

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL



6. DRUGS AND ALCOHOL ABUSE



Fact Sheet Prepared by Dr Marcia Paltoo, Ministry of Health

Man has used mind-altering drugs in his search to dispel sorrow and achieve 'lasting joy'. Mind altering drugs are derived from both natural and synthetic sources. Plant sources include opium, marijuana, hashish, cocaine and alcohol. Alcohol use and its dependency are 100 times greater than dependency on illegal drugs. The negative effects of drug use are a source of great concern worldwide. Negative effects include personal dysfunction, crime, accidents, ill health, and AIDS. A worrisome trend in recent years is the earlier first drug use and the growing proportion of female drug users.

Did you know?

More than 6% of the world's population under 12 years (13.9 m) people has used drugs within the past 30 days?

Source: www.dol.gov



Some short term effects of alcohol abuse: in co-ordination, staggering, slurred speech, blurred vision, lowered inhibitions (do things one would normally not do), poor judgment, nausea and vomiting.

Some long term effects of alcohol abuse: degeneration of the brain, cirrhosis of the liver, sexual impotence, stomach ulcers and dependency.

Effects on unborn child: mental retardation, poor co-ordination, hyperactivity, increase in congenital defects of the eyes, ears and mouth.

Societal Effects

The Secretary of the US Department of Health and Human Services reports that that alcohol has been a contributing factor in almost 50% of the suicides, homicides and accidental deaths in the U.S.

Drug use and Youth

Adolescence is a period of change and restless search for values, ideals and meaning to life. The period of change is biological, intellectual, emotional and spiritual. Some of the factors which contribute to the spread of drug abuse among adolescents:

- Curiosity and the desire to experience new things
- Identification with a peer group that uses drugs/alcohol
- Adolescents take more risks and are more impulsive
- Family conflicts, school and social stress
- Availability of drugs and general attitude towards its use, especially alcohol
- Absence of positive alternatives
- Lack of spiritual or religious values

1. Smoking

what happens when you smoke?

Tobacco is made up of some 300 chemicals, 40 of which are known poisons. When you smoke, these chemicals enter the bloodstream.

- **Nicotine** – a very powerful drug that makes the heart beat faster
- **Tar** – which contains a number of substances that can cause cancer.
- **Irritants** – which damage the fine hairs that keep the lungs clear, producing smoker's cough.
- **Carbon monoxide** – a deadly gas that affects the blood's ability to carry oxygen round the body.

Societal effects

- **Money** – cigarettes are very expensive. Money spent on cigarettes can't be spent on other things.
- **Pollution** – non smokers are forced to smoke because of smokers. They become 'passive smokers'. A recent report says that non-smoking wives who live with smoking husbands have a 50 per cent increase in the risk of lung cancer.
- **Health Services** – smoking costs the NHS in UK about 180 million sterling a year. Cigarette smoking is responsible for 50,000 premature deaths a year and thousands of serious illnesses.
- **The Third World** – it takes between seven and eleven hectares of woodland to dry and cure one hectare of tobacco. Therefore the long-term effects of growing tobacco are deforestation, erosion of soil and loss of land fertility. In some Third World countries land is given up to produce tobacco crops for export, and because of this the local population may go hungry.

Smoking & health

Smoking contributes to and causes many illnesses and diseases.

- **Bronchitis** – smoking causes 75% of deaths from chronic bronchitis which kills over 30,000 people a year.
- **Emphysema** – this is a disease of the lung, affecting breathing.
- **Heart disease** – nicotine increases the heart-rate and so wears down the heart. Smoking causes 25% of deaths from heart disease.
- **Cancer** – 90% of deaths from lung cancer are caused by smoking.



Other problems – smokers are less fit than non-smokers, and are more likely to get colds, flu and other infections. Smoking can damage unborn babies, and can cause problems like blood clots and stomach ulcers.

Why do people smoke?

- From habit.
- To relax.
- For pleasure.
- To conform.
- Because of advertising.

Reflections:

- ▶ Everyone who smokes their first cigarette find it disgusting. So why do people persevere?
- ▶ Why might some people argue that to ban smoking would be an infringement of human rights?
- ▶ The proportion of 11 – 16 years olds that smoke is increasing. Why do you think this is so?
- ▶ Should people who die of cigarette related diseases be able to sue tobacco companies?
- ▶ Should cigarette advertising be totally banned?

'Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.'
(I Corinthians 6:19)

Followers of the Great Religions believe that life is a gift from God. They therefore put a high value on its preservation and believe that people should try to look after themselves, avoiding actions that risk harm or injury to the body. Because it is harmful, some persons would argue that smoking is a denial of the goodness of God's creation.

In order, write down which of the following you find the most frightening.

- a On average, each cigarette takes 5½ minutes off your life.
 - b An average smoker loses about five years of their life.
 - c Only 6% of people diagnosed as having lung cancer survive.
 - d Cigarette smoking kills. On average, it kills 1,000 people prematurely a week.
 - e 25 % of heart attacks are caused by smoking
- How far do you think advertising encourages young people to smoke? Design an anti-smoking poster.

2. Alcohol

Ethyl alcohol, the active ingredient in alcohol, is a drug that acts as a depressant. Alcohol is a chemical, a drug, a fuel, a poison, a preservation and a solvent. There are four types of alcohol, their alcoholic content is:

Beer and cider: contains 4 – 7% alcohol

Wine : contains 10 – 12% alcohol

Fortified wine (e.g. port, sherry) : contains 15 – 22% alcohol

Spirits (e.g. scotch, rum, vodka): contains 40 – 55% alcohol

Why do people drink alcohol?

- To celebrate
- To be sociable
- To relax
- To feel adult
- For medicinal purposes
- In religious ceremonies

How does alcohol affect the body?

- **The heart** – alcohol can poison the heart muscles and lead to heart failure, in which the heart cannot pump blood efficiently. It can also cause an irregular heart beat, high blood pressure, stroke and chest pains.
- **The nervous system** – it acts as a depressant.
- **The liver** – alcohol causes fatty liver (this occurs because the body uses calories from alcohol as its energy source instead of the fat stored in the body). It also causes Hepatitis (liver inflammation, which involves the death of liver cells). It can cause jaundice (a yellow discoloration of the skin). Untreated this leads to death or cirrhosis.
- **The stomach** – alcohol causes the stomach to produce excess stomach acids. This leads to gastritis (painful inflammation of the stomach) which can cause bleeding and ulcers.
- **The brain** – prolonged drinking damages the nerves that allow you to control your muscles and sense pain, temperature, pressure and the position of your body.
- **Cirrhosis** – occurs when liver cells die and are replaced by scar tissue. Symptoms include weakness, fatigue, weight loss, and loss of interest in sex. Cirrhosis can be treated, but if drinking continues to cause liver damage it may be fatal.
- **Fetal alcohol syndrome** – the alcohol a pregnant woman drinks reaches her baby and stays there until the mother's body processes it.

