

# project AWARE



## ***SMOKE RINGS* FACILITATORS GUIDE**

The 14 minute movie *Smoke Rings*, along with special features, is available free of charge online by going to the films page at <http://www.projectaware.net>

This short, dramatic film was written, directed, acted in, and filmed by teens from all over Maine in 2012 as part of Project AWARE's Summer Film Institute. The creators wanted to share the story of one teen girl struggling with marijuana dependency as a coping mechanism for the things she was dealing with on a day-to-day basis. The movie is meant to start a conversation about marijuana and the effect it can have on a young person. Marijuana is a controversial substance due to confusing laws, lack of information and facts, and religious or moral beliefs. Often times, because it's so controversial, the conversation about marijuana never takes place. The creative team behind *Smoke Rings* hope the movie will create an opportunity for both teens and adults to have a constructive discussion about marijuana use.

**Note: Substance abuse education and prevention should be a year-long effort in schools. *Smoke Rings* is intended to complement existing education efforts and not stand alone for one-day or short term events or programs.**

## SMALL GROUP VIEWINGS & DISCUSSION

It is best to view and discuss the movie in smaller groups such as a health class, homerooms, or advisory. Students are less likely to speak freely about a topic in a large group, especially when talking about an issue that teens and adults seldom talk about. The point of this movie is to help create a safe-space where students, teachers, parents and / or other community members can all have a discussion about their own knowledge, questions, or concerns about marijuana.



**\*\*\*It's important, throughout the pre and post discussions to be aware of the mood in the room. Some students may be more affected by what they see in this movie than others and it's important to recognize those students and get them access to help if needed. \*\*\***

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR EDUCATION USE IN A HIGH-SCHOOL SETTING**

1. Have each small group who is participating in the screening have a pre-discussion using some of the themes from the movie as prompts (substance abuse, role-modeling, effects of gossip)
  - Facilitator (guidance counselor, etc) and Students can all work together to set group norms (parameters: “Listen to the speaker”, “Don’t judge other’s experiences”, etc.) for their discussion, write these norms down where everyone can see.
  - Facilitator can actively model the open communication and willingness to discuss the subject; seeing a facilitator who is open to this topic will encourage students to speak out.
  - If students are hesitant to start speaking, just go around the room so everyone is given the space and time to say what they want to say about their own knowledge or questions about marijuana and its effects.
2. Show the short film “Smoke Rings” and special features to hear from teens
3. After the screening, have the students use the discussion questions provided to have a post-discussion about the effects of marijuana that can be prompted by events shown in the movie. It’s important for students to realize the cause of the behavior and not just the behavior alone.

# **SMOKE RINGS PRESENTATION (assembly-style)**

**Consider using assembly style presentation only when your goal is to reach large numbers of students at once. Pre and post small discussion groups are still strongly recommended.**

➤ **WARM UP (ice breaker) | “Stand Up If…”**

1. You stayed up past 11 (sit down)
2. You like Chocolate (sit down)
3. You’re wearing Green (sit down)
4. You think Marijuana abuse is a problem in your school, family, etc.
5. You think gossiping and rumor starting is a problem in your school
6. You think prescription pill abuse and/or partying is a problem among your peers

➤ **INTRO TO MOVIE**

➤ **SHOW “Smoke Rings” (14 minutes)**

➤ **DISCUSSION |** Roll credits and mention all the people it took to make the movie, open the room up for discussion using the following questions as prompts:

1. What part does role-modeling play in this film?
2. What part does peer-pressure play in this film?
3. How, do you think, Phoebe’s home/family dynamics affect her drug use?
4. Why do you think Phoebe chooses to use marijuana?

• **SEND STUDENTS BACK TO THE SMALL GROUPS FOR A MORE IN-DEPTH DISCUSSION**

## **SMOKE RINGS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

- Why do you think Phoebe chooses to use marijuana?
- How do you think Luke (Phoebe's older brother) & Phoebe's relationship affect both of their drug use?
- How do you think Sam's (the younger sister) opinion of her older sister changes throughout the course of the movie?
- How do you think the mom's drinking habits affect her children?
- How do you think Andrew's (the Father) work-situation affects his family?
- Do you think the relationship between Phoebe and her mom is healthy?  
Why/Why not?
- How do you think Savannah and Phoebe's relationship affects both of their drug use?
- What part does role-modeling (either by family or peers) play in this movie?
- What part does peer-pressure play in this movie?
- How do you think Olivia's (Savannah's cousin) actions effect either Phoebe or Savannah?
- Do you think Sam will follow in her older sister and/or brother's footsteps?  
Why/Why not?
- How do you think Phoebe felt when Savannah lied to her about her prescription pill abuse?
- What do you think about Savannah labeling herself and Phoebe as "potheads" and both girls being ok with that label?

