**Opioid Prevention and Well-Being Lesson**

**Lesson Objective**

By the end of the lesson, group members will be able to understand what opioids are, identify what opioid misuse is, and how it affects an individual’s emotions, thoughts, actions, and brain. Members of the group will also explore the connection between stress and its impact on thoughts, emotions, and behaviors and learn how to identify stressors in their lives, along with recognizing how their well-being is impacted. During the lesson, group members will learn about what well-being is, and learn two coping Brain Dump and 4-7-8 Breathing as tools for stress management.

**Materials Needed**

- Flip chart
- Pens/markers
- Just the Facts sheet (resource section)
- Glue sticks
- Scissors
- Paper
- Infographic Facts
- If You Give an Ox an Oxy: A Parod(ox)y by Dr. Laura E. Happe PharmD (Optional if you select option B)
- Self-Awareness Check-in (resource section)
- Well-Being Plan worksheet (resource section)
- Soft balls (4-5 per five people)

**Introduction**

(4 minutes)

- Explain to the youth that in the group, they will learn about what opioids are, how they impact their well-being, common misconceptions about opioids, and how they impact their emotions, thought, actions, and brain and body.
- If this lesson is used as part of the larger Opioid Prevention curriculum, inform the group members, there are 7 lessons in total. During this time, discuss the importance of attending every group as each lesson builds upon the previous lesson. It is important to make it to all lessons and be on time to show respect for other group members.
- If this lesson is being used as a standalone lesson, explain to the group the importance of staying engaged in the lesson and to ask all the questions they might have.
**Ball Juggle Game**

*This game is a fun way to understand how daily stressors can accumulate and become overwhelming.*

Instructions:

- Ask youth to stand in a circle and begin by holding one ball.
- Explain that each person must throw the ball to someone that is not standing beside them, and who hasn’t had the ball yet. They must remember who they threw the ball to and who threw it to them.
- Each time they throw the ball, they will throw it to the same person.
- The last person to get the ball will throw it back to you (the facilitator), who will keep the ball rolling.
- Once they get the pattern, introduce another ball and repeat the process until you have multiple balls in the air.
- It will get chaotic, but keep going!

**After the Game, Reflect on the Experience:**

- Ask youth how it felt to have multiple balls in the air. Listen to their responses.
- Relate the balls to daily stressors and explain how they can accumulate and become overwhelming.
- If we only had one ball in the air, or stressor, it wouldn’t be so hard to handle – like homework. But, it is never just one ball in the air. Things happen outside of our control, and we juggle homework, siblings, friend drama, figuring out who we are, sickness, etc.. Daily stress becomes cumulative.
- Ask the group to identify things in their life that could become overwhelming and stressful.
- Normalize the things that are overwhelming and stressful in their lives.
- It is helpful to pinpoint and be aware of what things in our lives are stressful. Awareness gives us the opportunity to take care of ourselves when we need it.
- Reassure them that this group/lesson is going to give them tools and resources to navigate the ups and downs of life.
**Types of Impacts/Responses to Emotions:**

**Stressed-out person:**
This activity will help the group identify how stress affects them and explore healthy coping strategies.

**Stressed-out person drawing instructions:**
- Now that we have identified some of the stressors in your life, we are going to identify the ways that stress impacts us.
- Break the youth into small groups of 3 to 4 people.
- Give each small group a sheet of poster paper and markers.
- Ask them to draw a picture of what a stressed-out person looks like according to how they experience stress or how others might experience stress.
- For example, they may draw a person with butterflies in their stomach or a person with red bloodshot eyes and tears because they cry when they are stressed. Some may draw a picture of a person eating junk food because they eat when they are stressed.
- You may need to give them a few examples to help them get started with their drawings.
- Give each small group a few minutes to draw their pictures and then ask each group to share what they drew.
- Normalize their reactions and explain that it’s common to turn to certain things or behaviors as a way to cope with emotions and stress. This can include overeating, overspending, drinking alcohol or misusing drugs, like opioids, or engaging in excessive gaming or social media use.
- While these coping mechanisms may provide temporary relief from negative feelings, they can also be problematic and interfere with daily functioning and overall well-being and have negative consequences.
- It is important to know that seeking comfort and relief is a natural human response to stress and that there are healthy coping strategies to release stress.
- Emphasize the importance of knowing the unique ways they are impacted by stress. The reactions they have to stress are their warning signs to take care of themselves – just like a car engine has warning lights - and release the stress in a healthy way.
Opioid Impacts on Emotions, Thoughts, and Actions

This activity will help the group understand the connection between their thoughts, emotions, and actions.

