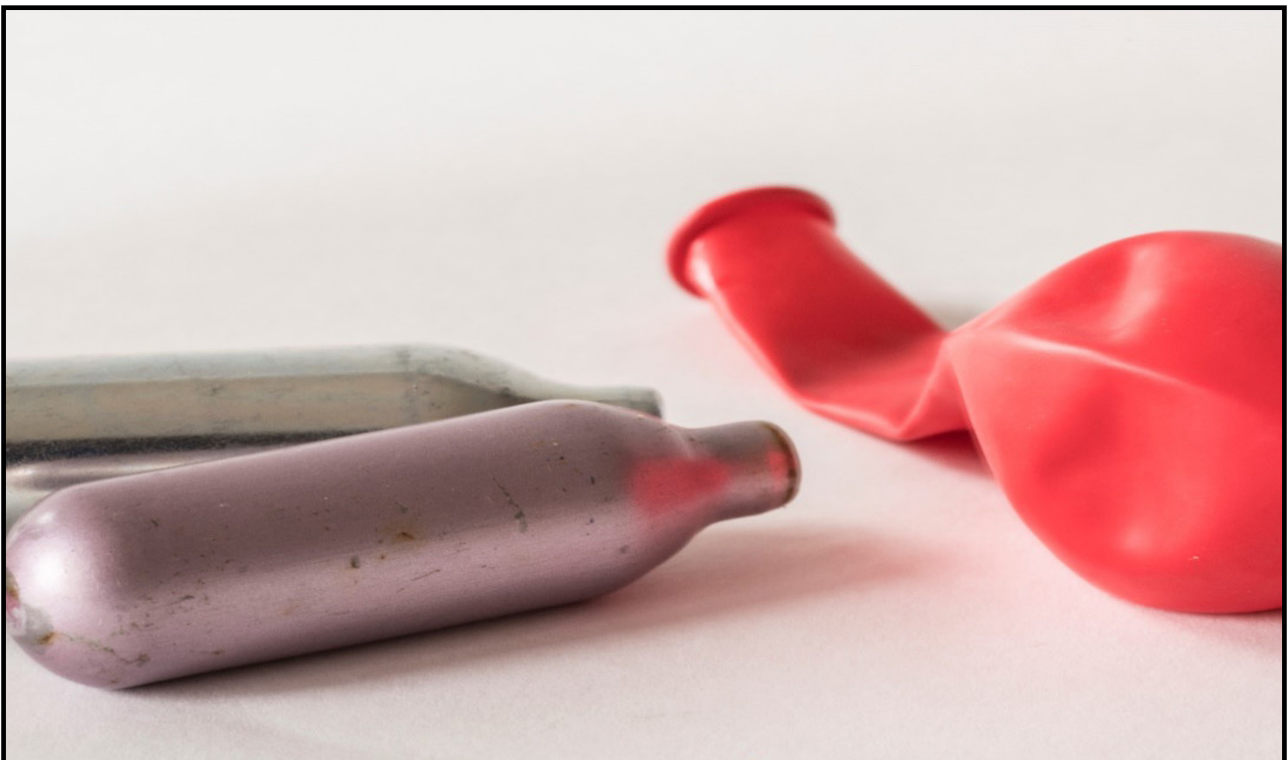


NITROUS OXIDE OR 'NANGING'**SKILL DEVELOPMENT: CHALLENGING MISINFORMATION,
IDENTIFYING RISKS, DECISION-MAKING AND REFUSAL SKILLS**

Jack was 15 and at a party with a group of friends. All of them had been drinking alcohol before they arrived at the house and a couple of the guys were pretty drunk. Matt had been drinking far more than anyone else and whispered to Jack and four others for them to go outside and have some 'nangs'. He had brought a box of them in his backpack and didn't want to share them with everybody at the party. The small group went upstairs and found a quiet place on a bedroom balcony. No-one was in the bedroom and they were pretty sure that no-one would find them.

Matt got the nangs and balloons and started to prepare one but was so drunk he dropped them a couple of times. It was pretty dark and as they fumbled around looking for them Jack knocked over a glass that one of the guys had brought with them and it smashed. They kicked the broken glass to the side and by that time, Matt had managed to fill the balloon with nitrous. The balloon was then shared around the group. After Jack had breathed in the gas from the balloon he started to feel a bit light-headed and dizzy. He felt very unsteady and fell to the ground. The others all started to laugh and asked Matt to fill another balloon. It wasn't until Jack lifted his hand and held it close to his face that he noticed he was bleeding. When he tried to tell the others what had happened they didn't take too much notice because they were too busy trying to prepare and use another nang.



STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH:

SCENARIO: ACTIVITIES

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

Matt had brought a box of ‘nangs’ to a party and invited his group of friends to share them with him. What do you know about nitrous oxide or ‘nanging’?