The 'cost' of a drink

- Alcohol consumption in Britain rose by over 100% between 1950 and 1990
- In 1996 24% of men and 9% of women in UK were found to be drinking over the sensible drinking limits (21 units per week)
- A survey of 9 – 15 years olds in UK found that 89% of the sample had had their first proper drink by the age of 13.
- 63% of children (11-15), in UK, believe that 'drinking is only dangerous if you are addicted to it'.
- The drinks industry spends over 2 million sterling per year on alcohol advertising.
- Over 1600 million sterling per year is incurred in terms of lost production and costs to the medical and social services in caring for alcohol mis-users.
- People who are unemployed drink more than people who are employed.
- Heavy consumers of alcohol have a three-fold risk of cancer of the mouth and heavy drinkers have ten times the risk of dying from chronic liver diseases than non-drinkers.
- 50% of murderers had been drinking just before committing the offence.
- Drink can be a cause of family rows, divorce, child and wife battering, poverty, absenteeism, road accident and violence in the streets.

Reflection:

- ‘Without alcohol our society would go to pieces’.
- Some people describe getting drunk as having a ‘good time’. What leads them to such a view? In what sense could getting drunk be describe as having a ‘bad time’?
- Make a list of:
 - all the ads on TV in one week about alcohol
 - the images these ads try to create
 - the types of drinks advertised
 - the time of night the ads are on.

3. Drugs

At some time in our lives, we almost all use drugs of one sort or another. A drug is any substance which alters the chemistry of our bodies and, consequently, affects the natural balance of our minds and emotions. Drugs which can be prescribed by a doctor include substances such as penicillin which are intended to cure infections, and sleeping pills, tranquilizers and anti-depressants intended to help us relax. Cigarettes and alcohol, which we can ‘prescribe’ for ourselves, have a similar function.

**Drugs can have nasty side-effects**

- They can bring on confusion and frightening hallucinations
- They can cause unbalanced emotions or more serious mental disorders
- First time heroin users are sometimes violently sick.
- Later still, there may be more serious mental and physical effects.
- If a drug user starts to inject, infections leading to sores, abscesses, jaundice, blood poisoning and even the AIDS virus may follow.

Personal problems

- Relationships may become strained, especially with friends and family.
- Rather than helping you to face up to life, drugs may simply become one more problem in addition to the ones you already have.

Legal problems

- By taking illegal drugs you are risking heavy fines or even imprisonment.
- If you are arrested the result may be a police record, difficulty finding a job later, and other embarrassments.

Money problems

- It costs money to take drugs – they are expensive. A heavy user may end up spending all their money on ‘feeding the habit’. The habit may lead to violent crime.

Marijuana:

A dangerous drug made from the Indian Hemp plant called cannabis sativa. It contains 421 different chemicals, 61 of which are found in no other plant. There are three basic forms:

- **Marijuana** : made from leaves, seeds and stems of the hemp plant
- **Hashish**: a concentrated form of marijuana made by compressing marijuana resins into small blocks
- **Hash Oil**: made by soaking marijuana in a chemical solvent and then evaporating the solvent to obtain an oil concentrate.

How does marijuana damage your body?

- **Immune system suppression**: your immune system keeps you from getting sick and helps you fight infection. Marijuana interferes with special immune systems called Helper T cells. These cells produce substances which are used by other immune cells called Killer T cells which pass through capillary walls to attack and destroy invaders such as bacteria, viruses and even cancer.
- **Lung damage**: because marijuana is inhaled deeply and held in the lungs for some time, smoking a joint is much more dangerous than smoking a cigarette. There is as much tar in one joint as there are in 15 cigarettes. Each puff contains more than 150 cancer causing substances. The smoke breaks down the delicate air sacks in the lungs and causes shortness of breath.
- Over 100 chemicals in the marijuana are irritating to the lungs and can cause bronchitis (inflammation of the bronchial tubes which take air to the lungs).
- More than 150 complex hydrocarbons are present, some of which can cause pre-cancerous growths, which can result in lung cancer.
- **Brain damage**: Marijuana widens the gaps between nerve cells and causes dense material to clog up the tiny gaps between the nerve cells in the brain preventing communication. Marijuana causes packets of neuro-transmitters to clump and become inactive and hampers the activity inside each nerve cell. It also interferes with thinking, attention, learning and memory.
- **Damage to males**: marijuana reduces the level of male hormone testosterone. With low levels of hormone little boys do not develop into adult males and their genitals do not function properly. In mature males, without testosterone, an erection cannot occur.
- **Damage to females**: testosterone levels increase in females causing development of facial hair, dark body hair and acne. It also disturbs the menstruation and ovulation.

Cocaine:

Cocaine, also known as crack, white lady and snow ice, is a dangerous drug made from the leaf of the coca bush. It is mainly grown in South America. Crack cocaine is a rock-like form of cocaine that produces a vapour and cracking sound when heated. It is quickly and overwhelmingly addictive.

How does cocaine damage your body?

- **Brain**: cocaine affects three types of chemicals in the nerve cells – dopamine, serotonin and norepinephrine. These chemicals relay information from one nerve cell to the next. Cocaine causes release of these chemicals and keeps them active for a longer time. It also slows the manufacture of these chemicals, and since the brain has less chemicals,

when cocaine is stopped it produces a devastating low. To avoid this feeling, users will do anything to get more, which is why it is so terribly addictive.

- **Brain damage:** high blood pressure can cause the vessels in the brain to burst, causing brain damage or even death. Cocaine also causes seizures (fits) and infection of the brain from dirty syringes or needles.
- **Heart and blood pressure changes:** Cocaine causes increased heart rate, irregular rate or causes it to stop completely. This extra stress can cause severe chest pains and heart attack.
- **Lung damage:** if cocaine is injected too rapidly, it can cause life-threatening clots to form in the lungs. It also clogs the tiny air sacs in the lungs reducing the ability to breathe. Lung infections are common, and respiratory failure can result.
- **Damage to fetuses and infants:** pregnant cocaine users have a greatly increased risk of miscarriage and bleeding. Babies are born addicted, with low birth weight, seizures, strokes and kidney problems. Breast feeding also transfers the cocaine to the infant.

How Abusing Drugs can Harm Society

- A heavy user will find it difficult to contribute to society.
- There is a connection between drug addiction and crime.

‘Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells within you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy and that temple you are.’
(I Corinthians 3: 16 – 17)

Reflection:

- Write a short article entitled ‘Why some kids say “yes” .’
- John Stuart Mill, a nineteenth – century philosopher, wrote an essay entitled ‘On Liberty’ in which he argued that a person should be free to do whatever they want so long as it does not harm anyone else. What do you think?

