



SOBER AND ALERT

AN EDGE ISSUE NIGHT ON DRUGS AND
ALCOHOL

EDGE NIGHT OUTLINE

CATECHISM

1806

1809

2280 - 2291

SCRIPTURE

Tobit 4:15

Proverbs 20:1

Luke 21:34

Romans 2:19

Romans 13:1 -7

Romans 13:12 -14

1 Thessalonians 5:8

Galatians 5:16 -26

Ephesians 5:8

Ephesians 5:11

Ephesians 6:12

1 Peter 4:3

1 Peter 5:6 -9

KEY CONCEPTS

GOAL OF THIS NIGHT

The goal of this Edge Night is to make the middle school youth aware of the dangers of drugs and alcohol and also our Christian responsibility as a middle school youth to resist the temptation to drink or do drugs.

ABOUT THIS NIGHT

We often hear that the pressures that youth face today seem more difficult than they were in recent decades. Some psychologists and sociologists agree that there has been an age compression, meaning that what a sophomore or junior in high school faced and had to deal with is now what many middle school youth are facing. This includes the use of drugs and alcohol. Youth see many references and uses of drugs and alcohol in television shows, movies, music videos, video games, and the music they listen to. This night will discuss the dangers of drugs and alcohol, but also discuss with the youth the spiritual reasons we are called to be sober. This is a topic that the youth may think they know everything about because they hear about it in school. It is important to keep the focus of the night not just on the dangers of drugs and alcohol, but our Christian responsibility to be obedient to the laws of our land and the importance of staying sober so we can witness to others.

The Edge Night begins with a fun icebreaker that will certainly get the youth dizzy. The youth will compete in a “dizzy bat relay” and discuss what it felt like to be dizzy and try to accomplish a task. The Proclaim will break open that we are called to “sober and alert” so that we can serve the Lord. During small groups, the youth will further examine the issue of alcohol by reading a blog written by Mark Hart. Be ready to answer some tough questions. The night will conclude with the youth making a commitment to stay “sober and alert” and to develop a deeper relationship with Jesus.

PARENTAL NOTICE

Tonight was discussed the issue of alcohol and/or drugs during our Edge session. Today’s youth are lured into drinking and drugs through the current culture that expresses the idea that if it feels right, do it. Middle school youth desire to be grown up and feel drinking/drugs will provide them the feelings of being grown up and mature. Some youth will drink because they are trying to escape from their emotions and problems they are facing. Whatever the reason, statistics show that youth who begin drinking in middle school have a greater risk of becoming an alcoholic by the time they are 18 years old. Alcohol and drugs also damage their brains and physical development during this time of changes and growth. Although the Bible does not say that drinking is a sin, tonight we examined Scripture verses about the dangers of underage drinking and the importance of staying sober and alert. Talk with your child about his/her feelings about drinking. Also share with your child your families guidelines/rule and expectations when it comes to alcohol and drugs. Here are some questions for the ride home:

1. What did you learn tonight about underage drinking and drug use?
2. How can we as a family support you to resist temptations to drink or use drugs?
3. Have you ever felt your problems were so bad that you wanted to drink or use drugs?

ENVIRONMENT

Create an environment where everything seems upside down. Hang posters upside down, turn some chairs on their backs, and possibly start the Edge Night from another part of the room than the youth are used to in order to create a feeling of being off balance. You could even have the Core Team wear tie-dyed funky shirts to add to the dizziness.

GATHER

OPENING MUSIC

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See song suggestions in Media Suggestions sidebar.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

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Welcome and introduce new youth.

Recognize and celebrate any youth or Core celebrating a birthday by singing “Happy Birthday.”

Present a brief overview of the session.

OPENING PRAYER

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This prayer should be based on the overview of the session. Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance and understanding about the theme/topic for the night.

DIZZY BAT RELAY

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Have each small group get in a single file line and sit down at one end of the meeting room. Explain that the first person from each team will run to the middle of the room and pick up a bat. The bat will be placed with either end on the ground before the youth places his/her forehead on the other end of the bat sticking up in the air. The youth must keep his/her head on the bat and the bat on the ground and spin around five times. The dizzy youth will then run back to his/her small group and tag the next person in line. The first group to have all small group members complete the crazy bat spin is the winner. Offer a prize to the winning group. Be sure to have Core Members help the youth not to run into walls or any other obstacle.

PROCLAIM

SCRIPTURE PROCLAMATION

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1 Peter 5:6-9

PROCLAIM TALK

How many of you are still a little bit dizzy from our dizzy bat relay? It is difficult to get things done when we are dizzy, right? A few spins around the bat and most of us could no longer walk in a straight line. No matter how hard we try, we are dazed and confused and unable to function the way we are supposed to function. This gives us some insight into what it is like when we allow ourselves to be “dizzied” by drugs and alcohol. When you choose to use drugs or alcohol, it becomes difficult (nearly impossible) to make good decisions and impairs your judgment. Think about the spinning: when you were done, you were trying so hard to focus on your group, but you could not make your body do what you wanted it to do. That is the same effect that drugs and alcohol have on us.

