

HALLUCINOGENS - LSD**SKILL DEVELOPMENT: CHALLENGING MISINFORMATION, IDENTIFYING RISKS, DECISION-MAKING, HELP-SEEKING AND REFUSAL SKILLS**

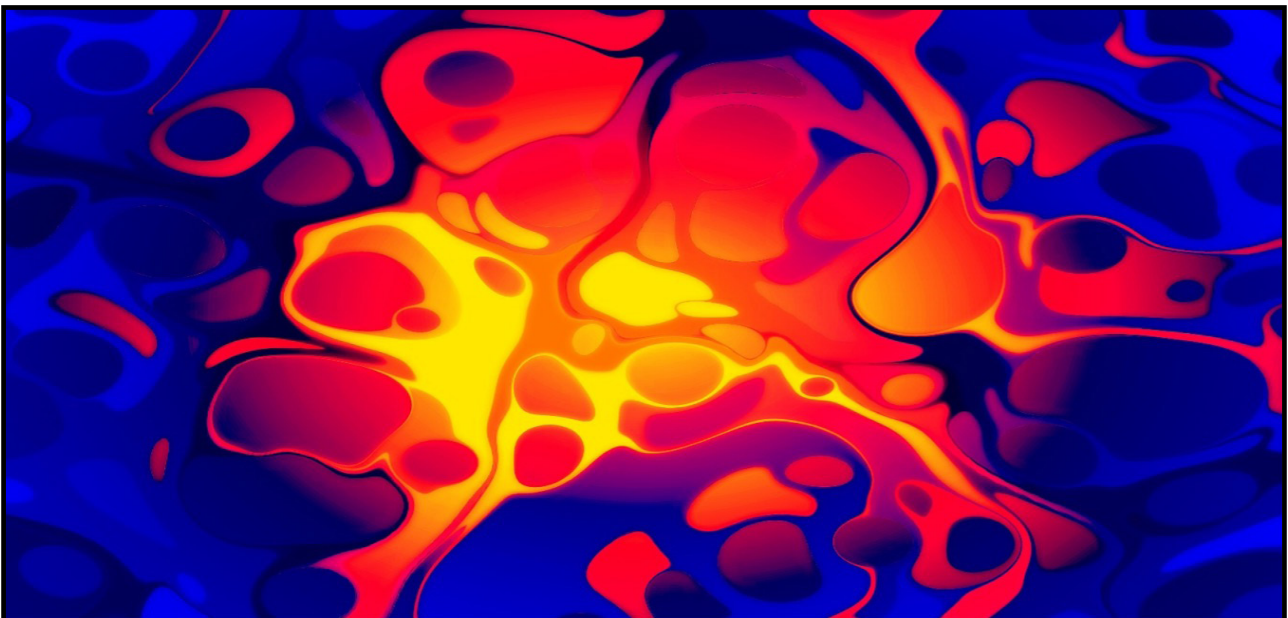
Karl was going around to a mate's house with a group of his friends to play video games. One of the boys (Jason) had managed to get three tabs of LSD from his older brother and took them along to share with the rest of the group. None of them had ever taken LSD, including Jason, and they knew very little about the drug.

Once the parents had left for the evening, Jason pulled out a tiny plastic bag with three squares of paper in it. One side of each square was brightly coloured with rows of little red cherries printed on it. These were the LSD tabs or trips that were going to be shared between the six of them. He cut the squares in half and handed them out. Karl did not feel comfortable with the idea. He told Jason that he could have his half and he would just continue gaming, stay sober and make sure everyone was okay. With that some of the guys started teasing him and saying that he was too scared to try the drug. Although he tried to ignore them and laugh it off they kept going and finally he agreed to take the trip.

The boys went back to gaming, playing on their phones or listening to music. Karl was not happy and sat by himself on his phone in the corner of the room. Over the next hour some of the boys began to feel the effects of the drug. A couple of them started to giggle, another started talking about the animation on the video game looking different and that he was feeling very warm and Jason began to find it difficult to speak properly. Karl, however, was having a very different experience. He started to feel very frightened and was convinced that he was going to die. He began to have trouble breathing and was unable to move. He tried asking the other boys to help him but found it impossible to speak. Finally, one of his mates came over to see how he was feeling and realised that something was very wrong. Karl was shaking and sweating profusely.

"He's having a 'bad trip'," said Jason. "He'll be fine, no-one has ever died from LSD."

"But we all took the same thing," replied another boy "Why's he feeling like this and none of us are?"



STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH:

SCENARIO: ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1: WHAT DO STUDENTS KNOW (OR THINK THEY KNOW)?

Jason brought some tabs of LSD to a mate's house to share with some of his friends. None of them had taken the drug before. What do you know about LSD and other hallucinogens?

It is important to firstly find out what they know about the substance, or what they think they know. Give them no more than a couple of minutes to do the following:

Write down 5 things you know about LSD and other hallucinogens

Ensure that students know that it is okay if they do not know much about e-cigarettes and vaping. If they do not feel confident sharing their ideas with others, ask them to wait quietly while others complete the short task

Of those students who do know something about the topic, teachers could use the following prompts to assist them in putting together their list - 'What is it?'; 'How is it used?'; 'Does it have other names?'; 'How dangerous is it?'