Drugs that can be dangerous:

Drug	What it looks like	How it's used	What it does	Risks
Amphetamines (Speed)	A white powder, or brown powder, may be in pill or capsule form	Usually sniffed or injected	Make people lively, giggly, over-alert; depression and difficulty with sleep may follow	Heavy use can produce feelings of paranoia
Cannabis (pot, dope, hash, grass, ganga, weed)	Hard brown resinous material or herbal mixture	Smoked in a joint or pipe, sometimes with tobacco	Heightened appreciation of sensory experience; elevation of mood, talkativeness	Risks of accidents; can cause feelings of paranoia; sleepiness
Cocaine (Coke)	A white powder	Usually sniffed	Makes people lively, over-alert, elevation of mood	Can lead to dependence; withdrawal can be very uncomfortable
Crack	Crystalline rocks	Smoked	Same as cocaine	Long-term use can cause deterioration in mental functioning, irritability, social withdrawal, loss of sexual desire
Ecstasy (E, Dove, Barney Rubble, XTC)	Tablets or capsules	Swallowed	Feelings of empathy with others at low doses, restlessness and anxiety at higher doses	Heavy use can cause psychological confusion, alienation and fear
Heroin (Skag, smack)	A brown or white speckled powder	Injected or smoked	Alertness at first, then drowsiness and drunken appearance	Overdose can cause unconsciousness; regular use leads to dependence; giving up becomes difficult
Magic mushrooms (Liberty cap)	Mushroom found growing wild	Swallowed raw, cooked or as a beverage	Heightened appreciation of sensory experiences; perceptual distortions	Mainly from eating other poisonous mushrooms by mistake
LSD (acid)	Tiny coloured tablets; microspots on blotting paper; small absorbent stamps	Taken by mouth	Perceptual distortions can produce hallucinations; elevation of mood; sometimes causes severe panic or anxiety attacks	Heavy use can cause psychological confusion, paranoia. Risks of accidents while under influence
Tranquillizers	Prescribe tablets and capsules	Taken by mouth	Similar to alcohol, effect increase when taken with alcohol	May lead to dependence; withdrawal symptoms can include severe anxiety

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Activities

Main ideas:

- Unless prescribed by a competent physician to treat a specific condition, the use of habit forming drugs and alcohol are dangerous to health and well-being
- Every means possible should be used to educate youth about the dangers of these intoxicants
- These intoxicants cause physical damage not only to the body, but spiritual damage to the soul.

Activities:

1. List all the forms of advertising that are used for the sale of alcohol in Guyana. Next to each write down the strategies used in these advertisements to 'glamorize' the use of alcoholic drinks. Discuss what measures should be put into effect to curb the high incidence of the use of alcohol by youths.
2. Alcohol is a major export and source of foreign exchange in Guyana. What is more important - the physical and spiritual health of the people (which may mean discouraging the use of alcohol) or the foreign exchange that alcohol brings in. Participants should be encouraged to give reasons for their answers.
3. Companies that make alcoholic drinks use tremendous amounts of water while many areas of Guyana lack a source of clean drinking water. Discuss this issue with your group. What kinds of decisions should be made and by whom?
4. Plan and perform a skit about the effects of alcohol and drug abuse on families.
5. Write 'alcohol' in the centre of a piece of paper. Draw lines out from this word and write one negative aspect of the use of alcohol on each line.

6. DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE



READINGS

‘The drinking of wine is ...the cause of chronic diseases, weakeneth the nerves, and consumeth the mind’.¹

‘Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit.’²

‘Alcohol consumeth the mind and causeth man to commit acts of absurdity’.³

‘Alcohol leadeth the mind astray and causeth the weakening of the body’.⁴

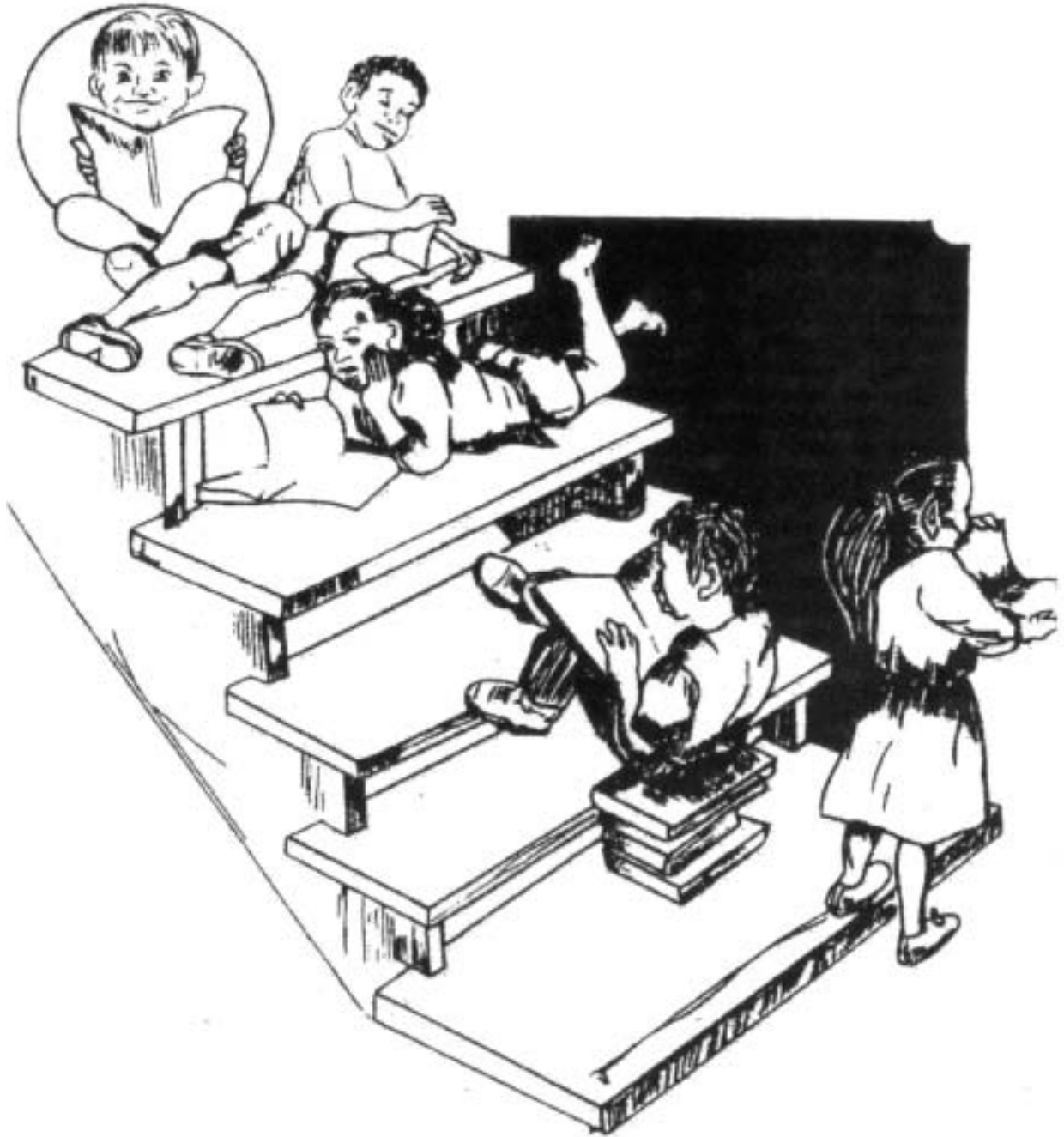
‘You who believe! Intoxicants and gambling ... are an abomination- of Satan’s handiwork: eschew such that you may prosper. Satan’s plan is to stir up enmity and hatred among you by means of liquor and gambling, and to hinder you from the remembrance of God and from prayer. Will you abstain?’⁵