What We've Heard

Many of you could probably give a pretty good talk about the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol. Maybe you still had the D.A.R.E. program at your school or your school participates in the “Red Ribbon Week” to promote drugs and alcohol awareness. You may have heard some scary statistics and real-life stories about youth your age who have used drugs and/or alcohol and been in trouble. Hearing those stories helps us to understand how truly dangerous these drugs and alcohol can be for us. We even hear about celebrities (movie stars, actors/actresses, singers) who have ruined their careers by excessive use of drugs and/or alcohol. (If there have been any recent stories in the news from the past year, include those examples here very briefly. Explain how the person has damaged his/her career and credibility.)

Why Can't I?

Why do youth your age want to drink? Somewhere along the way, we have watched enough television, seen it in a movie, or maybe older siblings who drink and it looks fun. Television commercials also make us believe that if you drink you will have a good time and probably be skinny and good looking. We buy into the lie that in order to have a good time, we have to have drink alcohol or do drugs. What we never see are the consequences of drinking/using drugs. Most television shows might make silly jokes about being hung over the next morning, but that is the extent of the consequences that they will show. They do not show how truly painful it is to use alcohol and drugs. The media want us to believe it all just a fun party. The truth is, when the party wears off, the

consequences are still there. Alcohol and drugs have a much more damaging effect on your body at your age. You may or may not want to admit it, but you are in a major stage of development at your age. Not only is your body changing, but also your brain is developing in a unique way. Drugs and alcohol cause severe damage to the brain as well as inhibit your development.

Some youth may say they drink because they want to feel more adult. There is a certain desire to want to be more grown up and to participate in things we see adults doing or even older teenagers. It can drive us crazy to feel “stuck” in middle school youth and not allowed to do anything we think is cool. If we believe that God has a plan for our lives (Jeremiah 29:11), then we must understand that He has desires us to be a middle school youth. There will be a time when you will be an adult. However, to be more mature means to say “No” now so you can follow God’s plan for your life. That can be a tough thing to hear, but God is not making you be in middle school to punish you, but rather to help you develop the strength and courage to resist temptation.

Another reason youth say that they drink is because they want to escape something. We sometimes have this idea that if we drink, it will make the pain we feel about something in our lives go away. Alcohol and drugs do not solve our problems – in fact, they make them worse. If you are having problems that you feel you need to escape from by using drugs or alcohol, seek out an adult who can help you. God desires you to live in His peace, not in the false promises the world says that alcohol and/or drugs will bring you. You may experience a very temporary sense that your problems have disappeared, but as you sober up, you quickly realize your problems are still there and things are not better, but worse. If we want true peace, we have to seek out those who can help us and dive deeper into our relationship with Christ.

Stay Sober and Alert

Our Scripture Proclamation tonight gives a good deal of food for thought. (Re-read the Scripture Proclamation for the night.) Stay sober and alert so that you can grow in your relationship with Christ. Stay sober and alert so that you can be a witness to your friends. Stay sober and alert so you can live out your baptismal call of leading other people to Christ. If you have struggled with using drugs or alcohol, seek out help from your parents, our youth minister, a counselor, or another adult that you trust. Also, seek out Jesus in the Sacrament of Reconciliation so you can receive the grace you need to make changes in your life.

If you feel tempted, find a group of friends that can support you. Also, be honest with your parents about the temptations. You are probably thinking there is no way you could talk about this with your parents. Having your parents on your side is an important key in helping you to stand firm in your decision to stay sober and alert.

Lastly, at your Baptism, you were given the mission to lead others to Christ. You have the courage to resist temptation. If you are worried about your friends, know that God has given you the strength to overcome that temptation as well. God never asks anything of us that he will not give us the strength to overcome. Maybe you can be the one that stands up and encourages your friends not to drink or do drugs. You may think you are the only one who does not want to drink/party, but your friends feel the same way. You do not have to do this alone. We are here as a community to support you.

TEEN WITNESS

Have one of your teen Core Members share his/her experiences with resisting alcohol and/or drugs. Be careful with this witness. It is meant for a teen to share the difficulty of resisting the temptation and how he/she has found strength in friendships and his/her church youth group/community. This witness is not about having a teen share about his/her personal addictions. For this Edge Night, keep the focus on resisting temptation. Be sure that the teen gives his/her witness to the youth minister prior to the night to ensure proper content and timing.

BREAK

SMALL GROUP PRAYER

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As your small group begins, say a prayer for the group and the activities for that session. In particular, pray for everyone's guardian angels to join in the discussion.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

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In your small group discuss the following questions:

1. How was your week? What was the high point and low point of your week?
2. What are some reasons you think middle school youth use for wanting to drink or do drugs?
3. Why is it dangerous for youth your age to drink or do drugs?
4. How can you provide support for your friends who are tempted to drink or do drugs?
5. If you have not given in to the temptation to drink/do drugs, how have you remained strong?
6. Why is it important to have good friends who will support you?