Instructions:

- Draw a picture of the Cognitive Behavioral Triangle (CBT) on the board labeling each corner as part of the CBT triangle. (thought-top / emotions-bottom left / actions-bottom right.)

- Refer back to the ball juggling game and take one of the stressful situations they named off. Write this situation on the board beside the triangle.

- Ask the group what their thoughts, emotions, and actions might be in this situation.

- What are your thoughts in this situation? (Write on the board in the thoughts section)

- What might your emotion be? (Write the emotions in the lower left corner)

- What might your action be? (Write the actions in the lower right corner)

- Point out how the action is one of the ways they react to stress. It might even be one they drew on their stressed-out person activity.

- Explain how their thoughts, emotions, and actions are all connected and influence each other. Just like an influencer on social media can influence what is cool or the latest fashion, the brain and our thoughts is the influencer of our emotions and actions.

- Summarize the connection between their thoughts, emotions, and actions: When you think (blank thought), you feel (blank emotion). When you feel (blank emotion), you do (blank action).

- Example: When you have a test coming up, you think to yourself I am going to fail. When you think, I am going to fail, you feel sad and overwhelmed. When you feel sad and overwhelmed you cry.

- Emphasize that thoughts determine their emotions and behaviors, and we all perceive situations differently, which is why some people react in a different way.

- It is important to analyze the thoughts we tell ourselves and make sure our thoughts are accurate and helpful. Our thoughts are always in our control and what we tell ourselves determines how we feel and what we do. Later in the lesson we will learn how to do a self-awareness check which will help you take a moment to analyze your thoughts.

- Situations can also be interpreted differently when we are under the influence of substances. Opioids are powerful drugs that alter how we interpret things and often cause errors in thinking and judgement. This causes issues with processing thoughts, remembering things, regulating emotions, and making good choices. This is why it is important to be careful with opioids and only take them when prescribed by a doctor and to not misuse them when they are prescribed to you.

- Now we are going to talk more about Opioids and what they are.
**Lesson Focus: What are Opioids? (20 Minutes)**

Introductory activity: Brain Dump

- Write the following questions on four flip chart sheets and place them around the room. Provide markers to the group members to write on the sheets. If group members would like more privacy in writing the questions, hand out sticky notes they can write their questions and thoughts on. Then they can place the sticky notes on each of the flip chart sheets.

- What are opioids?
- What questions do you have about opioids?
- Where have you learned or heard about opioids?
- What is well-being and why is it important?
- Any other thoughts or questions?

- Explain to the group members that they have five minutes to brainstorm and write all their thoughts and questions about opioids on the flip chart sheets or sticky notes. They can write anything they know or want to learn about opioids. Assure them that their thoughts and questions will be kept anonymous.

- Once the time is up, have the group members return to their seats. Gather the sheet with the questions “What do you know about opioids?” and “What questions do you have about opioids?” Take it to a visible location and discuss with the group members what was written and the questions asked.

**What are Opioids?**

*There are two options for presenting information about opioids based on the Brain Dump activity. Choose an option below.*

**Option A: Opioid Facts**

- Use the Just the Facts opioid fact sheet from the resource section of the lesson to guide the discussion and answer questions from the Brain Dump activity. The information on the Just the Facts sheet was collected from the National Institutes of Health.

**Option B: If You Give an Ox Oxy**

- Read pages 4 to 30 of the book, If You Give an Ox an Oxy: A Parod(ox)y by Dr. Laura E. Happe PharmD to the group. As you read the book, point out the answers to the questions from the Brain Dump activity.
JUST THE FACTS

- After answering the questions from the Brain Dump activity, reinforce the information by doing the Just the Facts activity.
- During this activity, group members can work individually or in small groups of 2-3.
- Provide them with premade fact sheets about opioids, and ask them to create an infographic to share with their peers. They can either cut facts from the premade sheets or draw representations of the facts.
- Provide a copy of the Just the Facts resource pages to help them develop the infographics.
- Once complete, ask if anyone would like to share what they have created.