‘Become ye intoxicated with the wine of the love of God, and not with that which deadeneth your minds’.⁶

‘Regarding marijuana and other hallucinogenic agentsThis is the worst of all intoxicants...it causeth the disintegration of thought and the complete torpor of the soul...marijuana extinguishes the mind, freezeth the spirit, petrifieth the soul, wasteth the body and leaveth man frustrated and lost.’⁷

‘Men who are grave and wise, though they drink, are mild masters of themselves; but those who are benighted and ignorant are devoted to drink, and more so daily. Be careful each of you, of your deportment – what heaven confers, when once lost, is not regained.’⁸

LITERACY



7. LITERACY



Fact Sheet – Prepared by the On the Wings Task Force of Varqa Foundation

What is literacy?

Literacy is the ability to read and write. There are many levels of literacy, the most significant being functional literacy. Functional literacy is the ability to effectively apply reading and writing skills to one's daily life.

In Guyana, though education from the nursery level to the secondary level is mostly free of cost, the country's general population has a serious problem with literacy. In a survey conducted by the University of Guyana and the Ministry of Education, it was found that the rate of illiteracy was on the rise with as many as 89% of out of school youth of some areas functionally illiterate. Another survey conducted by the Varqa Foundation in regions 6 and 10 found that 12% of 12 year olds in the school system for six years could not read a single word.

Why is literacy important?

Literacy is important to us all as a general form of communication used at all levels. In today's society the majority of transactions and activities take place with the use of textual material. Such transactions include business, health, communication, travel, education and learning, finance, and even domestic related activities such as shopping.



The advancement of human civilization is based on the ability of its inhabitants to read and write. The development of science, technology and even the arts is dependent on this basic ability.

Society has reached a higher level of individual independence, where each person must depend even more his or her own skills to take them through daily life. The more skilled a person is, the better off he will be.

Literacy Projects in Guyana

Did you know?

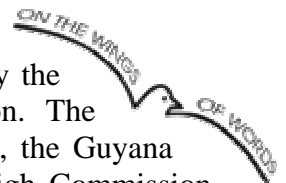
Worldwide, more than 840 million adults are illiterate, 64% are women.

Source: www.undp.org



The Wings of Words Taskforce

On the Wings of Words is a nationwide literary initiative organised and coordinated by the Literacy Taskforce of the Varqa Foundation. The project is funded by the Baha'i World Centre, the Guyana Book Foundation, GUYSUCO, the British High Commission, CIDA and UNICEF.



On the Wings of the Words evolved from an earlier initiative by the Varqa Foundation which established almost one hundred (100) village libraries after a donation of almost 45,000 books organized by Baha'is in the Toronto area of Canada.

Recognizing the need for improved literacy skills to increase access to and utilization of these libraries, Varqa Foundation embarked upon a training programme for community volunteers dedicated to improving the literacy skills of youth ages 10-16 in their community groups.

The first training in 1996 was an overwhelming success with over 200 volunteers attending the one-week programme. Volunteers came from all educational backgrounds. To date over 1,200 facilitators have been trained, working with over 7000 youth throughout the country.



During the training, the facilitators are exposed to the two main components of the programme, the spiritual/moral “wing” and the mechanics of reading. In teaching the youth to read two approaches are used – the look and say method, where children learn the whole word- and the phonics approach, where individual letter sounds are taught and blended into syllables and words.

Morning training sessions are devoted to the three major themes:

- Man is a noble being
- We are in control of our actions
- Our actions affect others

These themes are expanded and elucidated through discussions, memorization of the Holy Word of different scriptures, stories, drama, art and song. The programme offers a complete training course that guides the facilitators and students through the manuals, graded reading books, informative student workbooks, pertinent discussion topics, stories and reinforcement activities.

Training programmes take place at various times of the year and in different locations.

7. LITERACY



Activities

Main Ideas:

1. Youth who have reading difficulties should be encouraged to attend an "On the Wings of Words" programme in their area.
2. Youth who have good reading skills and are interested in making a difference in helping other youth in their areas to improve their reading should attend an "On the Wings of Words" facilitator programme and serve as a facilitator of literacy classes in their area.
3. Reading alone will not solve the many problems of literacy amongst youth; therefore the literacy programmes must have a moral or spiritual component which helps the youth to realize:
 - We are all noble beings
 - We are in control of our actions
 - Our actions affect others

Activities:

1. Ask the members of your group to make as many sentences as they can using only the following high-frequency words:

I can go you will to help (Hint: There are over 50 possibilities)

2. After doing this exercise, ask them to continue, but add the words **'We'** **'Not'** this will demonstrate the value of teaching high-frequency words to allow the students many opportunities of practice.
3. Make a game-board (like *Snakes and Ladders*) and a set of playing cards to go along with the game. Write a letter on each card. The game-board can be made more interesting by putting penalties or rewards at various places in the game. Each player would then take a card and be asked to either make a sound of the letter or the name of a word that begins with the sound of that letter. The game can be made more complicated by using a set of dice to determine how many words to list. The dice could also be used to create categories. The words each player thinks then would have to belong to a certain category.
4. Play a game or Charades. Form two teams. Team One thinks of a name of a song, movie, or book. They give the name to one member of Team Two who has to use pantomime or gestures and actions to get his team to guess the answer. Then Team Two thinks of a song, movie, or book, and a member of Team One has to get his team to guess it. Although no words are allowed in getting the team to guess it is a good game for comprehension and thinking skills that youth enjoy!

5. Start with one word written across a sheet of paper. Ask one member of the group to think of a word that should be connected to this word (as in the game of *Scrabble*). Each member of the group takes a turn in succession adding a word until no one can think of anything else to add. The end result should resemble the game-board at the end of a game of *Scrabble*.
6. Play a word game where the first person in the circle says a word that fits into a certain category (i.e. animals, cities, countries, foods, etc). The next person has to say a word that *begins* with the *last* letter of the first word mentioned. (If the first word in the food category was banana, the next person might say apple. The next player might say egg).
7. Give the following quiz about literacy to your group:

Literacy Questionnaire



Consider each of the following statements below and decide whether you feel they are true or false. Write **T / F**.