Give students 2-3 minutes to write down at least 5 things they know about ‘nanging’ or nitrous oxide.

Ensure that students know that it is okay if they do not know much about the issue. 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?’; ‘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:

- nitrous oxide or ‘nanging’ is not ‘safe’ – all drug use, legal, illegal or pharmaceutical, involves some degree of risk
- nitrous oxide is a colourless gas that has anaesthetic and pain-relieving properties
- it is used by dentists and other medical professionals to sedate patients who are undergoing minor medical procedures. It is also given to women during childbirth
- most young people who use nitrous oxide access the gas from whipped cream cannisters or bulbs, often referred to as ‘nangs’
- the gas is usually put into a balloon and then inhaled by users
- when inside the cannister, the gas is intensely cold, meaning if it is inhaled directly from the bulb, the user is at risk of frostbite to the mouth, nose, lips and vocal cords
- deaths are rare but they do happen and are usually caused by ‘misadventure’
- nitrous can cause a user to become less aware of pain and the environment around them
- when inhaling a gas like nitrous oxide, users can experience a lack of oxygen causing dizziness and disorientation. This can result in injuries from tripping and falling
- other deaths have been caused by hypoxia or asphyxiation
- just because nitrous oxide is given to patients by a doctor or dentist does not mean that it is ‘safe’
- if police find young people using nitrous oxide or ‘nanging’ and they believe they are at risk, although there may not be an actual charge, they do have a ‘duty of care’ to ensure their safety and could remove the product and/or call their parents or even an ambulance if necessary

STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH:

SCENARIO: ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 2: IDENTIFYING RISKS AND MAKING DECISIONS

This group of friends had made a number of decisions that had led them to a situation where Jack had injured himself and could possibly need medical attention but there was no-one around who was sober enough to assist.

After some general information about parties and gatherings has been discussed, ask the students to identify and list all the potential risks that Jack and his friends were facing in the scenario. These would include the following:

- **they had all been drinking alcohol, some of them were pretty drunk**
- **they didn't tell anybody else where they were going and what they were going to do**
- **they were on an upstairs balcony**
- **it was dark on the balcony**
- **there was broken glass on the floor**
- **the person preparing the 'nang' was very drunk**
- **'nanging' is not 'risk-free' and things can go wrong, particularly if the person has been drinking alcohol**
- **when Jack cut his hand, there was no-one who was sober in the group who would have been able to respond appropriately**

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:

What decisions could Jack have made to keep himself and others safer?

- **is there anything Jack could have done to ensure his night was 'risk-free' and that he and his friends were completely safe?**
- **what decisions could Jack have made that would have removed one or more of the most potentially dangerous risks of the evening?**
- **if you had been with Jack and his friends, what would you have done to keep yourself safer? Why?**

If you are working with students who are used to this type of higher order activity, ask them to rank these decisions in order from removing all risks, (e.g., Jack stayed at home and didn't attend the party), through to limiting some of the inherent risks (e.g., Jack should have made sure that they stayed inside and that at least one other person knew where they were and what they were doing).

STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH:

SCENARIO: ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 3: REFUSING PEER PRESSURE

When Matt asked Jack and the others to go outside and use nitrous oxide he put himself into a very risky situation. How difficult would it have been for Jack to decline the offer and stay at the party with everyone else?

Do young people sometimes experiment with alcohol and other drugs because they face pressure from their friends? Do teenagers face greater peer pressure when they are at parties and gatherings? Why/why not?

When Jack was at the party, in front of other mates, would it have been easy for him to refuse Matt's offer? Discuss some of the things that could influence Jack's decision to 'give in' and follow the others. Some of the answers could 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**

If Jack had not wanted to use nangs with the others and he had actually succumbed to peer pressure, there are a number of strategies that he could have used to assist him to refuse Matt's offer. These are called 'refusal skills' and 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

Using Activity Sheet 1 students should provide four different ways Jack could have avoided the risky situation he found himself when he accepted Matt's invitation to go nanging on the balcony. Students should identify which type of refusal skill they are using (e.g., making an excuse) and then provide a brief outline and/or illustration explaining what Jack said and did in response to Matt's offer.

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.

ACTIVITY SHEET 1:

GETTING OUT OF A SITUATION

When Matt asked Jack to join him and the others to leave the rest of the party and go outside to use nitrous oxide ('nangs'), what could he have said or done to refuse the offer and avoid the risky situation? Decide on four different options and then identify what particular type of 'refusal skill' each involves and provide a brief outline of what Jack would say and or do in each case.

WHAT COULD JACK HAVE SAID AND OR DONE
TO AVOID THE RISKY SITUATION?

TYPE OF REFUSAL SKILL USED

TYPE OF REFUSAL SKILL USED

TYPE OF REFUSAL SKILL USED

TYPE OF REFUSAL SKILL USED
