



www.renzcenter.org

Renz Addiction Counseling Center
One American Way, Elgin, IL 60120
847.742.3545

Project Towards No Drug Abuse (TND) continues at Elgin and Larkin High Schools. This past month, freshman students have discussed chemical dependency, participated in a role play exercise and examined alternative ways to cope with stress.

Chemical dependency is the topic of the fourth session in the 12 session program. The lesson begins with a discussion of the stages of chemical dependency and the effects on various aspects of life, including the family.

1) Experimentation-During this stage, the user feels in control of his or her drug use and only uses the drug occasionally.
2) Regular use-The user becomes a frequent drug user, often developing habits as to when and where he or she uses the drug. Tolerance may begin to develop, higher or more frequent doses may be needed to get the same reaction that was originally achieved.
3) Daily use and preoccupation-The user develops a pattern of using the substance every day, often multiple times a day. He or she becomes so preoccupied with the drug that school, work, and family life all suffer.
4) Chemical dependency-The user completely loses control of his or her drug use. He or she experiences significant health damage, psychological damage, or damage to relationships but still cannot give up the drug despite the harm it causes. People differ in how likely they are to become addicted to alcohol or drugs. While family history is sometimes a predictor, one never knows who will become addicted to a drug or how fast.

When a family member has a chemical dependency their disease has negative effects for not only that person, but for everyone living in the household. Negative effects may include loss of employment and income for the family, argumentative behavior, neglectful of family responsibilities, and many others. Substance abuse affects the whole family and all our relationships. The only solution is to get professional help. Students are made aware of assistance at their school and in the community for those affected by drug abuse.

The next session, was designed to provide students with a greater understanding of the negative consequences of alcohol and drug abuse. Students were asked to role-play as if they were at a "Talk Show". Some students volunteered to act as guests who have been affected by drug abuse in a variety of ways, the teacher played the host, and the others were audience members. This activity helped to review the information learned in the previous session in a fun and entertaining way.

The 6th session focused on managing stress and provided coping alternatives to drug abuse, which is often used proactively or reactively to deal with stress. The importance of health as a value for a happy life was also emphasized. Students examined sources of stress in their lives, and reviewed strategies for dealing with stress (for example, physical activity, relaxation, seeking social support, problem solving). Each student completed a "Quality of Life Questionnaire" which assists them in identifying their goals in life and the value they place on health. Stress is a natural part of life that we encounter as we try to achieve our goals, improve our lives, and live our dreams. It is important to learn how to accept and deal with stress effectively to support our physical and mental health. The better we feel, the more likely we are to achieve our goals. Drug abuse limits our ability to deal with stress and affects the quality of our lives and our ability to achieve our goals.

For information related to the Project Towards No Drug Abuse call Ricardo Gasca, Prevention Coordinator, at 847-742-3545 x264.