

Lesson 5

Social Pressures to Use Substances



PROJECT
ALERT

Lesson Overview

Lesson Goals

1. Understand and identify social pressures to use substances
2. Demonstrate how to resist social pressures to use substances
3. Practice resisting social pressures to use substances

Scope and Sequence with Pacing Guidance

1. Introduce Lesson (3 min.)
2. Begin Video: *Lindsey's Choice (Part 1: Problem)* (7 min.)
3. Prepare Skits (10 min.)
4. Act Out Skits (10 min.)
5. Complete Video: *Lindsey's Choice (Part 2: Solutions)* (2 min.)
6. Discuss Video Solutions (8 min.)
7. Wrap-up (5 min.)

Brief Lesson Description

This is the first in a series of lessons designed to give students practice saying “no.” The theory behind this lesson series is that people who have rehearsed a particular behavior will be more likely to successfully engage in that behavior later.

Project ALERT uses videos to model real-life situations where students could be offered substances and three different ways to say “no” to the offer. Students will view the first part of the video *Lindsey's Choice* to understand the problem situation and characters involved in the video.

The video pauses part-way through for students to break into small groups and prepare skits where they say “no” to the substance use offer. Each group will perform their skit, allowing students to share how they would say no in that scenario.

The class will view the remainder of the video, which models three possible ways to say “no”. The class will build self-efficacy and reinforce resistance methods by discussing the ways student scenarios and Lindsey refused.

Background Knowledge: Pre-Reading

In helping students learn how to say “no”, Project ALERT:

- validates their feelings that it’s sometimes hard to resist the pressure to use drugs;
- demonstrates that students have the right to say “no;”
- helps them believe they can say “no” without suffering rejection or embarrassment; and
- gives them several ways of saying “no”.

Below are six different ways to say “no”, and example responses for each of those ways. Most of these are demonstrated in the videos and represented on the *Ways to Say No* poster.

1. Simply say “no”. Often the easiest of the six resistance strategies, simply saying “no” helps avoid arguments. Students frequently believe that such a brief reply won’t work, and they will continue to receive pressure. Thus, it’s very important to help them see the viability of this response.

- No, I’d rather not.
- No, thanks.
- Not today/tonight.

2. Give a reason. This technique uses “I” statements to emphasize your decision and making the decision for yourself. “I” statements are a neutral way to refuse a substance use offer, like saying “I don’t like the taste” rather than “How can you stand the way you smell?” Giving a reason may also include excuses, like “I’m getting picked up soon”.

- I don’t feel like it.
- I’ll get red eyes and my parents will find out.
- I’m an athlete so I don’t (vape, smoke, drink).

3. Give an alternative. The approach of giving an alternative can be particularly effective when the person offering is trying to make conversation, be friendly, or avoid excluding someone. The person extending an offer often don’t care if it is accepted or not. Others, particularly experimenters, may offer drugs to look cool. They may be relieved when the other person says “no.” The alternatives listed below make it clear that the drug is being rejected, not the person who offered it. Hence, the alternatives are less likely to generate hostility.

- No. Let’s go do something else.
- No, let’s get something to eat instead.
- No, I need to practice (sport/activity).

4. Stand up to pressure. Students’ concerns that a friend or acquaintance might really pressure them with taunts need to be validated. They also need help thinking about why a friend might be taunting them (e.g., insecurity). To deal with this kind of pressure, students need to know that they don’t have to give a reason if they don’t want to. They may just repeat “no”, or use any of the other saying “no” strategies.

- I already said no.
- I just don’t feel like it.
- I really meant it.

5. Leave the scene. Sometimes the pressure is very difficult to resist. If so, it may be easier to leave the scene. This doesn't necessarily mean leaving something entirely, it might mean leaving a room or space. Other times it may be easier to get away from the whole scene even though it might feel lonely or isolating. It helps to know who to call or rely on if a leave the scene situation arises.

- I've got to go now.
- My ride will be here soon.
- I need to be home in 15 minutes.

6. Avoid the scene. Sometimes the wisest strategy is to avoid situations in which resistance is likely to be needed. Young people almost always know which places to avoid (e.g., specific bathrooms, restaurants, alleys, parties, or online platforms). Avoiding such places or taking a break from social media interactions can save them from pressures. However, such a strategy could bring feelings of isolation that should be acknowledged. These negative feelings may be countered to some extent by reminding students that:

- resistance can make you feel good because you demonstrate internal strength;
- people who reject you because you don't use are not very good friends.

