

ALCOHOL AND PARTIES**SKILL DEVELOPMENT: CHALLENGING MISINFORMATION,
IDENTIFYING RISKS, DECISION-MAKING AND REFUSAL SKILLS**

Lauren and her friends were invited to a 16th birthday party. They went to a pre-party beforehand and had all had a bit to drink before they left for the party. None of them were big drinkers and they were all slightly intoxicated when they arrived quite early. Their curfew was 11.00pm and Lauren's mum had arranged to pick them up at that time.

At about 9.30pm a group of older guys showed up who were not invited and the party went downhill fast. A fight broke out on the front lawn and the host parents immediately called the police. One of the gatecrashers was an ex-boyfriend of one of Lauren's group of friends and she felt very unsafe. Even though the police were on their way Lauren and the others decided to leave. They didn't really have a plan as to what they were going to do next but it was only 10.00pm and they still had an hour left before they were due to be picked up.

They walked for a couple of blocks and finally found a small park and sat down on a bench. They could see a couple of groups of young people they didn't know hanging around, some who they thought had come from the party as well. A car drove past with some guys hanging out the windows, shouting out to them and honking their horn. It also started to become obvious that one of the groups in the park were pretty drunk.

Some of the girls began to feel uncomfortable. There were streetlights but it was still pretty dark and the drunk people seemed to be getting louder. Lauren suggested that she call her mum to collect them now and one of her friends agreed. The rest of the group, however, wanted to stay out a little longer. They were going to be picked up in a short time anyway, why bother calling her any earlier than they needed?



STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH:

SCENARIO: ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1: RISKS AND RISK REDUCTION STRATEGIES

Lauren and her friends were invited to a 16th birthday party but unfortunately not all went to plan. Teenage parties and gatherings are great places for young people to socialise and have fun but things can go wrong.

Even those students who do not attend parties will be aware of some of the risks associated with these events. As such, before the scenario is presented to students ask them to write down as many things as they can that can go wrong at a teenage party or gathering.

This can be completed in small groups on butcher paper or individually, with students writing each onto a separate post-it note and putting these onto a board. The list of risks could include the following:

- **uninvited guests or 'gatecrashers'**
- **people arriving drunk or drug-affected**
- **fights and violent behaviour**
- **noise complaints**
- **property damage**
- **neighbours becoming upset**
- **people trying to smuggle alcohol into the party**
- **police being called**

Ask the group to vote for the five most important risks that have been identified, i.e., which have already happened at parties they have been to or are likely to happen at parties they attend in the future. Once that is done, students should work in small groups to develop simple strategies that could possibly reduce the risk of each of those five problems from occurring.

Examples could include the following:

- **uninvited guests or 'gatecrashers' – make sure you have a guest list and limit the number of people invited**
- **neighbours becoming upset – ensure that you visit all of your neighbours in the days before the party to let them know what is happening and when it is happening. Also, give them your contact number so that if they get upset they can call you on the night and not the police**

STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH:

SCENARIO: ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 2: IDENTIFYING RISKS AND MAKING DECISIONS

Lauren and her friends went to a party to have a good time but things didn't go exactly to plan because of a number of decisions they made that put them all at risk.

After some general information about parties and gatherings has been discussed, ask the students to identify and list some of the issues Lauren and her friends were facing in the scenario. These would include the following:

- **they went to a pre-party and had been drinking before they arrived at the party**
- **the party had got out of control and there was a fight**
- **one of the gatecrashers was an ex-boyfriend of one of the girls and she felt unsafe**
- **they left the party without letting their parents know**
- **the group had been drinking alcohol and ended up in a park at night**
- **there were other groups of people in the park but Lauren and her friends were not sure if they knew them or not**
- **one of the other groups in the park appeared to be drunk**
- **the group of friends could not agree what they should do next**

Using a 'think pair share activity' (i.e., think to themselves, pair up and talk about it with one other person and then share together), ask students to develop three different ways this scenario could end. These will all depend on the decisions the young women make next. Write down what those important decisions could have been and what may have happened as a result of those actions. Those should be shared with the class or acted out as role-plays.

Then ask students to consider the following questions:

- **if you were at a party that was shut down early or got out of control what would you do? Why?**
- **if you were with a group of friends and had to make a decision about safety and different people had different ideas on what to do, how would you make that choice? Would you just go along with what everybody else said, look to the 'leader' of your group for advice or is there some other way you would have made your decision? What would you have done in this situation and why?**

STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH:

SCENARIO: ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 3: ALTERNATIVE TIMELINES

Even though Lauren and her friends had plans in place to ensure they got home safely, a number of incidents and decisions ended up changing the rest of their night putting them into a potentially high-risk situation.

A number of key times are provided in the scenario, e.g., curfew is 11.00pm, older boys turned up at the party at 9.30pm. Ask students to plot the scenario out on a timeline using those times and ask them to include others to fill in missing sections of the night, e.g., arrival at the pre-party, arrival at the park, etc.

Once the timeline is filled out students should identify at least four points in the evening where potentially risky decisions were made. These could include:

- **10.00pm – Lauren and her friends left the party**
- **8.00pm – the group started drinking alcohol at the pre-party**
- **10.15pm – the group sat down on the park bench**
- **9.30pm – one of the girls saw her ex-boyfriend had crashed the party and stayed**

Once completed students should create an ‘alternative timeline’ using the same times but replacing what happened in the original scenario with a ‘less risky’ or ‘safer decision’. These could include the following:

- **10.00pm**
 - o **Lauren and her friends left the party replaced with**
 - o **Lauren phoned her Mum to tell her the party was out of control. Her Mum told her to go the corner of the street and she would meet them there in 10mins. The girls left the party and were picked up by Lauren’s mother and taken back home**

STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH:

SCENARIO: ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 4: HOW DO FRIENDS MAKE GROUP DECISIONS?

Lauren and her friends have to make a decision about what they should do next. Some of them want to stay out longer and not leave the park while others want to call a parent to come and pick them up.

How do you and your friends make decisions about what you do as a group? Are decisions made in different ways depending on the situation? Look at the following situations and discuss how the following decisions would be made in your friendship group:

- **what movie or TV show you are going to watch together?**
- **where you will go on a Saturday night?**
- **what present to buy for a friend?**
- **whose parent would be asked to drive the group somewhere on a Saturday afternoon?**
- **should you try to sneak alcohol into a party?**
- **whose house you choose to have a sleepover at?**
- **should you call an ambulance because one of you has drunk too much?**
- **if you found a \$50 note on the ground as you were walking together, what should you do with it?**
- **if you were all worried about someone you knew who was using drugs and didn't know whether to tell an adult about it?**

Can you think of any decisions that you would make where it wouldn't matter what your friends thought or did, you would make them regardless? What kind of decisions are they and why are these different from others that you are willing to make with your friendship group? Use Activity Sheet 1 to explore how students believe they make their decisions and who influences their decision-making.

Discuss with the class the decision Lauren and her friends have to make. How do you think they'll make the decision and what do you think the best decision would be? Are there any things about this situation that makes the decision particularly difficult?