Teaching Tip

If there is limited time, ask the group members to create a representation of an Instagram or other social media post with the information provided.

WHAT IS WELL-BEING AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

- Now pull out the brain dump activity sheet about well-being. Review what was written and the reasons why the group members believe well-being is important.
- It is important to understand that well-being is a combination of physical, mental, and emotional health. This means that well-being involves taking care of your body, mind, and emotions. It is more than just getting enough sleep or eating healthy foods. It is about putting all the pieces together and understanding the impact of emotions and thoughts on the things you do, your relationships, social connections, and future goals.

BRAINSTORM HEALTHY HABITS

- Next, have the group brainstorm healthy habits they can do instead of taking opioids. Use a second drawing of a person to draw an image representation of healthy habits. Encourage the group members to think of activities that they can do for their physical, mental, and emotional well-being.
- Pass out copies of the Well-being Plan worksheet so that group members can write down their own ideas. If time is limited, the Well-Being worksheet can be sent home.
**Importance of Self-Awareness**

- A big part of well-being is awareness. Awareness helps us identify and understand our own reactions and make good decisions. The practice of awareness can also help us avoid misusing substances like opioids because we are more attuned to what is happening, what our needs are, and our emotions. By being aware of our well-being, we are able to choose other options when we are stressed or feeling unregulated and avoid temporary unhealthy choices like opioids.

**Self-Awareness Check-In**

- Hand out the Self-Awareness Check-in worksheet and go over how to use it. This worksheet is a tool to help group members develop self-awareness by identifying their emotions, thoughts, and physical sensations in their body.
- Encourage them to use this tool regularly to help develop their awareness skills.

**Well-being practices**

- Schedule time for social connection: Set aside time each week to connect with friends, family, or colleagues. This could be as simple as a phone call, text message, or video chat.
- Make time for activities: Join a club or sports team, take up a new hobby, or volunteer for a cause that you care about.
- Practice self-regulation: Incorporate relaxation techniques into your daily routine, such as deep breathing, mindfulness meditation, or yoga.
- Set goals: Identify achievable goals and work towards them. Have hope for achieving them. Celebrate your progress along the way!
- Embrace supportive beliefs: Explore spirituality, mindfulness, or other practices that align with your values and beliefs. Find your purpose in the world.
- Seek out a supportive community: Join a support group, attend social events, or connect with others who share similar interests.
Cognitive Behavioral Skills

(5 minutes)

- When things feel too big or out of control, it’s important to have tools that can help you cope. In this lesson, we will learn two cognitive behavioral skills that can help with this.

Brain Dump

- At the beginning of the lesson, we did a Brain Dump activity, which is also a cognitive behavioral skill. Brain Dump is a good practice to do when you’re feeling overwhelmed or stressed. It can help clear your mind, reduce anxiety, and free up your thoughts to refocus.

- What is a Brain Dump? A Brain Dump is where you write down everything that is swirling around in your head on a piece of paper. It is like you are dumping out a messy drawer to see what’s there.

- How to do a Brain Dump? Take a piece of paper and something to write with and write down everything that is on your mind. It is not an organized practice. It is writing down whatever is on your mind. It can be anything – need to clean your room, worried about forgetting an assignment, a friend’s upcoming birthday, or a situation you experienced that you can’t stop thinking about. It is a mental dump to get everything out of your head and onto paper. It’s not a to-do list, even thought some of the things that get dumped out might be to-do list items.

- After the Brain Dump, teach the group how to do 4-7-8 Breathing.

4-7-8 Breathing

- Stress and intense emotions like anxiety and anger can cause us to hold onto tension. As the youth learned earlier in the lesson, the body and mind are so connected, activating relaxation in their bodies can impact their emotions by helping them feel calmer as they release the tension.

- To begin 4-7-8 breathing, place the tip of your tongue against the roof of your mouth just behind your front teeth and slightly open your lips.

- Breathe in deeply through your nose while you count silently to 4.

- Hold your breath for a count of 7.

