderful job so far in watching powerful real-life stories, thinking deeply, writing honestly, and sharing your thoughts in discussions and activities. We're proud of the way you've engaged.

Now, we've reached a very important part in our anti-drug curriculum: the pledge. But remember, this is not just about saying a few lines out loud.

This pledge is your voice, your promise to yourself, your commitment to your dreams, your stand for a healthier, stronger community. A pledge is a promise we make to ourselves and each other. It's a public commitment that says: I choose to stay away from things that harm me, and I support others who make the same choice

[Step 2] Recite the Pledge Collectively (3–5 mins)

Instructions:

1. Ask all students to stand up.
2. Select one of the students who is active and can read well.
3. Ask the selected student to read the pledge line by line.
4. Instruct the other students to read the pledge line by line, repeating after the selected student.
5. Maintain a slow, calm pace so all students can follow clearly.

[Step 3] Closing Words (1 min)

Teacher Script: This pledge that you have taken today is not the end: it's just a start.

It's the first step in a journey where you choose what kind of life you want to lead. You've seen real stories of the journey of drug addicts. You've reflected. You've learned. This promise you're making is not just for today. It's something you carry with you: in your actions, your words, and your decisions.

Take a moment and think: Who are the people in your life you care about? What kind of future do you want for them—and for yourself?

So as you stand and say this pledge, do it with:

Clarity: You know why you're making this choice.

Compassion: You care about others.

Courage: You're ready to stand up for what's right.

Pride: You are shaping a better future.

Let's carry this promise forward together.

Frequently Asked Questions

Questions about Types of Substances

1. **Are Red Bull or other energy drinks considered a form of drug and are they addictive?**

Ans- Energy drinks like Red Bull are not classified as drugs, but they contain high levels of caffeine and sugar. Regular use can cause dependence and lead to sleep problems, anxiety, or heart issues if consumed in excess.

2. **Are *bhukki*, *afeem*, *opium*, also drugs and considered addictive substances or not? My elders say it is not a drug but a medicine.**

Ans- Bhukki, afeem, and opium come from the poppy plant and have strong addictive properties. While they were used as medicines in the past, using them without a doctor's supervision is dangerous and can lead to serious addiction.

3. **Is *bhanga* (cannabis) a drug? People use it openly during festivals like Shivratri, so is it okay?**

Ans- Yes, bhanga is a form of cannabis and is considered a psychoactive drug. Even if it's used during festivals, it still affects the brain and can be harmful, especially for young people or when used often.

4. **Where does *chitta* come from, how is it made, and what does it contain that makes people addicted so quickly?**

Ans- Chitta is a street name for synthetic heroin, often mixed with harmful chemicals. It is highly addictive and dangerous because it affects the brain quickly and severely, leading to both physical and mental dependence.

The following questions may be asked by the students post screening, all of them are addressed in the curriculum materials. If any of the following questions are asked, the teacher may politely request the students to stay tuned for finding answers together in upcoming weeks.

Questions about the Causes of Drug Use

1. Why do people start using drugs even when they know it's harmful?
2. Do people become addicted to drugs even after trying them just once? Does using a substance one time always lead to addiction?
3. If drugs cause so much harm and are addictive, why don't people stop using them? Why is it difficult to leave drugs?
4. Does drug use reduce stress or tension in their lives, and make physical work easier?

Questions about Quitting and Recovery

1. How difficult is it to quit drugs once someone is addicted?
2. Can medicines alone help someone stop using drugs?
3. Is going to a rehab centre one time enough to stop drug use permanently? How effective are rehabs in getting out of drug addiction?
4. Is it necessary to change your environment and circle of friends if you want to quit drugs?
5. What happens inside a de-addiction centre? How do people recover?

Checklist before session

- Downloaded all materials for the particular session week
- Booked audio-visual room according to timetable for each section of 9th to 12th class students
- Have link to 'screening form' ready to be filled out during the session

Contact Details for any support

1. Lack of infrastructure for sessions- Respective DEO
2. Follow up on intervention package- Mr. Satvinder Singh (Senior Project Associate, J-PAL SA)
3. Adverse event- Mr. Unmuktman Singh (Research Associate, J-PAL SA)