

The Right to Resist: Know Your NOs

Role Playing Lesson for Middle School Students

This lesson is a follow-up to the Peer Pressure “Bag of Tricks” lesson from www.thecoolspot.gov. Time needed is one to three 45-minute sessions with a 20-30 minute prep time for selected students.

Enduring Understandings

- Everyone has the right to resist and to walk away from pressure to drink alcohol.
- Deliberate actions enable people to remain in control of themselves in drinking situations.

Essential Questions

- How do I use words and body language to effectively say “No” to drinking?
- Why does the most effective “No” work best?

Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- recognize the more effective and less effective ways of saying “No”
- name the more effective and less effective ways of saying “No”
- demonstrate the words and body language of saying “No” in four less effective ways—passively, evasively, aggressively, and with a “know-it-all” attitude
- demonstrate the words and body language of saying “No” in one effective way—assertively.

Before class, the teacher should select five students who will participate in a teacher-led role play in front of other students but without the other students’ awareness. The teacher will explain the premise of offering pretend alcohol to these selected students. The teacher will give each student a copy of the “Right to Resist” handout (p. 7) and may suggest responses or may coach students with the appropriate gestures and words for their assigned

"NOs"—see below. (Ground rule: no name-calling, no rude or obscene language or gestures, no real or personal attacks)

Outcomes, continued - NOs to Demonstrate in Role Play

- Passive: Use a thin or small voice, mumble, make excuses, use weak body language—and eventually accept a "drink."
- Evasive: Change the subject, avoid the issue, try to distract the other person—and eventually accept a "drink."
- Aggressive: Act pushy or angry, be loud, threaten or blame, use put-downs, and get in-your-face with the other person—and don't accept a "drink."
- Know-it-all: Throw out facts, act superior, be judgmental, tell others how they are feeling, and get personal and off topic with the other person—and don't accept a "drink."
- Assertive: Stand up straight, look the other person in the eye, use a firm voice, speak quickly and politely, use well-chosen, definitive words ("No, I don't want to")—and don't accept a "drink."
- Combination: A pair of students in which one is Passive and one Assertive. Role play two refusals by the Passive student, after which the Assertive student joins in, stands close to the Passive student, and adds to the "NO" by using Assertive language with "we" ("No thanks; we don't want to.") and/or encouraging the Passive student to move away from the pressuring person.

Notes to teacher:

Only a teacher may assume the role of the pressuring person to keep students from identifying with, practicing, or mimicking that behavior. Encourage students to continue their resistance, but let them know that the pressure to take a "drink" will continue until the student capitulates or the situation becomes emotionally charged. This will hold true for all except the student using the Assertive No, in which case the teacher will back off. Allow students to role play behaviors not associated with their typical roles in school.

Addendum 1

About the Combination Demonstration: Physical contact of standing shoulder to shoulder, linking or touching arms, putting an arm around someone's shoulder, etc. implies solidarity. Those who pressure others do this to sway resisters. Resisters can also use physical contact to support each other in saying "No." The teacher may want to demonstrate this when pressuring and have the Assertive helper echo or mimic the physical contact used by the teacher during the "rescue."

Addendum 2

About the Assertive No Demonstration: Students who are resisting should be made aware that they can simply restate "No" or "No thanks, I don't want to" as many times as necessary. They can also ignore or refuse to explain or answer questions. This undermines efforts to hook the resister in a dialogue and disarm him or her.

Materials Needed

- Pens or pencils for the students
- Post-it notes for each student
- Chart paper/white or black board/overhead projector and appropriate writing instrument for the teacher
- Empty cans or bottles to simulate beer or other alcohol
- One "Right to Resist" handout (p. 7) for each student and one enlargement for whole-class use

Procedure

Students will come into class as usual. As the group comes in and settles down, the teacher should start offering "drinks" to the pre-selected students with them responding as assigned. The teacher may go so far as to hand "drinks" to these students or place the "beer" on their desks.

Let this teacher-led role play evolve into a general discussion through leading questions (ground rule - no names or specific places). Examples may be personal or from TV, etc.

- How did you feel as you listened to and watched your classmates being offered alcohol?
- Which students do you think stayed in control of themselves? Explain why you think so.
- Has this kind of thing ever happened to you? Maybe not with alcohol but with any kind of pressure? What was the circumstance/setting?
- Have you ever seen this happen in a real situation? What was the circumstance/setting?
- Have you ever heard about this happening? What was the circumstance/setting?
- How did you/the person being pressured feel during and after the exchange with the person who was pressuring you?
- What did the student friend do or say that helped make the pressuring person back off?

- What similarities did you see or hear in the pressuring person and Assertive No's behaviors?
- (optional) What do you know about the bad effects of drinking alcohol?
- (optional) What are some false, good effects that some people believe about drinking alcohol?

Distribute the "Right to Resist" handout and post the enlargement where students can see it. Review the handout without going into too much detail. Invite the pre-selected students to come to the front of the room for a replay. Direct the class to carefully watch for body language (look), tone of voice (sound), and words used (say). The students may take notes if they wish. After all the role plays, direct students to write the names of the role players on their post-its, one name per post-it, and instruct students to put their post-its on the enlarged "Right to Resist" handout next to the type of NO demonstrated by each role-player. Allow brief discussion and changes. Ask each of the five role-players to stand by their own "NOs", then count and announce how many correct "votes" they received.