- Exhale forcefully thought your mouth for a count of 8 seconds. It may be helpful to make a whooshing sound as you breathe out. This completes one cycle of breathing.

- Repeat the cycle of 4-7-8 at least three more times.

- Repeat each of the above if time allows. Encourage youth to practice these on their own. The more they practice, the easier it will become for them to do when they are feeling stressed, anxious, or overwhelmed.
Lesson Wrap-Up

- Hand out the Self-Awareness Check-in worksheet and go over how to use it. This worksheet is a tool to help group members develop self-awareness by identifying their emotions, thoughts, and physical sensations in their body.
- Encourage them to use this tool regularly to help develop their awareness skills.
What are opioids?
Opioids have been around for a long time and were originally used to help people manage pain. Opioids are made from a plant called the poppy and can be very strong. But just because something comes from nature does not mean it is always safe. There are two types of opioids: some are made from the plant and others are made in a lab. Some opioids are legal and can be prescribed by a doctor to help with pain, but others are illegal and can be very dangerous, like heroin and illicit fentanyl.

How do people use opioids?
Prescription opioids are prescribed by doctors to treat pain and other health issues, such as coughing problems and diarrhea. When used as prescribed and for a short time, opioids are relatively safe. But when they are misused, they can be dangerous.

Fentanyl is a very strong painkiller that is prescribed by doctors for severe pain. However, some drug dealers add it to heroin to make it stronger, which is causing people to overdose and die.

What are the health effects of opioids?
The short-term effects of opioids can relieve pain and make people feel relaxed. However, opioids can also have harmful effects, including:
- extreme drowsiness
- confusion
- nausea
- constipation
- slowed breathing
Over time, opioid use and misuse can lead to insomnia, muscle pain, heart problems, pneumonia, addiction, and overdose.

How do people misuse opioids?
- taking a prescription in a way or dose other than instructed
- taking an illegal form of an opioid
- taking someone else’s prescription
- taking prescription drugs only to get high
- mixing prescription opioids with alcohol or other drugs
- crushing pills or opening capsules, then:
  - snorting the powder
  - dissolving the powder in water then injecting the liquid into a vein

What are the most commonly used prescription opioids?
- Hydrocodone (Vicodin®)
- Oxycodone (OxyContin®, Percocet®)
- Oxymorphone (Opana®)
- Morphine (Kadian®, Avinza®)
- Codeine
- Fentanyl (also used illicitly)

Are opioids addictive?
Yes. Over time, opioid use and misuse can change the brain, leading to addiction. Addiction means a person continues to use a drug despite negative consequences, and actively tries to get more and more of the drug. Many people who become addicted to opioids may end up taking more and more of the drug, leading to deadly overdoses that can be fatal — taking enough to make you stop breathing.

1 in 100 young adults between the ages of 12 and 17 currently misuse prescription opioids.
Just the Facts
Opioids: The Brain & Body

HOW DO OPIOIDS AFFECT THE BRAIN?
When opioids are taken, they attach to and activate opioid receptors that are present in various parts of the brain, spinal cord, and other organs in the body. These receptors play a role in regulating feelings of pain and pleasure, and the activation of these receptors can cause a person to experience pain relief and feelings of euphoria.

Opioids bind to the opioid receptors in the brain and they block pain signals sent between the brain and the body and release large amounts of dopamine in the brain's reward regions. Dopamine is the chemical responsible for motivating our actions and repeating pleasurable experiences. This release can strongly reinforce drug use, making a person want to take the drug again and again despite negative consequences.

Why are some people impacted more than others by using opioids?
- Risk factors such as a history of substance misuse, lack of support systems, and protective factors all impact a person's likelihood of developing an opioid use disorder.
- Other risk factors include:
  - Easy access to prescription or illegal opioids
  - Living in poverty
  - Living in a rural area
  - Prior substance or alcohol misuse
  - Family history of substance misuse
  - Experiencing abuse (physical, sexual, verbal, emotional) or neglect
  - Unemployment
  - Mental health disorders or issues
  - Personal history of substance abuse
  - Age
  - Risk-taking or thrill-seeking behavior
  - Heavy tobacco use
  - Stressful circumstances
  - Lack of support system
  - Difficulty with relationships (family or friends)

What is Well-being?

