Addiction prediction

A lesson idea for ‘Big Picture: Addiction’

Will addiction still be an issue in 25 years’ time? How about 100? Could there ever be such a thing as ‘harmless’ recreational drugs? Will we all be popping pills to enhance our personality, mood and brainpower?

Learning objectives

Students will:

• consider how drugs affect the functions of the brain
• understand the impact of drug abuse on an individual and on society
• discuss a possible future preventative measure against drug addiction

Background information

Drug addiction causes social and medical problems, and often this can affect young people either directly or indirectly. ‘Big Picture: Addiction’ explores the science and the issues of all sorts of addiction (not just drug addiction) and looks at the future of addiction.

One of the scenarios is a mock-up of a tabloid newspaper story about a pharmaceutical company Cerebetter and the world’s first anti-addiction immunisation ‘Addictagone’. You can see the article on page 12 of the ‘Big Picture: Addiction’ PDF (find this at www.bigpictureeducation.com).

In this activity pupils will imagine this scenario, predict what it might mean for society, and consider how different people might feel about such a jab.

Refresher activity

Depending on what pupils already know about the nervous system and the effect of drugs on synaptic transmission, you may want to refresh their memory or ask some of the following questions:

• How do drugs affect the brain’s reward circuit?
• What neurotransmitters in the brain do drugs block the re-uptake of?
• What other changes to the brain can long term drug use cause?

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

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The Utah Addiction Center website has a lot of information about this.

**Starter activity**

Watch the video *The Line* on our website.

This video explores addiction as a sliding scale, from harmless fun to all-consuming need. It touches on the myths of addiction, why it affects some and not others, how it can affect people and the different types of addiction – physical, mental and behavioural.

Ask some of the following questions:

- Why do some people become addicted and others don’t?
- What is the difference between habit and addiction?
- What different types of addiction are there?
- What are some of the physical effects of addiction and how do these relate to what you know about the effect of drugs on synaptic transmission?

**Main activity**

Read our article *A high-tech solution?*. Ask students to consider whether they think giving people a vaccine against drug addiction is a good idea and what problems they might perceive with it.

Give them copies of the ‘Anti-drug jab row grows’ article (on page 12 of the ‘Big Picture’ PDF) to read in pairs.

Does this make them think any differently about such a vaccine?

Working in groups, pupils will discuss the anti-addiction vaccine from a range of perspectives.

One group will consider it from an addict’s point of view, one from a scientist’s point of view, one from a social worker’s point of view and one from a parent’s point of view.

Pupils will use the worksheets to prompt discussion and then feed back to the class about their ideas.

Pupils may wish to do this activity on computers in order to access articles online and to read more widely on the topic.

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Plenary

Ask students if they think that ‘Addictagone’ should be produced. Is there any more information they would need to make a decision?

This activity could also lead to discussions around how scientific discoveries are presented in the media.