Each item should be written onto a separate post-it note and once completed, these should be put onto a board. Once all have been collected, discuss what has been written and challenge misinformation where appropriate.

Some basic information and key messages that could be discussed include the following:

- hallucinogens are a group of drugs that affect the senses, leading users to see, hear, smell, taste or feel things in a different way and result in hallucinations
- some hallucinogens are man-made or synthetic, while others are naturally-occurring
- LSD is a man-made or synthetic hallucinogen
- LSD usually comes in the form of small square pieces of paper called 'tabs' or 'trips'. They usually have some sort of colourful design on one side
- there are many naturally-occurring hallucinogens, the most well-known being magic mushrooms
- when someone uses a hallucinogen it is sometimes referred to as 'tripping'
- one of the major risks associated with the use of LSD and other hallucinogens is the user's altered perception can make them more susceptible to accidents and injury
- a 'bad trip' is a term used to describe an unpleasant and frightening experience a person has when they have used a hallucinogenic drug
- bad trips be caused by many things, including just feeling worried about taking the drug or not liking someone you are with or feeling uncomfortable with your surroundings
- deaths have occurred when users took a far more dangerous substance believing it to be LSD

STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH:

SCENARIO: ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 2: IDENTIFYING RISKS AND MAKING DECISIONS

Karl went around to a mate's house to play video games and when Jason offered him LSD he told him that he didn't want to use the drug.

After some general information about LSD and other hallucinogens has been discussed, ask the students to identify and list some of the issues Karl was facing in the scenario. These would include the following:

- **no-one at the gathering knew very much about LSD**
- **Karl was in a social setting with five of his mates**
- **the young men were alone in the house, i.e., the parents had left for the evening**
- **when Jason offered LSD to all of the guys Karl was only the one who declined**
- **Karl had to deal with a great amount of peer pressure to experiment with LSD in that social setting**
- **Karl did not feel comfortable taking LSD**
- **Karl's experience after taking LSD was completely different from all the other guys who had taken the drug**
- **everyone at the gathering was now drug-affected**
- **Karl was having a 'bad trip' and was unwell and frightened**

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 consider the following questions:

- **Karl found himself in a really difficult situation because all of his mates accepted Jason's offer to try LSD and he was the only one who declined. Why do you think this was particularly hard for Karl? Would it have been different if it was just Jason and Karl in the room? Why? Why not?**
- **Karl tried a number of ways to refuse Jason's offer and cope with the peer pressure when they wouldn't accept his decision? Which of the strategies that Karl tried to use do you think you would have used if you found yourself in a similar situation? Why did you choose that one? Discuss any other strategies that you think would have been more effective? Why do you think that may have worked better?**
- **why do you think Karl's experience with the drug was so different from that of the others? What sort of things could affect a person's experience when they use any drug?**

STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH:

SCENARIO: ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 3: WHICH REFUSAL SKILLS WORK FOR YOU?

Karl did not feel comfortable taking LSD and was happy just playing video games. He only took the drug because his friends put pressure on him and he ended up having a very scary experience.

When one or more of your friends wants you to do or try something you are not comfortable with it can sometimes be extremely difficult to say 'no'. Ask students to discuss some of the reasons why this may be the case. These may include:

- **fear of non-acceptance, i.e., being rejected by your friends**
- **being seen as afraid or frightened of taking part in an activity**
- **losing face in front of others**
- **fear of missing out**

Ask students whether they believe it is more or less difficult to refuse an offer when they are with a group of friends, rather than just with one other person? Why?

Using Activity Sheet 1, introduce the concept of 'refusal skills' and how the different strategies that a young person can use can be grouped:

- **be assertive** – being clear and firm with a refusal
- **make an excuse** – these can be pre-prepared if a person knows they are likely to face pressure or created in response to a particular situation
- **give the 'cold shoulder'** – when you need to get out of the situation entirely by walking away
- **be a 'broken record'** – repeat the same assertive response over and over if they continue to face pressure to cave by being asked the same question again
- **use delaying tactics** – putting the person off and delaying the situation until later

Working through the activity sheet, students will need to identify all the strategies that Karl used in an attempt to not take the drug. These are as follows:

- **someone else could have his half**
- **he wanted to continue gaming**
- **he would stay sober and make sure everyone else was okay**
- **he tried to ignore them when they said he was scared to try LSD**
- **he tried to laugh them off when they teased him**

Once students have completed their own sheet, they can share their ideas with a partner and/or a group and decide on the strategy they believe is the most practical and would be likely to be most effective. These should then be shared with the class and discussed.

STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH:

SCENARIO: ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 4: IF IN DOUBT, SEEK HELP – BUT FROM WHERE?

Karl was experiencing a ‘bad trip’ and was unwell and frightened. Everyone else at the gathering had taken LSD and none of them were experiencing negative effects.

