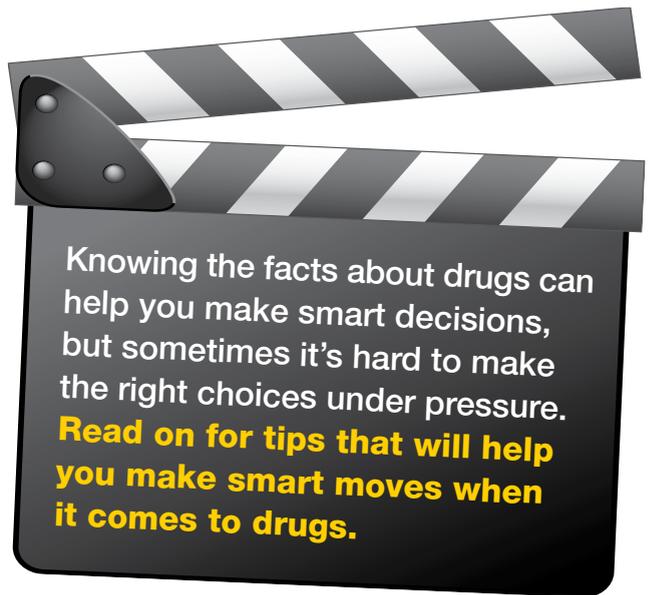


FACTS INTO ACTION



SCENE #1:

You are hanging out with your best friend, checking out each other's Web pages. Your friend says, "Wanna try some of my mom's painkillers? It'd be fun." You are surprised and stop what you're doing. "It's not like the meds are illegal. My mom's doctor gave them to her. They're safe, for sure," your friend says.



REALITY CHECK! Your friend seems to believe the myth that prescription drugs are safer to abuse than illegal ones. **Not!**

Prescription drugs such as painkillers or ADHD medications, when taken as prescribed by a physician, make a huge positive difference in the lives of millions, but that doesn't mean they are safe to *abuse*. When used for nonmedical reasons or not as prescribed—such as to get high, relieve tension, or just to experiment—these drugs can lead to addiction. But it's not only addiction that a person risks when

abusing prescription painkillers. For example, a single, large dose of painkillers can cause your breathing to slow to dangerous levels.

TIME OUT You can't believe your friend is asking you to do this! You know the facts, but then again, you totally trust your friend and feel like maybe it would be OK, even fun. This is your BFF. You do everything together. What would happen if you said "no"? Will your friend stop hanging out with you? Wouldn't it be OK to try it just once? How can you get out of this situation without it becoming a big deal?

NOW WHAT? **Tell it like it is.** Since this is your BFF, lay it on the line and let your friend know where you are coming from. "That's not for me. Let's just hang out."

Be cool and change the subject. Coming up with another activity can distract people. "I don't really feel like it. Anyway, there's this cool new phone app that lets you add cat pics to photos. Want to download it?"

Give an excuse. It's OK to make an excuse when you are on the spot. "I have to leave soon for dinner."

SCENE #2:

It's Friday night and you're hanging with friends at a party. The tunes are blaring. Someone nudges you and another friend: "I have some weed if anyone feels like getting high." One girl responds, "Sure. I'm definitely in. It's not like you can get addicted to it."



REALITY CHECK!

TISNT! Looks like this girl mistakenly believes that people can't get addicted to marijuana. But they can and do. About 9 percent of people who try marijuana become

addicted to it. And, as with other addictive drugs, once addiction takes hold of you, you keep taking the drug even when everything starts to fall apart—long after the party ends. Young adults may be especially vulnerable: Studies show that about half of the individuals who enter drug treatment centers (sometimes referred to as "rehab") for marijuana use are under 25 years old.

In addition to causing addiction, the THC in marijuana (the chemical that gives you the "high") also affects your memory and distorts your perception (your senses), motor skills, reaction time, and judgment. It can make you mess up at school, in sports, and in other activities. Use it for too long, and you could start to lose interest in school, family, friends, and even your own well-being. Trying to quit has its own drawbacks, including depression, irritability, restlessness, trouble sleeping, anxiety, headaches, and other withdrawal symptoms.

TIME OUT

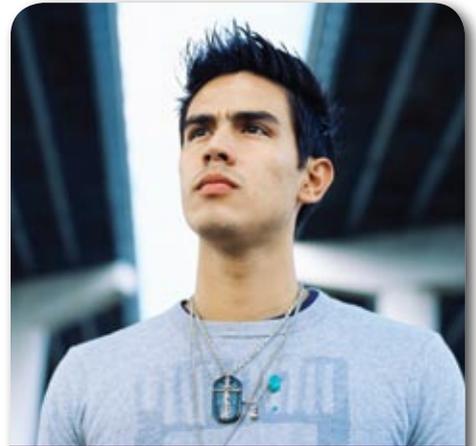
Should you smoke marijuana with your friends? You know the facts, and you know it's a bad idea to smoke. But you worry about how you'll look in front of others at the party if you say "no." What if people stop asking you to parties altogether? Even if the health risks aren't enough, fear of your mother's or father's anger if they smell it on you is reason enough not to smoke!

NOW WHAT?

Walk away, maybe create a diversion. "I feel like changing the tunes. Anyone want to come with me?"

Give a simple no. Don't make it a big deal. Be polite. "No, thanks."

Pretend you didn't hear. It's a party, go talk to other people. "I can't believe she's here, I've got to talk to her...."



YOUR MOVE

You have a better chance of making smart decisions if you can take a moment to think about a situation before you act.

Discussion Questions:

Think of a situation you might encounter where you'll have to make a decision that involves drugs.

- What is a myth that might be tossed around regarding that drug? What are the facts?
- What thoughts might be going through your head as you figure out how to respond? What are the pros and cons of your different options?
- What are some ways you can get out of a difficult situation?

To research the facts on drugs and drug abuse, check out:

- teens.drugabuse.gov
- scholastic.com/headsup