Teacher should circulate among the groups during the following activities.

Divide the class into five Expert Groups. Assign each group one of the "NOs" and have them sit together to brainstorm a list of words and actions that fit their "No". Every group member should make a list to use in the next group.

Rearrange the groups to include at least one Expert for each type of "No". Each Expert then shares the brainstormed list with the others in the new group. Allow discussion of similarities, differences, additions, or deletions among the lists. During this session, the teacher will uncover or make a large chart:

	Look	Sound	Say
Passive			
Aggressive			
Evasive			
Know-It-All			
Assertive			

Have students return to their seats. Select one Expert student to represent each "No". Have each Expert come to the front and role-play the "No" with the teacher as the pressuring peer. After each role play, the teacher will call for the specific behaviors of that "No" and write them on the chart.

Direct Instruction

On the Look-Sound-Say chart, teacher crosses out less effective behaviors and circles more effective (Assertive) ones while explaining:

- the varying aspects and effects of the different "NOs;"
- how each behavior denotes strong or weak conviction;
- how each behavior invites or rejects persistence from the person offering alcohol; and
- that although some non-Assertive NOs can be successful in not taking a "drink" (particularly the Aggressive and Know-it-all NOs), the students can also lose control of themselves and get into uncomfortable situations with immediate and delayed social fallout.

Teacher explains that the Assertive No is most effective because:

- It is definite. Ambiguity and mixed messages from the resister are interpreted by the pressuring person as openings to continue the pressure.
- It circumvents inferior or insecure feelings, either self- or other-imposed, that can spiral out of control and lead to acceptance of a drink. Teacher and student may toss out ideas of how they have seen this kind of pressure used in advertisements.
- It tends to be more emotionally neutral for everyone. No one can tell another person what they want or how they feel. Other "NOs" can beget anger, a bad precedent, a win/lose situation, insecurity, regret, fear, other negative feelings and outcomes.

Teacher lists for the class the Assertive No behaviors and demonstrates each as they are listed: *(If another adult is available, the other adult can act as the pressuring peer as the teacher demonstrates the list of behaviors.)*

- **standing up straight**
- **making and holding eye contact**
- **speaking in a firm voice**

- using a quick and polite tone of voice
- using definite words of choice, "No, I don't want to." "No, thanks." "No."
- walking away (not stalking or running away)
- repeating the refusal as often as needed and claiming the right not to say why

Closing and Summary

"The Wave"

Teacher gives the class a brief think time and then goes through the class quickly from one student to the next in their seating arrangements, asking each student to give one NEW piece of information. Try not to repeat!

Or

"Telephone"

As above, except that each student has to repeat what the student immediately preceding them said before they offer their own thought.

Follow-up Activities

- Discuss the behaviors of the pressuring peer. Find and cite other examples in media or literature.
- Find and cite examples of the various "NOs" in media or literature.
- Discuss other situations in which an Assertive No would be helpful.
- Draw cartoon strips of the different kinds of "NOs".
- Clip pictures from magazines or print from the computer and have students make dialogue bubbles or captions demonstrating a "No".
- Take digital photos of the class members demonstrating the different "NOs" and then have the students write captions or dialogue bubbles and arrange photos in a storyboard.
- Make a poster or collage about any aspect of the alcohol resistance lessons.
- Video the students demonstrating their "NOs". Show to the class for further discussion and/or share with parents at home, at Back to School night, or at a student academic fair.

- Write a fictional journal entry or letter about an encounter with a pressuring peer or acquaintance who has been drinking.
- Rewrite the lyrics to a song of choice to reflect any part of the alcohol resistance lessons.
- Investigate sources of help for students who want to discuss anyone's problem drinking


KNOW YOUR NOs

From "The RIGHT TO RESIST" Peer Pressure on The Cool Spot Web site (www.thecoolspot.gov)

MOST EFFECTIVE NO

ASSERTIVE NO

"No thanks, I don't want to"



Being assertive means:

- Standing up straight
- Looking 'em right in the eye
- Speaking in a firm voice
- Saying it quickly and being polite
- Choosing words well—Instead of a wimpy "I can't," say, "I don't want to"


Why is the "Assertive No" more effective?

Here's one reason: Compared with the other "NOs," it's harder to argue with someone who simply says "No thanks, I don't want to" in a firm and polite way. If someone asks *why*, you don't have to give a reason. You can politely say "I just don't want to" as many times as needed. If the pressure persists, you can return the challenge by saying "I thought you were my friend" or "I don't drink, and if you're my friend, you won't keep asking me." And of course, you can walk away assertively as well.

LESS EFFECTIVE NOs

PASSIVE NO

"Um, sorry, I can't, I uh, have a ... thing"



Being passive means:

- Saying no weakly
- Mumbling
- Making lame excuses
- Acting like a wimp

AGGRESSIVE NO

"No way, stupid. You guys are losers."




Being aggressive means:

- Pushing people around
- Threatening or blaming them
- Putting them down
- Acting angry

AVOIDING (or EVASIVE) NO

"Hey, did you see what that guy is wearing?"




Avoiding means:

- Changing the subject
- Staying away from the issue
- Trying to distract the person

KNOW-IT-ALL NO

"No and you shouldn't either—it's really bad for you"



Being a know-it-all means:

- Giving lots of facts
- Acting superior
- Judging people
- Telling them what they are feeling