- | | |
|--|----------|
| 1. Most illiterates are wome | <u>T</u> |
| 2. There are few illiterates in developed countries. | <u>F</u> |
| 3. If a person is illiterate it is his/her own fault. | <u>F</u> |
| 4. There are about 800 million illiterates worldwide. | <u>T</u> |
| 5. Illiteracy can be eradicated. | <u>T</u> |
| 6. Generally the public is sympathetic to illiterates. | <u>F</u> |
| 7. Every year there are fewer illiterates. | <u>F</u> |
| 8. Illiteracy and poverty are closely linked. | <u>T</u> |
| 9. Literacy is a basic human right. | <u>T</u> |
| 10. Illiterates usually have low paying, manual jobs. | <u>T</u> |
| 11. The best literacy projects stress economic aspects of development. | <u>F</u> |
| 12. Illiteracy is a developing country problem. | <u>F</u> |
| 13. Illiteracy affects the general well-being of an individual. | <u>T</u> |
| 14. Illiteracy is not a barrier to an individual in exercising his/her own rights. | <u>F</u> |
| 15. New literates can return to being illiterate. | <u>F</u> |

7. LITERACY



READINGS

‘Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can, alone cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit there from.’¹

‘Every child is potentially the light of the world -- and at the same time it's darkness. Wherefore must the question of education be accounted as of one primary importance’.²

‘It is learning alone that enables man to better the condition of his friends and relations. Knowledge is the holiest of holies, the god of gods and commands respect of crowned heads; shorn of it a man is an animal.’³

‘No man of wisdom can demonstrate his knowledge save by means of words. This showeth the significance of the Word as is affirmed in all the Scriptures, whether of former times, or more recently. For it is through its potency and animating spirit that the people of the world have attained so eminent a position.’⁴

‘The Word of God is the King of words and its pervasive influence is incalculable. It hath ever dominated and will continue to dominate the world of being.’⁵

‘There is no greater wealth than wisdom; no greater poverty than ignorance’⁶

‘Training in morals and good conduct is far more important than book learning. A child that is clean, agreeable, of good character, well behaved - even though he be ignorant - is preferable to a child that is rude, unwashed, ill-natured, and yet becoming deeply versed in all the sciences and arts. The reason for this is that the child who conducts himself well, even though he be ignorant, is of benefit to others, while an ill-natured, ill-behaved child is corrupted and harmful to others, even though he be learned. If however, the child be trained to be both learned and good, the result is light upon light.’⁷

‘Take my instruction instead of silver and knowledge rather than choice gold; for wisdom is better than jewels’⁸

‘The children are even as a branch that is fresh and green; they will grown in whatever way you train them. Take the utmost care to give them high ideals and goals, so that once they come of age, they will cast their beings like burning candles of the world, and will not be defiled by lusts and passions in the way of the animals, heedless and unaware, but instead will set their hearts on achieving everlasting honour and acquiring all the excellences of humankind.’⁹

HUMAN RIGHTS



8. HUMAN RIGHTS



Prepared by material supplied by the National Commission on the Rights of the Child

What are human rights?

Human rights mean the right of every human being to certain privileges due to them as a person.

Why are human rights important?

The recognition of the dignity belonging to each individual as well as the equal rights of all peoples is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. A disregard for this results in inhuman acts that have shamed the human race. The world cannot progress when the rights of humans are being granted to some and withheld from others. Human rights include the rights of children, men, women, as well as other groups of people such as workers, people of various races and religious belief.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was written after the Holocaust, and was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10th 1948.

The Declaration is a common standard by which the countries of the world are measured and held responsible for the status of human rights there.



The Declaration includes the following points:

- All people are born free with equal rights and should treat each other in a spirit of brotherhood.
- All people have the rights and freedom set out by the Declaration without being at a disadvantage because of race, sex, language, religion or social origin, property or birth.
- Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.
- No person shall be held in slavery of any form.
- No person shall be subjected to torture or cruel or degrading treatment.
- All are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of the law and from violations of the Declaration.
- Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within their country as well as to leave any country and return to their home country as they choose.

- No one shall be made to suffer unlawful interference of their privacy, family, honour and reputation. Everyone has a right to protection by the law against such acts.
- Everyone has the right to a nationality; no one shall be unlawfully deprived of his nationality or be denied the right to change it.
- Men and women of full age without limitations because of race, nationality or religion have the right to marry; marriage shall be entered into with the free and full consent of both, the man and the woman.
- Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.
- Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience or religion.
- Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression.
- Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
- Everyone without discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
- Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.
- Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well being of himself and of his family.
- Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages.
- In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law.

Children's Rights:

Since the 1980s the issue of child abuse has received considerable publicity. People are shocked by the widespread abuse and neglect of children in our society.

Neglect - the persistent or severe neglect of a child which results in serious impairment of the child's health or development.

Physical abuse – physical injury to a child, including deliberate poisoning, where there is definite knowledge, or a reasonable suspicion that injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented.

- Sexual abuse -** the involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities they do not truly comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent, or that violate the social taboos of family roles.
- Emotional abuse -** persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or rejection which results in severe adverse effects on the behaviour and emotional development of a child. All abuse involves some emotional ill-treatment; this category should be used where it is the main or sole form of abuse
- Grave concern -** children giving grave concern are those whose situations do not currently fit the above categories, but where social and medical assessments indicate that they are at significant risk of abuse.

The Declaration includes the following, demanding that the states who have signed it:

- Respect children’s rights without discrimination of any kind
- Ensure that the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration
- Recognize the child has the inherent right to life
- Ensure the survival and development of the child
- Ensure that a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will
- Combat the illicit transfer of children abroad
- Allow the child to express his or her own views freely
- Respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion
- Ensure the child has access to information
- Protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence
- Ensure that no child is deprived of health care, a standard of living adequate for the child’s physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development
- Shall work to diminish infant and child mortality
- Provide free education
- Recognize the right of the child to rest, leisure, and participation in cultural and artistic life
- Protect the child from economic exploitation
- Protect children from the illicit use of narcotic drugs, sexual exploitation, slavery, torture and capital punishment

Reflection:

- ▶ Explain in your own words the types of child abuse and neglect that exist.
- ▶ What do you think the term ‘cycle of disadvantage’ means?

8.HUMAN RIGHTS



Activities

1. Make a chart showing the rights that we have as people. Next to each right stated, indicate the situation in Guyana as experienced by most Guyanese. Differently coloured dots can be used to represent different meanings e.g. a blue dot to show that most Guyanese are not given this right (in reality), and a yellow dot to show that we do actually enjoy that right.
2. The group is divided into smaller groups and each one comes up with a list of 5 basic rights that they feel are most important in Guyanese society and why.
3. All of the rights are written on pieces of paper and put into a bag. The group is divided into pairs and each pulls a piece of paper from the bag. Then they make some mini presentation to demonstrate the importance of that particular right they pulled. It can be a talk, a song, a game, a play or any creative means they can think of.