Wellbeing
/welˈbeɪɪŋ/
noun
The state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy

According to the CDC, "Well-being includes the presence of positive emotions and moods (e.g., contentment, happiness), the absence of negative emotions (e.g., depression, anxiety), satisfaction with life fulfillment and positive functioning" (Center for Disease Control, n.d.).

"Higher levels of well-being are associated with a decreased risk of disease, illness, and injury; better immune functioning; speedier recovery" (Center for Disease Control, n.d.), which means pain medications do not have to be used for extended periods of time.

What are protective factors?
Protective factors are characteristics associated with a lower likelihood of negative outcomes or that reduce a risk factor's impact. Protective factors may be seen as positive countering events.

- Ability to control one’s emotions
- Positive self-concept
- Good coping and problem-solving skills
- Engaged in school and learning
- Social skills
- Healthy physical development free from disease and injury
- Feeling connected and engaged with at least two areas outside of family: school/after-school, positive peers, athletics, employment, religion, culture, or the arts
- Family support
- Stability and predictability
- Rules, limits, monitoring, structure (age-appropriate)
- Supportive relationships with family members
- Clear expectations for behavior and values
- Mentoring and support for development of skills and interests
- Opportunities for engagement within school and community
- Positive norms
- Clear expectations for behavior (similar to above stability and predictability in families)
- Physical and psychological safety (free from violence and bullying)

SAMHSA (2019). Risk and Protective Factors

How does mental health impact opioid misuse?
People who have opioid use disorder often also have a co-occurring or undiagnosed mental health condition.

Due to misuse of opioids and the effect they have on the brain, opioid use disorder is considered a chronic brain disease.
On a large sheet of paper, draw an outline similar to this for group members to use during the Impact of Stress activity and the What does Well-being look like activity.
Instructions: Even though there are common impacts from stress, we are all uniquely impacted. Think about the ways that stress impacts you and draw it on the person below. For example, you might draw butterflies in the stomach to represent getting nervous. You might draw tears to represent that you cry when you are stressed. Be creative!

It is important to recognize your personal impacts so you can notice early on when you are starting to feel stressed. Do something to take care of yourself & release the stress.
Opioids

Opioids are powerful drugs that come from the poppy plant. However, just because something is found in nature does not mean that it is safe.

People who misuse prescription opioids get them through various routes, including:
- Using their own prescriptions – 27%
- From friends or relatives for free – 26%
- Buying from friends or relatives – 23%
- Buying from a drug dealer – 15%

Types of Opioids

Opioid medications come in three forms:
- Natural- made from the plant
- Synthetic- made in a lab
- Semi-synthetic—made from the plant and modified in the lab

Prescription opioids are prescribed by doctors to treat pain and other health issues, such as coughing problems and diarrhea. When used as prescribed and for a short time, opioids are relatively safe. But when they are misused, they can be dangerous.

What is the best way to dispose of narcotics?

- Take the narcotics to a DEA collection site.
- Take the narcotics to an approved pharmacy or hospital.
- Use a mail-back system.
- Use a take-back drop box. This is a place to leave the narcotics at any time.

DO NOT FLUSH MEDICATION

You will need to contact authorities in your area to see if this is an option for you. The FDA also offers a list of medicines that are safe to flush down the toilet.

Fentanyl and other synthetic opioids are the most common drugs involved in overdose deaths. Over 150 people die every day. Drugs may contain deadly levels of fentanyl, and you wouldn’t be able to see it, taste it, or smell it.

More people die from prescription overdose than car accidents
How to Recognize an Overdose

**Slow breathing**
A person may have very slow, shallow breaths, make gurgling noises, or stop breathing.

**Trouble waking up**
A person may be awake but unable to talk, or may not respond when you try to wake them up.

**Changes to skin tone**
A person’s skin tone can turn grayish or ashen to bluish purple.

**Other side effects**
Nausea and/or vomiting, dry mouth, itching and sweating, increased sensitivity to pain

What to do NEXT?
Call 9-1-1, give naloxone, and support ventilation if the person does not respond.

WHAT TO DO IN CASE OF AN OVERDOSE

- **TRY TO WAKE THEM UP**
  Rub the middle of their chest with a closed fist.

