



CHAPTER 5

STREET YOUTH



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CHAPTER 5: STREET YOUTH (5:42)

Reflections on Practice:

- Entrenchment (1:15)
- Harm Reduction (3:14)

+Topics:

- Street Drugs 101 (34:58)

“[Adolescents] may use for their whole lifetime or for a period of time, and either way I would like them to be as healthy as possible while they are doing that.”

Elaine Jones, Street Nurse



CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter 5: *Street Youth* examines outreach nursing and street youth. It illustrates outreach nurses' efforts to support youth in avoiding long-term use or addiction (entrenchment). It also explores the concepts, strengths, challenges and consequences of harm reduction strategies when working with street youth.

“It doesn’t work to shake your finger at them. Speaking like a parent won’t help us develop a relationship.”

Elaine Jones, Street Nurse

SUMMARY OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To discuss issues and challenges faced by outreach nurses when working with youth who use drugs.
2. To explore nursing communication strategies with youth who use drugs.
3. To understand why adolescents may use drugs.
4. To understand the principles of harm reduction and the benefits and challenges of using harm reduction strategies when working with youth.

BACKGROUND

Adolescence can be a vulnerable time. For many young people it is a period of physical awkwardness, emotional anxiety and social isolation. In The Street Lifestyle Study, released by Health Canada in 1997, researchers asked street youth if life at home affected their decision to go to the street. Nearly 80 per cent said it had. Many said they felt no bond with their school and found the school environment regimented and controlling. Street life, on the other hand, with its instant “family” of “brothers and sisters,” met youths’ need for security and acceptance while allowing open-ended experimentation with a variety of traditionally forbidden acts and substances. These

factors make youth particularly susceptible, not only to experimenting with drugs, but also to becoming entrenched in a street-based, drug-using lifestyle. Once the entrenchment process has set in, youth find it hard to break away from the street environment and lifestyle.

(Health Canada, 1997)

LEARNING ACTIVITY 1 FOR CHAPTER 5: STREET YOUTH

Objective

To discuss issues and challenges faced by outreach nurses when working with youth who use drugs.

1. Distribute the *Entrenchment* handout on page 60.
2. Ask participants to circle a response for each statement.
3. Ask them to briefly note the reasons for their responses.
4. Invite participants to describe and explain their responses.
5. Identify the challenges that outreach nursing poses with regards to balancing nursing and social work.

5

HANDOUT 5.1

ENTRENCHMENT

ANSWERS	REASONS FOR MY CHOICES
<p>Nurses have no business telling youth who use drugs how to live their lives.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>strongly disagree strongly agree</p>	
<p>Nurses have a responsibility to inform adolescents of the consequences of long-term drug use.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>strongly disagree strongly agree</p>	
<p>Nurses should liaise with other community workers to help adolescents manage, and if possible, end their drug use.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>strongly disagree strongly agree</p>	
<p>Nurses must leave their personal moralities at home and be completely non-judgmental when working with youth who use drugs.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>strongly disagree strongly agree</p>	
<p>Nurses must do all they can to reduce the harm drug use causes to youth and the greater community.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>strongly disagree strongly agree</p>	
<p>Nurses may enable drug use in youth by using a harm reduction approach.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>strongly disagree strongly agree</p>	



LEARNING ACTIVITY 2 FOR CHAPTER 5: STREET YOUTH

Objective

To explore nursing communication strategies with youth who use drugs.

Before Viewing

1. Divide participants into groups of three.
2. Ask one to role-play Rose, a 16-year-old youth. Rose has never been to Vancouver before and is on her own.
3. Ask another person to role-play an outreach nurse.
4. Ask the third person to act as an observer.
5. Ask Rose to describe the circumstances that caused her to leave home, her journey to Vancouver, and her first night there.
6. Ask the nurses to discover the anxieties Rose is feeling upon her arrival in Vancouver.
7. Ask the observer to give feedback on the interaction between Rose and the nurse.

During Viewing

View Chapter 5: *Street Youth* (5:42)

Ask participants to note how the nurse, Elaine Jones, communicates with Rose and offers support.

After Viewing

Discuss how Rose might feel during her conversations with Elaine.