8. HUMAN RIGHTS



READINGS



‘Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us?’¹

‘O Children of Men! Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other.’²

‘The source of human rights is the endowment of qualities, virtues and powers which God has bestowed upon mankind without discrimination of sex, race, creed or nation. To fulfill the possibilities of this divine endowment is the purpose of human existence.’³

‘I look upon all creatures equally; none are less dear to me and none more dear.’⁴

‘The Prophets of God have stressed the unique character of man’s individuality and of his right to live a fruitful life. Human rights then, are not the exclusive prerogative of the few, to be parceled out at the legislative discretion of human institutions. We believe rather that human rights are God-given and hence inviolable.’⁵

‘All persons of whatever sex, race, nationality, ethnic group, religion, or economic class are creations of God and all are equal in their spiritual essence and human dignity. Any act, which discriminates against or otherwise restricts the human rights of any person demeans the dignity of the individuals involved and is contrary to the Teachings of God.’⁶

‘For the white to lord it over the black, the Arab over the non-Arab, the rich over the poor, the strong over the weak or men over women is out of place and wrong.’⁷

‘The recognition that mankind belongs to one family under one God brings with it the responsibility to respect and help one another in every way.’⁸

‘How excellent, how honourable is man if he arises to fulfill his responsibilities; how wretched and contemptible, if he shuts his eyes to the welfare of society and wastes his precious life in pursuing his own selfish interests and personal advantages. Supreme happiness is man’s, and he beholds the signs of God in the world and in the human soul, if he urges on the steed of high endeavor in the arena of civilization and justice... the happiness and greatness, the rank and station, the pleasure and peace, of an individual has never consisted in his personal wealth, but rather in his excellent character, his high resolve, the breadth of his learning, and his ability to solve difficult problems.’⁹

‘Equal opportunities for developing their unique capacities are the right of all individuals. Variety, not conformity, is a basic characteristic of a progressive society. Therefore, an equal standard of human rights must be upheld throughout the world.’¹⁰

‘Throughout the animal kingdom we do not find the creatures separated because of colour. They recognise unity of species and oneness of kind. If we do not find colour distinction drawn in a kingdom of lower intelligence and reason how it can be justified among human beings?’¹¹

GENDER EQUITY



9. GENDER EQUITY



Fact Sheet- Based on material provided by Ms Vanda Radzik,
CIDA-PSU, Gender Equity Programme

What is gender equity?

Gender equity refers to a situation where both men and women have equal rights and opportunities at all times.

What is the situation with gender equity in the past?

In many cultures, women were traditionally perceived as unequal to men and their main purpose was to produce children and to serve their husbands and family. They had little or no rights as individuals and no control over their lives. The men in these cultures were the undisputed heads of the households and the communities. Some men used this power to keep the other half of humanity (women) down, by denying them education and other basic human rights.

However, there were some cultures where women had better status, for example in Ancient Egypt. In that civilization, women could own and manage property, conduct their own legal matters, even being entitled to sue, as well as keep her independence after marriage as well as her maiden name. The Ancient Egyptian Civilization is one of the best examples of gender equity, seen by some as better than that of today's society.

What is the situation with gender equity today?

Currently throughout the world, the status of women is relatively better than it was centuries ago, especially so in the more developed countries. Here the role of men has been reduced to little importance in many families, where the woman is often the sole breadwinner and guardian, they are often known as single parents. This is another imbalance of the roles and status of the two sexes.

In the society women still have a long way to go in order to have equal opportunity and treatment. Though many women are improving their selves, by pursuing a formal education and getting jobs, they still face many forms of discrimination in everyday life and in moments of opportunity. The general trend in society is that women are not taken as seriously as men, and thus their right to equal opportunity is ignored and they continue to receive peripheral treatment.

In some countries the female sex is of so little consequence and that it has serious implications for the females born in certain parts of Asia and Africa. Often the situation results in death, human trafficking, slavery and other forms of inhumane and unethical treatment.

One such country is India, where at times unborn babies are tested for gender and when found to be girls, some may be aborted.

It is generally known that the majority of the world's poor are women and 2/3 of the world's adult illiterates are women. Though the amount of women in gainful employment is increasing the pay they receive is far less than men, even in developed countries such as the US. Even in developed countries, women doing the same jobs as their male counterparts were often paid less.



The point where the two genders have reached equality is still a long way off, with the male section of the world's population being at a significant advantage over the female section. In some parts of the world more efforts are being made to correct the unjust situation and give women rights as human beings.

Does the world really need gender equity?

On the whole, the world has been without gender equity for its entire history. During that time countless wars have wiped out nations, civilizations, peoples and entire generations, with outbreaks of disease, famine and slavery following closely on the heels of war. It has been the rulers and the decision-makers of the time that were responsible for these grievous events.

If women were given a chance to make significant contributions to important decisions, the loss of millions of lives may have been prevented along with the horrors and consequences of war. Also if women had been given the opportunity to a formal education, many of the ills resulting from ignorance would have been absent since women are also the first educators of children.

9. GENDER EQUITY



Activities

Main idea:

- To recognize the fact that men and women were created equal
- To understand the importance of the equal treatment and opportunity open to both genders.

Activities:

1. Get into groups of two, one male one female.
 - The girl will write a list of what improvements she would like to see in her life and the life of her brothers and father and possibly future sons, as well as the problems she sees facing the female population in Guyana.
 - The boy will list the improvements he would like to see in his life as well as the lives of his mothers and/or sisters and possibly future daughters. As well as a list of disadvantages faced by the male population in Guyana.
 - Discuss the results as a group.
2. Have a role play of a family where both the mother and father are equal decision makers in the affairs of the home, where they actively discuss problems together and arrive at a decision upon which both agree. Have a contrasting role-play where either man or woman dominates the situation and forces his/her decision upon the other as well as the family and portray the consequences on the family's unity.