FRIDAY NIGHT BRAINSTORMING

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One of the excuses youth use for why they drink is because that is the only thing to do on a Friday/Saturday night. Every single community is different, but there are alternatives for youth. Your group is to brainstorm as many ideas of activities to do on a Friday night. This will be a competition with the other groups, so be creative. Use the poster board and markers to write down your answers. Be creative so that your answers do not match other small groups. Select someone from the group to be the spokesperson and another youth to hold the poster board. You should brainstorm no more than five minutes together as a group.

The group with the most original ideas at the end of the competition wins. Here is a tip: Do not just put "bowling" on your list – be creative and write "go bowling dressed up as clowns" or another variation.

THINK ABOUT DRINKING

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Give each youth a copy of "Thinking About Drinking" (Handout A on pages 82-83). This comes from a

blog on www.lifeteen.com by Mark Hart. Also, if you have enough Bibles for everyone, give each youth a Bible and allow them to work on the handout individually. If you only have a few Bibles per group, read the Bible verses together as a group and allow the youth to complete the reflections on their own.

SEND

FRIDAY NIGHT ACTIVITIES

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This will be a fun competition for the groups and allow them to hear other ideas. Select one group (perhaps the group that came in first/on time and was seated quietly) to start the competition. The group will come forward and read the top ten ideas from their list. As the other groups listen, have them cross off items that are an exact match. For example, if the group up front says, "bowling," and you have "bowling" on your list, cross it off your list. However, if the person up front says "bowling" and your list says "bowling dress up as clowns," you do not have to cross that off because it is an original idea. (The activity has to be realistic: you cannot write, "Go to the Grand Canyon" if you live nowhere near it. The activities must be actual activities the youth in the group can do on a Friday night.)

Once the first group has read their top ten, have them sit down and have a second group come to the front and read their top ten activities (if they have that many left). The other groups cross off exact matches from their list. Continue this process until each group has had a chance to read their items. The group with the most original ideas wins! Have a prize for the winning group.

CLOSING PRAYER

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Tonight's prayer will allow the youth to make a commitment to "stay sober and alert," to resist the temptation to drink or do drugs. Change the room so that everything looks like it is in the right place. Use a large cross or crucifix at the front, center of the room. You will also need a podium or stand to place a journal or notebook for the youth to sign. Use instrumental music to set a tone of prayerfulness in the room.

We have heard a lot tonight on the temptation to use alcohol or drugs and the many reasons to say, "No!" There are emotional, physical, and psychological dangers to drinking alcohol or doing drugs at your age. However, we do not often hear about the spiritual dangers as well. Drinking under age causes us to sin and our ability to make good choices is greatly affected. We easily lose sight of our relationship with Jesus and focus on the temporary feelings we get when drinking or doing drugs. Tonight, as a community, we are inviting you to make a commitment to "stay sober and alert" as we heard from 1 Peter in Scripture. We support you as a community to help you resist temptation and to stay focused on your relationship with Jesus. When you are ready, come forward to sign the book to show your commitment to not drink alcohol or do drugs and you will support your peers in their decision to resist temptation as well. If you have messed up in this area, you can make a commitment tonight to change. We support you and will help you make this commitment. Once you have signed the book, you can also spend a moment or two in front of the cross/crucifix asking for grace to resist temptation.

You may need to have one or two teens willing to start the process or select a group to begin to help

prayer service to finish in a timely manner.

SUMMARY CHALLENGE

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Before the middle school youth are sent home they will be challenged to remember:

1. Hollywood does a lot to glamorize the use of alcohol and/or drugs. TV shows, music videos, movies, and video games rarely show the true-life consequences that alcohol and drugs have on your life.
2. We may face temptations in school and with our friends to drink, but God gives us the courage and strength to say no.
3. If you are struggling with this issue, find an adult you can talk to and get answers to your questions.
4. If you are not struggling with this issue, find ways to reach out to those who help and pray for them to be brave enough to say no to the temptations.

CONCLUSION

ADAPTING THIS NIGHT

For the opening game, you can increase or decrease the number of spins according to the number of youth you have. However, if you have a small group, consider adding an element of putting on one piece of over-sized clothing while dizzy and then trading off with the next person in line. That person would wear the first piece and add a second piece of clothing after spinning. Continue until everyone in line has gone. Be sure to have enough clothing for the number of youth present.

If you have the budget and/or supplies, have the youth create a reminder of the “Party Sober” commitment they made during the closing prayer (small rubber bracelets like “Livestrong,” necklace with a cross, laminated card with commitment on it, etc.).

You could adapt this night to be only about drinking, about drugs, or about a particular drug.

GOING DEEPER