

Materials	Refusal Strategies for Substance Use handout, Substance Use Scenarios, paper, pens
Learning Outcome	Practice substance use refusal strategies using role play in response to a scenario.

Flipped Classroom Strategy (Optional)

A flipped classroom is an instructional model where direct instruction is delivered to students *outside of and before* instructional time. Students are introduced to content that supports the introduction, comprehension, and recall of content and then instructional time is utilized to apply, analyze, synthesize, or evaluate content.

Before implementing this activity during instructional time, ask students to view the [Refusal Skills](#) video and consider the strategies that are included.

Activity Description

Part I

Share with students that this activity will support them with developing strategies they can use to effectively respond to peer pressure and provide them an opportunity to develop a mindset for avoiding unhealthy situations and peer pressure. If utilizing a flipped classroom approach, review what students watched in the Refusal Skills video. If not using a flipped classroom approach, ask students if they know what is meant by the term refusal skills and in what contexts the term is utilized (e.g., peer pressure, substance use, risky behaviour, etc.).

Share the *Refusal Strategies for Substance Use* handout at the end of this activity with students and review and discuss the different strategies for refusing to use substances.

Part II

Divide students into groups of three or four. Choose a scenario from the *Substance Use Scenarios* included at the end of this activity. Explain the following:

- Each group will receive a strip of paper with a scenario described on it. All groups will have the same scenario.
- Students will work with their group members to brainstorm at least one way they could respond to the scenario. Students should consider how they might refuse, suggest a positive alternative, or support a friend in saying “NO”, to pressure to use substances. Groups can choose a strategy from the handout or come up with their own.

Part III

Now that students have gained some understanding in the different types of refusal skills it's time to put them into practice.

Each group will be given a different scenario, they will have 10-15 minutes to role play the situation before they come back and perform it for the class. The group has to decide what is the best refusal tactic for the given situation. Each group member has to have a part in each the role play of the scenario.

After each group presents their scenario, conduct a 2–3 minute debrief session in which students share their thinking about the effectiveness of the refusal strategy. Record students' thoughts and ideas for each skit. Use the following questions to guide the discussion:

- a. How effective would this strategy be in real life and why?
- b. Would the strategy be easy and safe to use? Why or why not?
- c. How would I adjust this strategy for my own use?

After each group has presented and debriefed their scenario, take time to ask students the purpose of this activity. Ask, "Why do you think we did this activity today?". Engage students in a discussion. Explain to students that even though it may feel funny to role play these situations, it can actually empower them to respond confidently, and also helps them develop knowledge and skills if similar situations happen to them in real life. Ask questions as needed to help them recognize how these kinds of activities can help them avoid situations in which they may be asked to smoke underage and empower them to respond confidently in situations like those described in the scenarios.

Healthy Living Competencies

THINK



Develop cognitive skills and strategies that facilitate knowledge about healthy habits, health risk situations, and the short-term and long-term effects of their health choices.

FEEL



Develop affective skills and strategies that facilitate healthy living for themselves, others, and their community.

ACT



Practice behavioural skills and strategies that facilitate choices, actions, and habits for healthy living.



Reflection Questions

Reflection is important to support learning. Consider asking students the following questions and discuss the answers together.

- *How do you think being able to say no this activity will help you when you experience peer pressure and risky situations in your life?*
- *How can the learning from today better help you support peers when they are in similar situations to the ones you found yourself in today? How might you think and feel differently if the scenario happens in real life?*

Observing Learning Outcomes

Sample questions to observe learning outcomes include:

- Does the student have a part in the role play of the scenario?
- Is the student able to successfully work with their group to identify a refusal strategy for their scenario?
- Does the student contribute to the debrief of either their scenario or another group's scenario?