9. GENDER EQUITY



READINGS

‘..women are counted the same as men, and God (has) created all humankind in His own image, and after His own likeness. That is, men and women alike are the revealers of His names and attributes, and from the spiritual viewpoint there is no difference between them. Whosoever draweth nearer to God, is the one most favoured, whether man or woman.’¹

‘Divine justice demands that the rights of both sexes should be equally respected since neither is superior to the other in the eyes of heaven. Dignity before God depends, not on sex but on purity and luminosity of heart. Human virtues belong equally to all!’²

‘The world of humanity consists of two parts: male and female. Each is the complement of the other. Therefore, if one is defective, the other will necessarily be incomplete, and perfection cannot be attained. There is a right hand and the left hand in the human body, functionally equal in service and administration. If either proves defective, the defect will naturally extend to the other by involving the completeness of the whole; for accomplishment is not normal unless both are perfect. If we say that one hand is deficient we prove the inability and the incapacity of the other; for single handed there is no full accomplishment. Just as a physical accomplishment is complete with two hands, so man and woman, the two parts of the social body must be perfect. It is not natural that either should remain undeveloped; and until both are perfected, the happiness of the human world will not be realised.’³

‘The world of humanity is possessed of two wings; the male and female. So long as these two wings are not equivalent in strength the bird will not fly. Until womankind reaches the same degree as man, until she enjoys the same arena of activity, extraordinary attainment for humanity will not be realised; humanity cannot wing its way to heights of real attainment. When the two wings or parts become equivalent in strength, enjoying the same prerogatives, the flight of man will be exceedingly lofty and extraordinary. Therefore, woman must receive the same education as man and all inequalities be adjusted. Thus, imbued with the same virtues as man, rising through all the degrees of human attainments, woman will become the peers of man and until this equality is established, true progress and attainment for the human race will not be facilitated.’⁴

‘In proclaiming the oneness of mankind He taught that man and woman are equal in the sight of God and that there is no distinction to be made between them. The only difference between them now is due to lack of education and training. If woman is given equal opportunity of education, distinction and estimate of inferiority will disappear’⁵

‘When mankind shall receive the same opportunity of education and the equality of man and woman be realised, the foundation of war will be utterly destroyed. Equality between man and woman is conducive to the abolition of warfare for the same reason that woman will never be able to sanction it.’⁶

Prejudice and Discrimination



10. Prejudice and Discrimination



Fact Sheet – prepared by Ms Munireh Mancey, Varqa Foundation

What is prejudice?

Prejudice is an attitude that is based on negative “branding” of individuals or groups because of their cultural, religious, racial, or ethnic background. This may come about from pre judging a certain group or individual from past experience with a few persons from a particular group or from gossip.

Consider this: An alien from another planet met an astronaut while he was out in space. The astronaut had a huge round glass head, and fat white arms and legs. The alien had never visited earth and immediately it assumed that all creatures from earth looked similar to that astronaut. Later he saw several other astronauts, which confirmed his decision of what earthlings looked like.

Question1: Does the average human look like an astronaut?

Question 2: Did the alien ever visit earth to see for himself the real situation?

What is discrimination?

Discrimination is the denial or prevention of people’s efforts in attaining their goals in life, on a daily basis it is basically giving them a hard time in anything they try to do. People are often discriminated against because of their gender, ethnicity, nationality, religion, language, class, age, and physical disabilities.

Consider this: A popular Kitty minibus is driving down the road and an old woman ‘flags down’ the bus, but even though the bus had a lot of space, it did not stop. Soon it passed a man with a pair of crutches who also tried to stop the bus, but again the bus did not stop. However, when a teenaged boy flagged the bus, it stopped and picked him up.

Question: Why do you think the bus only stopped for the boy?

Prejudice and discrimination are serious problems deeply rooted throughout the society, attempts to eradicate prejudice and discrimination must take local beliefs and customs into consideration.

Racial Prejudice

Racism is another form of prejudice also called racial prejudice. In Guyana, many people are the victims of racism, many too are guilty of being racial to some degree.

People are denied jobs, because of which race they belong to, in some cases police brutality is even blamed on racist discrimination. Racial discrimination can be stopped if people are more open hearted and cling less to what they hear or the bad examples they notice.

The roots of racism

Prejudice is defined as ‘thinking badly of others without sufficient reason’ So prejudice is seen as a way of thinking about others groups of people. Racism is defined by the formula ‘prejudice + power = racism’. Sometimes, our racial prejudices are made acceptable and supported by key institutions in our society. Racism is when racial prejudice get turned into action of some sort, and that action harms the weaker group. So racism is seen as a way of acting towards other groups of people.



Racism is not the same as ‘racial prejudice’. People have always had wild ideas about other humans who looked and talked differently. Prejudice comes out of ignorance and it thrived in a geographically isolated place like seventeenth-century Britain which had no real contact with black people. But racial prejudice on its own shouldn’t have lasted any longer than other irrational ideas and should have been destroyed by more frequent contact with Africans. Racism, on the other hand, has been going on for over 200 years and is still a ruling force in a world of mass communications, where geographical isolation is now almost impossible.

In Britain, racism began in the eighteenth century because it was economically useful. The first merchants who entered the slave trade weren’t doing so because they were prejudiced against Africans – they did it to make money. But once that foundation of economic profit had been laid it became very useful to think of black people as inferior, as ‘not altogether human’. So all the those ignorant rumors about black people became a set of beliefs, a system that justified slavery and the building of empires. The British rulers argued that to control places in Africa or India was a noble cause – white supremacy was necessary for human progress. This belief led to the near extermination of the Native Indians in North and South America and the Aboriginal people in Tasmania and Australia.

Racism always becomes more widespread during times of economic depression. In declining inner cities, for example, when jobs become scarce and money tight, frustration is vented on the most available scapegoats – the black population.

‘The cause of anti-racism is not just the cause of the black minorities in our own country it is the cause of the millions in Africa, Asia and Latin America still suffering from the legacy of the exploitation that produced our wealth as well as our racism. It’s up to us.’

(Chris Brazier)

10. Prejudice and Discrimination

Activities

1. Blindfold a person in the group, and a secretly selected number of persons will touch the person's hand, and after contact, ask the person if he/she could give the following details of the person:

- ▶ Which race the person belonged to
- ▶ Their age
- ▶ Gender
- ▶ Social class
- ▶ Political affiliation
- ▶ Religion
- ▶ Whether or not they are disabled.

Of course this game would have a better effect if the ethnicity in the group were mixed.

2. Ask the people in the group to list all of their friends, which ethnic group they belong to, their gender, whether or not they are handicapped, and their age. The person with the greatest diversity of friends should be cheered.
3. Do a skit to portray racial or any form of discrimination and prejudice.
4. Whether in or outside of the group the members must make an extra effort to banish all types of prejudice and discriminating attitudes they may have.