Consider how much Rose might trust Elaine if she needed advice about drugs or another health concern.

Ask all participants to discuss their experience.

5

CHAPTER 5

REFLECTIONS ON PRACTICE ENTRENCHMENT



“Drugs may solve some of their pain and some of their sadness. But it can’t solve their problems.”

Elaine Jones, Street Nurse

CHAPTER 5: STREET YOUTH (5:42)

Reflections on Practice:

Entrenchment (1:15)

Harm Reduction (3:14)

+Topics:

Street Drugs 101 (34:58)

LEARNING ACTIVITY 1 FOR ENTRENCHMENT

Objective

To understand why adolescents might use drugs.

Before Viewing

Ask participants: What are some possible reasons why adolescents use drugs?

The *Why Adolescents Use Drugs* handout on page 63 might help participants organize and focus their ideas.

During Viewing

View *Entrenchment* (1:15)

After Viewing

Ask participants:

- What ideas about entrenchment are presented in the video?

Add the ideas to the chart.

Consider the roles outreach nurses and other community workers might play in counteracting entrenchment.

- What other strategies exist to address entrenchment of street youth?
- What evidence exists regarding the efficacy of these strategies?

WHY ADOLESCENTS USE DRUGS

Biological	
Family	
Social	
Economic	
Relationships/ success at school	

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CHAPTER 5

REFLECTIONS ON PRACTICE HARM REDUCTION



CHAPTER 5: STREET YOUTH (5:42)

Reflections on Practice:

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+Topics:

Street Drugs 101 (34:58)

Overview

In Chapter 5: *Street Youth*, the street nurse, Elaine Jones, is seen handing out coloured condoms labelled with amusing names to a group of street youth. These youth are sexually active. By handing out condoms, Elaine is attempting to prevent the transmission of sexually transmitted infections. She is practicing harm reduction.

Background

Harm reduction principles can also be applied to drug use. A harm reduction initiative is client-centred. It aims to minimize the adverse medical, social, public health and economic consequences of illicit drug use and high-risk behaviour, while simultaneously recognizing that the behaviour may continue. Its essence is an open, respectful and non-judgmental approach that accepts people

for who they are and where they are in their lives. Concerns are frequently raised when using a harm reduction approach in working with youth, as to whether this approach may enable drug use. Ultimately, harm reduction attempts to improve the quality of life of people who use drugs by giving them an opportunity to develop trusting, therapeutic relationships with members of the health care team. (Harm Reduction Coalition at <www.harmreduction.org>) Very often this relationship with a health provider, initiated by a harm reduction intervention can be a key to a youth entering a detoxification or treatment program.

(Wood E, Tyndall M, Zhang R, 2006)



LEARNING ACTIVITY 1 FOR HARM REDUCTION

Objective

To understand the principles of harm reduction and the benefits and challenges of using harm reduction strategies when working with youth.

Before Viewing

Ask participants to suggest a definition for harm reduction.

Health professionals utilizing harm reduction measures are often criticized for enabling drug use. Discuss.

What is the evidence that harm reduction enables drug use in adults? In youth?

How is the practice of harm reduction different when you are working with youth or adults?

Explore whether harm reduction strategies are appropriate for youth.

List Elaine's use of harm reduction strategies in Chapter 5: *Street Youth*.

During Viewing

View *Harm Reduction* (3:14)

After Viewing

Ask participants the following questions:

- How have you used harm reduction principles in your nursing practice?
- What ethical/moral challenges would you face working with youth who use drugs?
- How do these ethical/moral challenges interface with nursing practice?
- What are the benefits of using harm reduction strategies with youth?
- What are the potential consequences of using harm reduction strategies with youth?
- Several Canadian provinces have launched alternative strategies (mandatory detention for counselling and detox) for youth who use drugs. What are the benefits and drawbacks of these and other alternative approaches?
- What is the evidence regarding the effectiveness of different strategies for addressing youth drug use?
- What is the Canadian experience with addressing youth drug use across the country?

STREET DRUGS 101

+Topics: *Street Drugs 101* is included in the Chapter 5 DVD menu.

The +Topics: *Street Drugs 101* Learning Activity is on page 21.