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FACILITATORS

You rarely find a teen and adult, together, having a conversation about substance use (or abuse), it's just not socially acceptable. Marijuana is something that many people will come into contact with, despite the fact that non-prescription use is illegal. We should all be equipped with the tools to make informed decisions around our own relationships with substances. Smoke Rings is one of those tools. Here are some tips for facilitators of small groups viewing and discussing this movie.

- Intimidation may be a huge reason why students don't want to speak freely with adults, try and create/maintain a safe and comfortable environment so your students feel like they can approach you.
- The fear of getting in trouble is a main reason students don't speak up when having discussions about controversial issues. Know a school's policy and also laws that apply when a young person speaks about their own substance use. Let everyone know. To the maximum extent possible create a safe space where everything that is shared is held in confidence and stays within the group.
- The most important thing facilitators can do is be clear about the safe-space and remind everyone about the norms agreed upon by the group. By doing this, trust can be built within small groups and real, educational discussion can take place.
- Try and model "I" statements (i.e: "I believe many teens use marijuana as a coping mechanism.") Also try and keep the conversation general without using names or specific incidents.

# MARIJUANA STATISTICS IN RELATION TO MAINE TEENS

**36%** of High School students in Maine have admitted to trying marijuana.

**21%** of these students say they tried it before age 13.

**57%** of high school students said it would be “easy” or “very easy” for them to get marijuana.

**24%** of high school students in Maine say they have obtained (either by buying or being given) illegal substances on school property.

**43%** of high school students say there is “Little, to no” risk for someone to use marijuana regularly.

**13%** of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders in Maine have used marijuana in the past 30 days

**37%** of high school students said they thought they’d be seen as “Cool” for smoking marijuana

**25%** said they thought they’d be caught by the police if they smoked

Approximately 13,000 of the 109,000 teens in Maine have used marijuana in the past month

Mainers ages 18-25 have a higher reported marijuana use than the national average

There is no significant difference in drug use between teen males and females in Maine.

## RESOURCES AND LINKS

<http://www.projectaware.net> Project AWARE – Youth Empowerment Workshops, Reel Life Program and Summer Film Institute

<http://www.narconon.org> Drug Addiction Resource

<http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov> – The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s directory of drug and alcohol abuse treatment programs.

<http://www.drugabuse.gov> – The National Institute on Drug Abuse.

<http://www.freevibe.com> – The Office of National Drug Control Policy’s site for teens and pre-teens, to help young people understand the dangers of substance abuse and make responsible decisions with their lives.

<http://www.theantidrug.com/> resources for parents

<http://www.rxsafetymatters.org>, sponsored by PurduePharma, the manufacturer of OxyContin

<http://www.treatment4addiction.com/> Online Recovery Resource Directory

The Hills Center is committed to helping every individual find the help they need. Their Drug Rehab Guide can be located at <http://www.thehillscenter.com/drug-rehab/>

Comprehensive online directory for addiction resources <http://www.treatment-centers.net>

Top 100 Counseling Resources on the Web <http://www.mastersincounseling.org/counseling-sites.html>

### **Maine State and Local Resources:**

**Dial 2-1-1** 24 hour 7 day a week emergency and directory services to Mainers. 2-1-1 includes a statewide directory of over 5,000 resources including agency services and support groups, which can also be accessed through the website [www.211maine.org](http://www.211maine.org).

[Maine Association of Substance Abuse Programs](#), Phone: (207) 621-8118.

[State of Maine Office of Substance Abuse \(OSA\) Information & Resource Center](#) email address [osa.ircosa@maine.gov](mailto:osa.ircosa@maine.gov) Phone: 1-800-499-0027 TTY 1-800-215-7604

Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/samhs/osa/data/miyhs/>

<http://www.ctbh.org> Choose to be Healthy, a York County Healthy Maine Partnership

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