

# INTOXICATION

**Before the meeting** copy each of the directions below on a separate slip of paper. Add others if you wish. Prepare one slip per group member. Place the slips in a basket.

*Directions:* talk too loud; talk slowly and deliberately; slur your speech; blur your vision by squinting; stare blankly at people; tell each person that he or she is your best friend; describe things around you as more intense; pretend to be a bird; act depressed; be afraid; shake; stumble; convulse; spin in a circle; cry; sing nonsense; stand too close to people; fall asleep; talk about yourself; etc.

In the meeting, invite each group member to draw one slip from the basket. Give these instructions: Each slip has an instruction written on it. Keep your instruction secret. For the next 5 minutes, interact with the other people in the room following the instruction written on your slip.

Observe what happens, and then discuss:

- What was happening? What do you think this activity is trying to illustrate?
- What behaviors did you find most annoying? most hurtful? most frustrating?
- Imagine yourself in a store or a classroom when someone exhibits these behaviors. How do people respond? How do you respond?
- When have you witnessed these behaviors as a result of someone else's drug or alcohol use?
- When have you experienced these symptoms because of your own drug or alcohol use?

## DRUGS AND DeSPAIr

- # 1 Alcohol is the most widely used drug in the world.
- # 2 Abusing drugs can affect a person's breathing and cause confused thinking, nervousness, fear, organ damage, nausea and seizures.
- # 3 Withdrawing from drugs causes sweating, shaking, chills, sickness, stomach pain and leg cramps.
- # 4 You can quickly become addicted to alcohol and other drugs.
- # 5 Using alcohol or other drugs for pleasure or to fit in, relax or escape problems can dull thinking, harm the body and allow a person to make bad decisions. Anybody can become an addict.

## DRUGS: HOOKeD

Place a bowl of Skittles® or M&Ms® on the table. Invite volunteers to come forward, one at a time, to take one candy from the bowl. When all who wish to come forward have done so, invite anyone who would like one more candy to come forward for one additional candy.

Observe members' responses as they come forward. Do some take more than one? Are some trying to sneak more? What comments do they make about the candies? about only being allowed to take one of the candies?

Allow people to come forward a third time for just one more of the candies, then discuss:

- Who would really like to come up and take more Skittles®?
- Why are these candies so "addictive"? What do we mean when we say that?
- What about Skittles® is so appealing? the flavor? texture? color? size?
- Describe your craving for Skittles®.
- Now imagine that you are addicted to these candies. You've got to have them. What is the sordid end of your obsession with Skittles®?

Record group members' answers to this final question on **chalkboard or newsprint**. Encourage extreme, creative and humorous answers; for example:

- You salivate when you hear the word Skittles®.
- You're caught stealing money from your mother's wallet to support your habit.
- Your friends start avoiding you because all you talk about is this candy and they don't like your Skittles® breath.
- Your hair falls out because you eat these candies constantly and no longer eat healthy foods.

**Note:** Definitions of addiction vary. These activities operate with this definition: *Addiction is the use of a substance, belief or behavior to avoid responsibility and anesthetize against painful feelings.* Write this definition on **chalkboard or newsprint**. In these activities, group members will be encouraged to think of addiction broadly, identifying not only obvious addictions, like those to alcohol, drugs or tobacco, but also more subtle forms of addiction, like those to religious beliefs or behaviors, food, sex, other people or exercise.