Tips for Class Activity Preparing and Acting Out Skits

Project ALERT uses role play skits to model and give students practice in ways to say "no." Lessons 5, 7, and 9 use this method, and the lesson plans give clear instructions on how to set up an effective role play. Here are a few extra tips when students are preparing and acting out skits.

Role play tips

- Float among groups during skit preparation to help groups focus, and listen to group discussion before intervening with help.
- Encourage those who do not like to participate by suggesting they play a non-speaking role at first.
- The same students should not always play the pressuring roles.
- Motivate any reluctant students with enthusiasm ("You'll be great," "I've seen some terrific skits in other classes, and I'm sure you can come up with some great ideas, too.").
- Simple speaking lines are fine! Skits are often very short; a simple "no thanks" may be the solution because students should be encouraged to be as realistic as possible.
- Remind students to put "themselves" (language, community) into skits.
- Consider choosing a group that will set a good example to act their skit first.

Critique tips

- The skit should be short and to the point. Its purpose is to highlight and reinforce the solution.
- If the solution is hostile, say, "You're saying 'no' to a drug, not necessarily to a friend. Could you try another take that isn't hostile to the person?"
- Using movie theme phrases can help keep it light. By saying "Take two!" teachers can ask the group to re-do a skit that had an inappropriate solution.
- Every skit should be generously praised, because even if it is simple, students need reinforcement and chances to build self-efficacy in resistance skills.

We recommend previewing the video *Lindsey's Choice* before delivering the lesson.

Materials and Supplies to Prepare

- **Visual** – Ground Rules: Students (from lesson 1)
- **Visual** – *Ways to Say “No”* poster
- **Visual** – Create a Cast of Characters list
- **Visual** – Create brief written summary of solutions presented in group skits
- **Materials** – Video: *Lindsey's Choice*

Legend

We use the icons below to indicate what to say during the lesson, what to keep in mind as you facilitate the lesson, and what to display in the classroom throughout the lesson.

What to display	What to say	What to keep in mind
		

Lesson Plan

1. Introduce Lesson



Display visual created in Lesson 1: *Student Ground Rules*.



Today we will learn how to identify pressures from friends and peers. We'll also learn some ways to resist these pressures. To resist pressures, we need to know how to say "no". Once we figure out how to say no, we'll practice saying "no".

2. Begin Video *Lindsey's Choice*



Display video *Lindsey's Choice*



We are going to watch a two-part video called Lindsey's Choice today. In part one you'll meet Lindsey and the cast of characters. Lindsey is going to be put in a situation where she needs to make a decision about substance use.

After she's offered the substance, I'll pause the video and break you into groups. You'll work together to write a script with endings where Lindsey says "no". Then, as a group, you'll act out the resolution to the scenario.

State any other expectations while students watch the video.
Begin the video.

3. Prepare Skits



Display the *Cast of Characters List*

- Lindsey – the person with a decision to make
- Frank – the person making the offer to use



We're going to write then act out skits called One Way Lindsey Can Say "No". Each group's job is to come up with a skit that shows Lindsey saying "no" and feeling okay about herself.



Display *Ways to Say "No"* poster



Before you get started on your script, let's talk about different ways that you can say no when offered a substance. The ways to say "no" on this poster are just a few ways, and you can use them in your script or to think of other ways that feel authentic to your group.

Read the poster aloud.



Workshop different ways that you can say “no” as part of the script writing process. You should try a few different ways before you write the final script.

There are a few roles in your group:

- **Director who will assign parts and be responsible for getting people to work together.**
- **Actors who will assume the role of Lindsey, Diane, Eric, and Mike in your skit. It’s okay to change the name of your characters. The most important thing is a character with the choice to make – resister - and a character who makes the offer.**
- **Recorder who will write down the final version of the script and provide it for review. Everyone might want to have their own script for acting purposes.**

When you meet with your group, please take the appropriate script writing supplies with you.

Break students into groups.



Circulate as students work in groups. If a group is not making progress, suggest that they do the following:

- Assign parts
- Try out different solutions

Decide on one solution and rehearse it

When students have been working for about 8 minutes, give them an alert about time.



You have two more minutes to complete your scripts.

After the next 2 minutes

Time is up – let’s see how solutions you came up with for this problem!

