Class Activities for **Chapter 10: Substance Use and Addiction**

**Class activity #1**

More and more states are legalizing marijuana for medical use, and even recreational use. While there is clear data to support the usefulness of marijuana in some medical treatments, public support remains divided. Although there is also a split on recreational marijuana use, it seems many people (and some communities) have more positive opinions about marijuana use than tobacco use.

Ask your class who is in favor of legalizing marijuana for recreational use (or keeping it legal, if you are in a state where it is already legalized) and who is in favor of keeping it illegal (or returning it to illegal status). If there is a fairly even split, have the class separate into groups based on that split. If not, ask people who are more “on the fence” to join the lesser-populated side.

Have each group spend some time coming up with a list of arguments in favor of their stance. When possible, tell them to back up their points with research or data—they may use smart phones or computers (if wi-fi is accessible) to find the necessary information. Instruct them to anticipate their opponents’ points and prepare potential rebuttals for those points in advance. Then encourage a respectful debate on the topic. Remember, declaring a winner is not the point; both sides should strive to understand and respect the point of view of the opposing side.

**Class activity #2**

Break the class into groups and give them the following handout. After they’ve come up with their nation’s laws, have each group share with the class. Encourage each group to field questions about their laws from other groups. Ask the class which nation they would most like to inhabit.

Our country, despite the War on Drugs, has not done a particularly good job of reducing drug use or discouraging it through the establishment of legal consequences. We have a higher percentage of our population in prison than any other industrialized country, and a sizable percentage of our prison population is incarcerated for drug-related offenses. Our recidivism rate is embarrassingly high as well, leading one to believe the correctional system is not "correcting" anything.   
  
Imagine that you are the leader of a governmental body of a new sovereign nation. (Perhaps a tropical island?) What laws and regulations would you establish to deal with drugs (including alcohol and tobacco) and crimes committed while under the influence? How would you deal with drug abuse, misuse, and dependence problems? Would there be a minimum age for drug use? If so, what would the penalties be for underage use or dealing to underage individuals? What are some problems that might come up?   
  
Creativity is encouraged! Remember, this is your own sovereign nation-- you are not under the constraints of U.S. law.

**Class activity #3**

Split your class into groups of 4-5 and provide them with the following information. Have the groups come up with plans, and when they’re done, discuss each group’s plan as a full class. Ask the class to question each other respectfully when they feel it is necessary, and then decide which plan they believe would have the best results.

We know that America's college students are notorious for binge drinking. This isn't as much of a problem in other countries. Other cultures' norms involve teenagers drinking as part of regular family functions. Some have suggested that if alcohol use were normalized for American teenagers, there would be less attraction to it. Others have pointed out that American culture is not the same as those cultures, and therefore, making such a change would be unlikely to create the same effects.

To illustrate the point, France, a country where some underage drinking is tolerated and wine tends to be the drink of choice, has the highest rate of alcoholism in the world. Conversely, Italy has some socially sanctioned underage drinking, but lower rates of alcoholism, perhaps because in Italy drunkenness is socially taboo for any age. You have also read in your textbook that parental rules against drug use are a protective factor, which contradicts the myth that teens use simply because it is prohibited.

Clearly, this is a complicated issue. There are no easy answers.

If the goal is to reduce teenage drinking by 50% and raise the average age of first use from 11 (approximately where it is now) to 14, how would you do it? What changes would need to take place in American society? Schools? Families? The media? Give specific instructions.