- **CALL 9-1-1**
  The Good Samaritan Law protects you from arrest for possession of drugs.

- **GIVE NALOXONE**
  Follow directions for nasal or intramuscular kit. Take our course. Link in Bio.

- **IF NEEDED, GIVE SUPPORT VENTILATION**
  Start CPR if the person is not breathing AND has no pulse. Push hard & fast in the center of the chest to the beat of the classic song, StayinAlive.

- **PUT THEM IN RECOVERY POSITION**
  If you can’t stay to wait for help, put the person on their side supported by a bent knee.

*Teens who use marijuana are 2 1/2 times more likely to misuse opioid prescriptions and become addicted.*

Fentanyl is an opioid drug that is 50 times more powerful than heroin. Medically, it is used to treat extreme pain and for surgeries. But now it’s being made illegally and is sometimes mixed with other drugs, leading to overdose.

*Every 19 minutes, someone dies from the misuse of prescription drugs.*

You may have heard people talking about opioids and not even realized it. Oxy, Percs, and Vikes are all slang terms for opioids.

YOUR WORDS MATTER
Just the Facts: Opioids and Opioid Misuse

**REPLACE THESE**
- Addict
- Junkie
- Crackhead
- Alcoholic
- Substance Abuse
- They are clean now

**WITH THESE**
- Person who uses drugs
- Person who injects drugs
- Dependent
- Person with alcohol use disorder
- Substance Misuse
- They are no longer actively using

Accidental Overdose Happens to Anyone

- A child when they borrow a headache medication from a friend or classmate.
- A grandparent when they forget how much medication they have taken.

What are the most commonly used prescription opioids?

- Hydrocodone (Vicodin®)
- Oxycodone (OxyContin®, Percocet®)
- Oxymorphone (Opana®)
- Morphine (Kadian®, Avinza®)
- Codeine
- Fentanyl (also used illicitly)

Narcan and Naloxone are life-saving medications that can reverse an overdose from opioids—including heroin, fentanyl, and prescription opioid medications—when given immediately. Having this life-saving medication available in community locations can help save time in the event of an overdose.

42% of the pills tested for fentanyl contained at least 2 mg (3 grains of salt), a potentially lethal dose.

Some opioids, like heroin, aren't available by prescription. People use those drugs just to get high.

Dopamine is released into the body when opioids attach to receptors in the brain.

57%

12 to 17 year olds who misused prescription opioids got them from a friend or relative.
SELF AWARENESS CHECK IN

I am feeling....

How much of the emotion are experiencing?

Write the emotion you are feeling in the circle. Fill the circle with the color you associate with the emotion.

Symptoms
What are the symptoms you are feeling?

- Headache
- Tension in the body
- Stomach issues
- Difficulty breathing
- Panic attacks
- Blurred eyesight
- Fatigue
- Chest pains and high blood pressure
- Teeth grinding
- ____________________
- ____________________

Actions & Reactions
What behaviors are you noticing?

- Cannot stop crying
- Difficulty eating or over eating
- Irritable or lashing out at others
- Unable to control anger
- Feeling guilty, helpless, or hopeless
- Avoiding friends, family, or co-workers
- Procrastination / neglecting responsibilities
- Losing sleep
- Worrying incessantly
- ____________________
- ____________________
- ____________________

Coping Skills
It often takes more than one coping skill to regulate emotions and responses. List the coping skills you will use in combination with one another to self-regulate.

- ____________________
- ____________________
- ____________________
- ____________________

The NAMI Help Line can be reached Monday through Friday, 10 am – 10 pm, ET
Call 1-800-950-NAMI (6264),
text "HelpLine" to 62640
or email us at helpline@nami.org
Dial or text 988 for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
WELL-BEING PLAN

Below are suggested ways you can increase your well-being and provide yourself time to rest and recharge. In the blank spaces create individualized ideas for yourself.

- Enjoy nature
- Do not overbook yourself
- Block off time for yourself
- Wear something comfortable
- Call a friend or loved one
- Drink something warm
- Reflect on positive things that have happened
- Eat healthy
- Let's Celebrate
- Celebrate your success
- Trash negative thoughts
- Write about your feelings
- Listen to music
- Relax with water