

WHERE ARE THE RISKS?

Objective: To examine risky situations and identify strategies to assist young people to keep safe

Task:

- In small groups get students to read the following true story:

Jana, Trish and Collette had been friends for many years. They were all 16 years old and enjoyed partying. They were high achievers (Trish topping her class the previous year) but still made sure that they had a big night out at least once a fortnight.

Collette was usually the one who organised the alcohol. She had an older sister who would buy it for them and although there had been some hesitation on her sister's part when she was first asked the year before, there were now no questions asked. Their drink of choice was vodka. They all had part-time jobs so finding the money was not a problem.

This night was not unusual. They were all picked up by Jana's boyfriend at Trish's house. Her parents were away for the weekend and each girl had told their parents a different story, all suggesting that they were being taken to the party by one of the other parents. They had also said that they would be staying the night at one of the homes where there were parents present, even though they were actually planning to return to Trish's home where there would be no adult supervision.

The drinking had started before they left the house. 'Power drinking' or drinking as much as you can before you leave home, was popular with their crowd. Jana also liked to drink through a straw in an effort to get intoxicated faster. By the time they got to the party they were flying and out for a great night. Although none of the girls necessarily liked the taste of vodka, they all drank it straight, and it wasn't long before they had polished off the first bottle. However it soon became obvious that not all was going to plan.

Jana had started drinking before everyone else and she had drunk substantially more. She began to feel extremely unwell and asked her friends to take her outside to be sick. The other two girls were also very intoxicated but agreed and immediately helped her to the back garden away from the view of other partygoers. She vomited for some time but it was not until she began to slip in and out of consciousness that her friends became worried. They tried to keep her awake but had no success, when they spoke to her she would not always respond and finally in a state of panic, Trish went to find her boyfriend.

When they found him they got him to agree to drive them back to Trish's home. By this time she was unable to walk and they had to carry her to the car. The trip back was frightening. The vomiting had pretty well stopped but they kept giving her water to keep her hydrated and every time they did it would be thrown back up. She also wet herself on the back seat and the smell of vomit and urine was over all of them.

Although the boyfriend wanted to stay the girls decided to look after their friend alone. As soon as they got her into the house, they stripped her down into her bra and pants and carried her into the bathroom where they put her under a cold shower. She had now been totally unconscious for at least half an hour. They slapped her face and tried a range of other things to try to bring her around, all to no avail. Trish finally went to the kitchen and grabbed some slices of bread. Desperate to try to sober their friend up, the two girls force-fed Jana tiny pieces of bread – one slice and then another. Using their fingers to push the bread further down her throat, Trish and Collette tried in vain to change her condition until finally the girl's gag reflex kicked in and she threw up the bread they had been giving her. She coughed and spluttered and showed the first sign of life for some time.

The girls, who were now in tears, picked their friend out of the shower and cleaned her up. Without even thinking of the consequences, and quite convinced that it was the right thing to do, they took the still unconscious Jana to the bedroom and put her to bed to let her sleep it off.

(Adapted from 'Teenagers, Alcohol and Drugs' by Paul Dillon)

- Once they have read the story get the students to work through the following questions:
 - 1 Students should now identify the top 5 risks that the three teenagers were involved in. Within the small group try to come to a consensus as to a ranking of these risks – i.e., what was the most risky thing the girls did? What was the next riskiest?
 - 2 Were there any ways that the girls could have reduced these five risks? What strategies could they have used to make sure they still had a fun time but it wasn't as dangerous?
 - 3 Identify three points in the story that could have resulted in serious injury or death. Discuss how the injury or death could have occurred at this point. What prevented that from occurring?
 - 4 Within your group develop three simple messages that could assist other young people from experiencing a similar situation.