**Discussion Guide**

**“When You Say NO to Alcohol, What Are You Saying YES to?”**

**About the Video**  
The video, "**When you say NO to Alcohol, what are you saying YES to?**" profiles five Maine students, who discuss their interests as well as their reasons for choosing not to drink. It captures each student engaging in activities that they feel passionate about. The overarching message of the video is that despite some assumptions, many students choose not to drink.   
  
**The target audience for this seven minute video is grades seven through nine.** Educators and prevention providers may find other audiences receptive to this message as well. The information provided below will aid facilitators in opening a discussion on this topic.

**Planning for a good discussion:**

**Select video segments:** Carefully selected video segments can be an effective way to open up a discussion on a sensitive subject. The video can be used to encourage participants to discuss their own issues and concerns surrounding alcohol use and to explore potential solutions and action steps. Alcohol issues can be very personal and emotionally charged, so it is important to consider the potential impact on participants both during and after the discussion. Be prepared with a support and/or referral plan should one or more participants express a need for help or intervention.

**Comfortable Participation:** Discussion participants will vary greatly in their desire to honestly discuss controversial or difficult issues. Each person must have the freedom to participate at his or her own level of comfort. Emotions about alcohol issues may run the gamut from apathy to empathy to fear, anger, and grief. While it is critical to recognize the validity of all emotional reactions and insights, a classroom discussion is not, and should not be, a group counseling session or support group. It is possible to have a great discussion on alcohol issues without incorporating participants’ personal experiences, but it takes thoughtful planning and facilitation. In most group discussions involving youth, personal disclosure about alcohol use should be avoided. Some suggestions for a productive discussion include:

* When starting the discussion, ask people not to share personal stories. The purpose of the discussion is not to have participants share their individual experiences but to examine the larger issues around how young people can make decisions about alcohol use.
* Prepare specific questions that keep the discussion focused on the larger social questions, rather than on participants’ personal experiences.
* Incorporate additional written materials (i.e. newspaper articles, survey results, legislation, research studies, magazine advertisements, etc.) from which examples and details can be drawn to enhance the discussion.

**One more word of caution:**

Many people overestimate the frequency and amount the “typical” teenager drinks. In spite of common misperceptions that “everybody does it,” the 2011 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey revealed most students are not regularly using alcohol. Of the students in grades 7-8 who participated in the survey, 94% of students did not drink alcohol in the past month. Even among high school students, the majority (72%) had not used any alcohol at all in the month before the survey. It is crucial in any discussion on underage drinking issues, that we are careful not to contribute to the myth that everybody drinks. It is important to help youth who are not using alcohol see they are “the norm” and that the majority of their peers are making the same healthy choices, even though they might often get a different impression from the media and other sources.

**Suggested Discussion Questions:**

1. What are the different reasons the youth in the video provide for their choices not to drink?

2. What messages do youth typically get about alcohol from television shows, ads, movies and magazines? Are these messages accurate? How is this video different from the typical television ad?

3. If you drank alcohol, what do you think are the chances that something bad would happen to you?

4. Some people insist they would never drink and drive, but then end up doing so at some point. Why do you think they change their mind?

5. The youth in this video seem to have made some pretty clear choices about drinking. What do you think their friends think about their choices?

6. Do older siblings have an influence on younger siblings’ choices? Do they have a responsibility to be a positive role model?

7. Why do you think adults warn young people not to drink alcohol? And why do you think young people sometimes ignore these warnings?

8. If you had the opportunity to create a public service announcement with the goal of reducing underage drinking:

a. what target audience would you want to reach?

b. what message would you want to get to that target audience?

c. what would you want the target audience to do/think differently as a result of seeing your public service announcement?

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