Learning Extension (Optional)

Have students develop a mnemonic device for different refusal strategies. A mnemonic device is a sentence that helps people to remember a string of words. Popular mnemonic devices include:

Prime Ministers Can't Eat Any Nachos (for the time zones in Canada: Pacific, Mountain, Central, Eastern, Atlantic, Newfoundland)

Never Eat Soggy Waffles (for the four compass directions: North, East, South, West)



Substance Use Scenarios

Scenario #1

A group of your peers smoke cigarettes behind the school every day. Jen, one of your best friends, hangs out there on a regular basis. You have been invited to come along many times but never have before. One day you decide to go and find Jen after school. You find Jen with a cigarette in their mouth. You were are shocked. Even though you are aware they have tried smoking, this was the first time you have seen Jen smoke. Next thing you know, Jen hands you one a cigarette and lights it up for you.

Scenario #2

Recently, you have had some problems with some old friends. To cope, you decided to become friends with someone you met through other friends. This person is great! They are more mature than other students and much more like you than your old friends. One day, they ask you if you who could bring some cigarettes to school; because their parents keep searching their bag. You feel like if you say no, they won't want to hang out with you any more.

Scenario #3

You're hanging out with some of your friends at a house. They're all drinking, and they want you to join.

Scenario #4

One of your classmates is telling you to ditch your last class and smoke cannabis with them outside school. When you say no, they push you and begin teasing you.

Scenario #5

Before class one morning, you are standing around talking with a group of other students. Two of the students are arguing about which flavour of e-liquid they think tastes better. One of the students suggests that everyone in the group should try both flavours and give their opinion. Two vaping devices start being passed around the group, with each student taking a turn using them. When you receive one of the devices, you hesitate to use it but feel pressured because everyone is looking at you.

Substance Use Scenarios (Continued)

Scenario #6

You are walking home from school with a few of your friends who are vaping. They are talking about their different vaping devices and all the different flavours, and you begin to feel a bit left out. One of your friends asks you if you want to try using theirs. You shake your head to say “no”, but then they say, “Come on. We can’t get in trouble here.”

Scenario #7

You are walking from one class to the next at school and stop to go to the washroom. You notice that some of your friends are in there and they are vaping. They ask you if you want to try. You say, “no thanks,” but then one of them replies, “Why not? The teachers can’t come in here and your parents will never find out.” You still don’t want to, but you also don’t want them to make fun of you if you say no again.

Scenario #8

You have just started going to a new school. On Friday, some of the students you’ve started hanging out with ask you if you want to hang out at a local park and they say they know where to get alcohol. You really want to fit in but don’t want to drink.

More Strategies for Using Refusal Skills

- Share a harmless joke. Sometimes humour is the best way to respond to a situation, as it can lighten a serious mood. It can also take the attention away from you and onto something else.
- Give a reason why it's a bad idea. Maybe vaping affects your asthma and you want to be able to run for the track team, or maybe you've learned about the negative health effects. Backing up your refusal with evidence gives it more power.
- Make an excuse of why you can't at this time. Maybe you have something else to do, you need to be somewhere at a specific time, you think your parents would be disappointed, or whatever you choose. Say it and stick to it.
- Just say no, plainly and firmly. In some situations, just saying no without any arguing or explaining is the best response. Just make sure your "no" is a strong and determined one.
- Suggest an alternative substance-free activity. There are many activities you can do that don't involve vaping or other substances. By thinking of something better to do, you're offering everyone an "out". You might be surprised of who will take you up on it.
- Ignore the suggestion. Pretend you didn't hear it and change the topic. Respectfully act like you don't think the idea is even worth discussing.
- Take a deep breath and repeat yourself if necessary. Sometimes you might have to say "no" more than once, on more than one occasion. You don't have to give in just because someone asks several times.
- Leave the situation. If you're feeling uncomfortable, you have the option of walking away. With you leading the way, other people might follow you as well.
- Shrug it off and say, "no thanks, I'm good". You can be polite and let people know you aren't interested at the same time.
- Use 'we' statements over 'I' statements. Sometimes "we" feels stronger than "I". Try to find someone who can back you up when you say "no".