Discuss with the class the range of symptoms that Karl was experiencing. These included:

- **feeling very frightened**
- **convinced that he was going to die**
- **had trouble breathing**
- **was unable to move or speak**
- **sweating profusely and was shaking**

Do they believe that Karl needed medical assistance? Ask students what they would have done if they had been in this situation? Remind them that there was no-one in the room who was not drug-affected, would that make any difference in their decision-making? Why? Why not?

In small groups ask students to identify reasons why those at the gathering may have been reluctant to seek help for Karl? These could include:

- **Jason said no-one ever died from LSD – he’ll get better eventually and doesn’t need help**
- **nobody else was having a bad experience**
- **where would they go for help? Who would they ask to help them?**
- **if they call for help, they may be scared their parents will find out**
- **if they called an ambulance, would the police be involved?**
- **if one of them suggests calling for help for Karl, what would the others think? i.e., would they lose face?**
- **they are unsure of what it is that they should actually do**
- **they had all taken an illegal drug, would they get into trouble if they sought help for Karl?**

Their ability to make good decisions is impaired and so it is vital that, at the very least, they seek help and assistance from someone who is not drug-affected.

Using Activity Sheet 2, students should identify help-seeking options that may be suitable in this particular situation. They should then list the ‘pros’ and ‘cons’ for each. Once students have completed their own sheet, they can share their ideas with a partner and/or a group and decide on which option they believe would be the most effective in achieving a healthy outcome. These should then be shared with the class and discussed.

Ensure that students understand that if they are in any doubt about the health and wellbeing of a friend that they seek help immediately. If they believe that a friend is at risk, calling 000 is always the best option. If students have identified barriers to calling 000, teachers should consider using Activity Sheet 3 and the DARTA fact sheets listed below. This will assist students to identify what happens when you call 000 and attempt to debunk some of the myths around seeking help in this way:

- [Calling 000 for a medical emergency](#)
- [Calling an ambulance: Your questions answered](#)
- [How do you look after someone who is having a bad trip?](#)

ACTIVITY SHEET 1:

WHICH REFUSAL SKILL IS WHICH?

Refusal skills are strategies that can assist us to avoid situations where we want to say no but feel pressured or embarrassed to say otherwise. These can be grouped in the following way:

- **be assertive** – being clear and firm with a refusal
- **make an excuse** – these can be pre-prepared if a person knows they are likely to face pressure or created in response to a particular situation
- **give the ‘cold shoulder’** – when you need to get out of the situation entirely by walking away
- **be a ‘broken record’** – repeat the same assertive response over and over if they continue to face pressure to cave by being asked the same question again
- **use delaying tactics** – putting the person off and delaying the situation until later

Karl used a number of refusal skills to avoid using the LSD that Jason offered him. List these below and identify which group each fits into.

KARL'S STRATEGY	REFUSAL SKILL GROUPING

Which of the above refusal skill groups did Karl choose not to use? List them below and whether you believe that they would have been more or less effective? Why do you think that to be the case?

REFUSAL SKILL GROUP NOT USED	MORE OR LESS EFFECTIVE	WHY?

Which of the refusal skills groups would you feel most comfortable using if you needed to say ‘no’ to your friends? Why?

What would you have done if you had been in Karl’s situation and did not want to experiment with LSD? Do you believe there is anything else that he could have done that would have helped him resist the peer pressure he was experiencing?

ACTIVITY SHEET 2:

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP: PROS AND CONS

Karl was experiencing a range of concerning symptoms after using LSD including:

- **feeling very frightened**
- **convinced that he was going to die**
- **had trouble breathing**
- **was unable to move or speak**
- **sweating profusely and was shaking**

A few ideas for help-seeking have been provided but who or what could Jason and the others have also asked for help in dealing with the situation? Outline the pros and cons for each.

WHO OR WHAT COULD HELP?	PROS	CONS
Call 000		
Use the internet to get advice		
Call an older brother/sister or family friend		
Contact the person who sold you the drugs		

ACTIVITY SHEET 3:

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU CALL 000?

Indicate whether you believe the following statements concerning calling 000 for medical assistance are true or false.

You have to give your name to the ambulance operator when you call	
You are not legally able to leave the scene once you've called an ambulance	
The ambulance operator will ask you for your personal details	
Your parents will always be called if you are taken to hospital	
The police will always attend an ambulance call if illicit drugs are involved	
The operator will always need to know your exact location when you call	
The paramedics will want to know your parents' contact details and will need to call them	
The information that you provide to the paramedic is strictly confidential	
The person who calls for the ambulance has to pay the bill	
You may be asked personal questions about your friend by the paramedic and your answers will be given to the police	

Using information provided on the following fact sheets find out whether you were correct:

- Calling 000 for a medical emergency
- Calling an ambulance: Your questions answered
- How do you look after someone who is having a bad trip?

Select two of the statements from above that you have now found out are false and then write down the information you have discovered that supports your finding.

Statement 1: _____

Facts: _____

Statement 2: _____

Facts: _____