4. Act Out Skits



Optional to create a visual to write brief summaries of the solutions presented in group skits



Let’s start with expectations for this activity:

1. **Actors should speak up so that everyone can hear you.**
2. **Face the class while you are acting.**
3. **Introduce characters. Director, this is your responsibility.**
4. **Attentive audience; quiet and focused on the actors. No more planning.**



After each skit, there will be brief applause. As an audience, you will try to come up with a brief summary of the skit solution. (Optional: I'll write the solution for each skit for reference.)

Volunteer for the first group of actors?



Praise students after each performance and, if necessary, lead applause.

Solutions can be displayed in whatever way is most convenient; the goal is for students to see the different solutions they generate for the remainder of the lesson.

Use students' words where possible for the written solution; if the solution is complex, try to capture some of the complexity in your summary.



Let's do a quick share out of our solutions to the problem, or the ways that we said no.

Summarize common themes in how students said no; point out variation in solutions where appropriate.

Here's what I observed about how our actor's said "no" ...

Comment on how actors appeared when saying "no." Give some examples of how there are many ways of saying no; for example, if no group offered an alternative, make sure to highlight that as an option and give an example. Note the importance of body language and voice tone in communicating resistance.

Looking back at the Ways to Say "No" poster, I saw our groups...

Note how students' solutions align with the poster

5. Complete Video: *Lindsey's Choice*



Now we'll see the solutions on the video and compare them with the ones we came up with.



Resume video

6. Discuss Video Solutions



**Let's talk about each of the solutions in the video.
What did Lindsey do in the first one?**

Solution 1:

Show of hands, how many of you thought this solution was a good solution?

What did you like about that solution?



How do you think Lindsey felt about saying “no”?

How do you think Frank felt when Lindsey offered an alternative?

Offering the mint is giving an alternative activity to substances use. In your response, you decline and suggest something else to do instead.

What are some alternatives you could give if someone made an offer to you?

Solution 2:

What about the second solution, what happened?

How many of you thought that was a good solution?

What did you like about that solution?

How do you think Lindsey felt about saying “no”?

What did Frank say after Lindsey said she was on the track team?

If Lindsey had taken Frank’s offer to vape, how would she have felt?

This type of response is giving a reason. You say no and give a reason why you don’t want to use the substance.

What are some reasons you might offer when saying “no”?

Solution 3:

Now, how about the third solution, what did Lindsey do?

How many of you thought this solution was a good one?

What did you like about it?

How do you think Lindsey felt about Frank after he pressured her again? How would you feel if someone continued to pressure you?

How do you think Lindsey felt when she said, “I just really don’t want to”?

The third solution is simply standing up to pressure. You say “no” and stick to it even if someone asks you again.



- Solution 1: Frank was okay with Lindsey's response; he was not angry. If students think he will feel angry, note that simply saying "no" usually does not make the other person feel angry. He accepted her alternative option as they continued their conversation.
- Solution 2: He agrees and says, *"I probably shouldn't [vape] either."*
- Solution 3: When Frank offered again, Lindsey reconsiders spending time with him now or in the future. She's uncomfortable with the situation where he doesn't listen to her the first time she says "no" and she repeats herself. She can avoid spending time with him in the future if he doesn't respect her choice.



In the video, we saw three different ways to say "no". You can say "no" and suggest an alternate activity or thing to do. The second is to say "no" and give a reason why, like I'm on the soccer team or I have asthma. The third is resisting pressure by saying "no" and continuing to say "no" when pressured again.

In each of these three scenarios, Lindsey said "no" and her relationship with Eric was fine. She was neutral in the way that she said "no", and she didn't treat Eric any differently. You can say "no" without making people dislike you. And, sticking with your decision can make you feel good about yourself.

7. Wrap Up



In this lesson we talked about ways to say "no". You created great skits with a variety of ways to say "no". We also saw how Lindsey used three different approaches to saying "no" when offered the opportunity to try substances.

We also talked a little about the ways to say "no" that would feel comfortable or true for ourselves. Saying "no" isn't always easy but there are different ways to handle these situations.

You can stick to your own values by saying no without compromising your social relationships or standing. Neutral, non-judgmental responses of "no" are a key to success. You have the right to say no.

In the next lesson we'll see and try out more ways to resist pressure to use substances.



- Reinforce benefits of resistance
- Reinforce variety of responses from students in their own ways to say "no"

