



## Teen Prescription Drug Abuse Animated Video Discussion Guide

### About this Guide

The guide is intended to encourage reflection and discussion around “Choices,” a new animated video designed to educate teens about the potential dangers of abusing prescription drugs.

You can use this guide to help plan a lesson about prescription drug abuse among teens. The lesson can be taught in settings including:

- Health classes
- Life skills sessions
- Parent-teacher meetings
- School assemblies
- Other appropriate school or community events

**Video Running Time: 4:30**



### Educators and Facilitators

It is important to view the video and read this guide carefully before using, to become familiar with the information provided.



### About the Video

The animated video tells the story of two teenage girls, Maya and the Narrator, who have been friends since the 4th grade. It follows them as they make several choices in their lives, from easier choices, such as which after-school activity to join, to more difficult decision making, such as whether or not to abuse prescription drugs.

The video provides an opportunity for students to gain a deeper understanding of the risks related to prescription drug abuse and includes themes such as:

- Peer pressure
- Separating myths and facts about prescription drugs
- The importance of making smarter and healthier choices for your future

### Learning Objectives

The video and this guide are a starting point for a discussion with middle and high school students. By the end of the lesson, students should be able to:

- Define prescription drug abuse
- Identify factors that influence decisions
- Recognize myths and facts around prescription drug abuse
- Understand the risks and consequences of abusing prescription drugs

# Using this Guide

The guide includes a wide range of questions and activities to engage students and start a dialogue with them about prescription drug abuse. There also are suggestions for activities and projects for further learning and digging deeper into the topic.

### Tip

This discussion guide can be used in conjunction with the Smart Moves, Smart Choices School Toolkit for a more comprehensive lesson, which you can access at [www.SmartMovesSmartChoices.org](http://www.SmartMovesSmartChoices.org).

## Before watching

Spend time with your students introducing the video and begin a conversation about the topic and its major themes.

Some questions to ask before showing the video might include:

- What do you know about prescription drugs?
- Where have you gotten your information?
- Have you ever talked with anyone about taking prescription drugs for any use other than their prescribed purpose?

## While watching

In order to encourage students to be actively engaged in watching the film, you can give them a few questions to think about. This will help to keep them focused on and listening carefully to the video.

- Think about which characters you relate to
- Ask yourself what you might do if you were faced with the same choices
- Keep track of facts or information that may be new to you

## After watching

The next sections offer some discussion topics and critical thinking exercises to help guide the conversation and reflection on the video.



# Discussion Topics

The following section is broken down by themes with sample questions to ask students. Based on the specific needs of the students and the time available, feel free to cover the topics which are most relevant to your class.

## Prescription Drug Abuse

The key issue in the video is the abuse of prescription drugs by teens. It is important that the students understand what “prescription drug abuse” means.

- What is a prescription drug?
- How would you define prescription drug abuse?

### What is prescription drug abuse?

Prescription drug abuse is the use of a medication without a prescription, in a way other than as prescribed, or for the experience or feelings elicited.

### Commonly Abused Prescription Medications

**Opioids** – Commonly known as prescription painkillers

**Stimulants** – Such as ADHD medications

**Sedatives** – Such as anti-anxiety medications (benzodiazepines) and sleep medications

*Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse*



## Choices

Maya and the Narrator were both given many opportunities to make choices in the video, including which extracurricular activity to join and whether to do homework or play video games. They also had to make tougher choices like whether to drink and drive or text and drive. One of the toughest choices was whether or not to take prescription drugs that did not belong to them.

- Which choices in the video can you relate to? Why?
- What are some factors that influence the Narrator’s decision to say no to Andre?
- What are some factors that influence Maya’s decision to say yes to Andre?
- What are some factors that influence your decisions?

### Myths and Facts about Prescription Drug Abuse

Throughout the video, several myths were dispelled about prescription drug abuse. It is important to explore these myths and counter them with facts about the abuse of prescription drugs.

- What are some ideas that the Narrator has about prescription drugs? Did you have some of these same ideas?
- What facts surprise you the most about prescription drug abuse?
- Did your perceptions about abusing prescription drugs change after watching this film?

### Consequences

With every choice, there are consequences. Each of the characters has to face the outcomes of the decisions that were made.

- How did Maya's choices impact her and others, including her family?
- How do you think the Narrator feels about her choices?
- How do you think the Narrator feels about the different directions she and Maya are headed at the end of the video?
- How might Andre's choices impact him and his future?
- How do you weigh perceived benefits of abusing prescription drugs (reducing stress or feeling good) with risks and consequences (reduced ability to speak or addiction)?

#### FACT CHECKER

For your reference, below are some facts and statistics from the video that may come up during discussion or that you may want to reference.

1. Taking prescription drugs to get high can be just as dangerous as taking drugs like heroin or cocaine.
2. When you mix prescription drugs with alcohol, it's even more dangerous.
3. If you abuse prescription drugs, you can stop breathing, have a seizure or heart attack, end up in a coma, have a stroke, which could result in paralysis, or lose the ability to speak correctly.
4. Every 19 minutes in the US, someone dies from a prescription drug overdose.



# Critical Thinking Activities

## Writing Assignment

Give the students time to reflect upon the video and write essays about one of the following topics:

- The Narrator describes Andre as really smart, but not always making the right choices. She later states that knowing the facts makes it easier to make the right choices. How much do knowledge and intelligence play into making healthy and safe decisions? Are they related? Why or why not?
- Write about an experience where you or a friend may have been in a similar situation to Maya and the Narrator. What were some of the things you or your friend considered before making a decision? Based on what you have learned from the video, how might you respond to a situation like that now?



## Role Playing

Have the students act out some sample situations to practice dealing with peer pressure. Ask for volunteers who will role play the following scenarios:

- Two friends are hanging out. One of the friends has a prescription from his doctor for a medication to help with her/his ADHD. The other friend is feeling stressed about school and an upcoming test and asks her/his friend for a few pills to help her/him prepare. The friend with the prescription thinks this is a bad idea, but doesn't want to upset or hurt her/his friend.
- A group of friends are going to the movies and one member of the group says that she/he found some pills in her/his mother's medicine cabinet. She/he offers each of the friends a pill and they all accept. The last friend says she/he doesn't want any, but the others tell her/him it is not a big deal and that she/he should relax and enjoy.



# Digging Deeper

There is a lot of information available for students to learn more about prescription drug abuse. Ask them to do additional research and check out the following sites for more facts and figures:

- Above the Influence: [www.AboveTheInfluence.com](http://www.AboveTheInfluence.com)
- Home to Homeroom: [www.StopMedicineAbuse.org](http://www.StopMedicineAbuse.org)
- Medicine Abuse Project: [www.MedicineAbuseProject.org](http://www.MedicineAbuseProject.org)
- National Institute on Drug Abuse: [www.Teens.DrugAbuse.gov](http://www.Teens.DrugAbuse.gov)
- Smart Moves, Smart Choices: [www.SmartMovesSmartChoices.org](http://www.SmartMovesSmartChoices.org)

# Resources

For more information on prescription drug abuse, reference the following websites:

- Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America: [www.cadca.org](http://www.cadca.org)
- D.A.R.E: [www.dare.org](http://www.dare.org)
- The Partnership at Drugfree.org: [www.DrugFree.org](http://www.DrugFree.org)
- Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator: [www.FindTreatment.samhsa.gov](http://www.FindTreatment.samhsa.gov)



Download the Smart Moves, Smart Choices School Toolkit at:  
[www.SmartMovesSmartChoices.org/school-tool-kit](http://www.SmartMovesSmartChoices.org/school-tool-kit)