10. Prejudice and Discrimination

Readings

‘Judge not that you be not judged. For with the judgment that you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get.’¹

‘O Children of Men! Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other.’²

‘Whoever sees all things in himself and himself in all beings does not, by virtue of such realization, hate anyone.’³

‘Treat people in such a way and live amongst them in such a manner that if you die they will weep over you; and alive they crave for your company.’⁴

‘Ye are all the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch. Deal ye one with another with the utmost love and harmony, with friendliness and fellowship.’⁵

‘Those who act kindly in this world will have kindness.’⁶

‘There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.’⁷

‘Hold fast, all together unto God’s rope, and be not divided amongst yourselves’⁸

‘Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbour.’⁹

‘Let your aims be common, and your hearts be of one accord, and all of you be of one mind, so you may live well together.’¹⁰

SUICIDE



11. SUICIDE

Prepared by Kala Seegopaul and Brian O'Toole

Background information:

- Suicide rates in UK among young people went up by 30% between 1985 and 1996.
- Men, on average, are three times as likely to commit suicide as women.
- The suicide rate amongst alcoholics is 80 times greater than for the rest of the population.
- Up to 1961, it was a criminal offence to commit suicide or attempt to do so. In 1961, the Suicide Act was passed, but it still remains a criminal act, punishable by up to fourteen – years imprisonment, to aid or advise suicide.
- Attempted suicides are probably running at about 200,000 a year.
- Every day throughout the world at least 1,100 people commit suicide – one every 80 seconds.

Facilitator's Notes:

The following notes are to help the YCMTW facilitators in their sessions with their peers in their own communities.

Give the participants the following test to see how much they know about suicide:

The participants should mark 'True or False' next to the following questions:

1. More boys kill themselves than girls (T)
2. Majority of individuals who commit suicide do have a diagnosable mental illness (F)
3. It is illegal to commit suicide in Guyana. (T)
4. Suicide can be prevented (T)
5. Those who talk about or threaten to commit suicide don't do it. (F)
6. Those attempting suicide always leave a suicide note. (F)
(only true in 15% of the cases)
7. Discussing suicide openly plants the idea in people's mind and encourages suicide. (F)
8. People who kill themselves really want to die. (F)
9. Suicide is a significant cause of death in many Western countries. (T)
(In Australia it is the # 6 cause of death and in USA #3)
10. Problem with love relationship is one of the main reasons why people commit suicide in Guyana. (T)

1.0. What is Suicide?

Intentional, Uncoerced, Self Killing

2.0. Why do people attempt/commit suicide?

- Not coping
- Emotional pain
- Cry for help
- Overwhelmed, traumatic experience,
- Can't see any other options
- Feeling 'no one cares'
- Extreme isolation
- Feeling 'nothing matters'

3.0. Why are the suicide rates higher now than 20 years ago?

- Now easier get the tools for suicide
- Pressures of modern life
- Less extended family for support
- Pressure from school to get 'good grades'
- Increased access to guns (especially in USA)
- Violence seen in newspapers and the TV
- Music – e.g. heavy metal – produces a feeling of alienation
- USA: One suicide happens every two hours
- In 1997 more adolescents died because of suicide than all the deaths because of AIDS, Lung disease, or cancer.
- In the period from 1960 to 1980 the rate of suicide for adolescent males in USA increased by 300%
- 500,000 teenagers try to kill themselves each year

4.0. What are some of the At Risk Factors for someone who may commit suicide?

- As the number of attempts increases the risk of dying from suicide also increases
- Depression
- Drug and alcohol abuse – lethal combination – depression and drug/alcohol
- Conduct disorder – trouble with the law, rejected by others: e.g. the shootings at Columbine High School in USA
- Family background : abusive, violent, unrealistic, intrusive, over bearing, over protective
- Problems with relationships: Boy/girl, husband/wife, Parent/child, employer/employee
- Poor coping skills – sense of hopelessness/helplessness
- Psychiatric illness – schizophrenia, anorexia nervosa
- Availability of lethal means to commit suicide
- Recent bereavement

5.0 Warning Signs that someone may be on the verge of committing suicide:

- Change in eating and sleeping habits
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Noticeable personality change
- Violent reactions, rebellious behaviour, running away
- Persistent boredom, poor concentration, poor school grades
- Low interest in fun activities
- Focus on morbid or death themes
- Stomachaches, headaches, fatigue
- Intolerance for praise/rewards
- Prior attempt at suicide
- Family history of suicide
- Complaints of feeling ‘rotten inside’
- Verbal hints – “I won’t be a problem to you much longer”
“Nothing matters, its no use”
“I won’t see you again”
“I wish I was never born”
- Putting affairs in order: cleaning room, throwing or giving away important belongings

6.0. Activity

Cut up the following statements and percentages and then have the students put the statements in order of priority and with the appropriate percentage next to the correct statement.

22.4%	Domestic/Family problems
10%	Problems with love relationship
9.5%	Alcoholism
5.0%	Domestic violence
4.5%	Parental pressure
2.6%	Bankruptcy/economic problem
3.7%	Infidelity
0.8%	Unemployment
0.5%	AIDS
1.3%	Spirit/Demonic possession

7.0. Activity

Cut up the following statements and percentages and then have the students put the statements in order of priority and with the appropriate percentage next to the correct statement.

What are the most typical reasons someone commits suicide in Guyana?

22.4%	domestic/family problem
10%	problems with love relationship
9.5%	alcoholism
5.0%	domestic violence
4.5%	parental pressure
2.6%	bankruptcy/economic problem
3.7%	Infidelity

Other reasons include: unemployment 0.8%
 AIDS 0.5%
 Spirit/demonic possession 1.3%

8.0. Interesting facts: In Guyana

August – highest month for suicide
October – highest month for attempted suicide
Sunday – highest day for suicide and attempted suicide
Evenings 5 – 9 p.m. – highest time
86.5% attempted and successful suicide attempts are in their own home.
2.6% murdered someone else in their attempt to commit suicide
3% murder someone else before committing suicide
Suicide victims in Mahaicony who are Hindus are buried in a special part of the cemetery.

9.0. Who commits suicide in Guyana

- Male: 80%; Female: 20%
- East Indians: 76%; Africans: 11%; Mixed: 9%; Amerindians: 2.4%
- Berbice has 53% of all the suicide victims.
- 66% of suicide victims are under 35 yrs.
- Majority are illiterate.

10.0. How do people commit suicide in Guyana:

66% Drinking poison (monocrotophus, Gramazone, Malathon)
17.2% hanged themselves
8.2% Lit self afire
3.4% overdose of tablets
1.3% drown themselves
0.5% overdose of alcohol
0.3% stab self
0.3% shot self
0.3% overdoes of illegal drugs
0.3% slashed wrist
0.3% pulled out emergency tubes

11.0. Protective Factors

- presence of an important person in the individual's life

- existence of a supportive network
- good coping skills – see stress as a challenge
- interests/activities – relate to others
- need to listen to youth
- talk openly about suicide
- remain calm and proceed slowly
- be positive
- know your own limits
- clarify the permanence of death
- know your resources

12.0. What is not helpful?

- act shocked
- encourage guilt
- promise total confidentiality
- ignore the problem
- leave the youth alone
- give up hope
- panic

Reflection:

People that believe in God have always believed that all life is sacred and ultimately belongs to God.

‘God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength.’
(I Corinthians 10:13)

► Suicide has been called ‘that most selfish of acts’. Do you agree?

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