

## Manitoba Addictions Awareness Week

### The Balancing Act – The Rush to Crash

**Background Discussion:** Explore with students the concept of the body wanting to maintain a state of balance, a state of feeling “normal”. Use some rush and crash examples they can relate to, for example:

- ❖ Regular caffeine consumption - consumption can cause restlessness, nervousness, excitement and cessation can cause some minor withdrawal symptoms: headaches, drowsiness, fatigue and decreased activity.

When a stimulant drug like cocaine or crack is used, the body experiences a rush of energy, alertness and euphoria. However, the body's need to regain its sense of balance often results in a rebound effect after the effects of the drug wears off. Such a rebound effect is seen in the withdrawal symptoms from cocaine/crack use (extreme fatigue, depression and anxiety). In the balancing act that our body demonstrates with the use of cocaine/crack, the rush of energy created by the drug is quickly followed by a crash in energy level and feelings of depression.

#### Activity Instructions:

- ✓ Separate the class into 2 groups. Present each group with copies of the Cocaine/Crack Fast Facts. For a more in-depth activity, you could also have students do some research using the school library, the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba Library (204-944-6279) or the Internet (see 2.5.14 “Surf the Facts”) to find additional information on the physical/psychological effects of Cocaine/Crack, then discuss and generate a master list of these effects.
- ✓ One group will brainstorm reasons why some people would want to use cocaine or crack (what might be some of the positive short and long term effects people might identify for using a stimulant like cocaine). The other group will examine the negatives (costs and consequences) of using cocaine or crack in the short and long term. Ensure each group has fully explored/considered how cocaine or crack affects the brain and the body (including withdrawal symptoms). Both groups will be asked to write **each one** of their findings on a piece of paper (8.5" x 11") (**one reason per sheet**).
- ✓ When both groups are ready to present their findings to the large group, ask for a couple of student volunteers to stand at the front of the class near the whiteboard. One **volunteer will represent the body** while the **other volunteer represents the brain** affected by cocaine or crack. Explain to the class that once the volunteers are in place, students will be asked to present their findings one at a time. On one side of the whiteboard write the heading **Benefits** and on the other the heading **Costs**. The benefits of using cocaine will be attached to one side of the board and the costs of using cocaine will be attached to the other.

- ✓ Have the benefit and cost groups take turns naming one of their findings. As each cost and benefit is presented, have the body and the brain demonstrate how that effect would look on the body (physical effects) and the brain (psychological effects).
- ✓ Students will take turns presenting one benefit followed by the corresponding cost of using cocaine until all of the findings are presented. For example, the benefit of experiencing an intense feeling of well-being is quickly followed by the cost of experiencing an intense feeling of depression and anxiety.
- ✓ Once all findings are attached to the appropriate side of the board, the number of costs will far outweigh the benefits. Help students to debrief after this exercise by processing the following questions:
  - What did you notice during this activity?
  - How tiring was it to role-play all of the effects on the body and brain in this activity?
  - What can this activity tell us about the effects on a body that is under the influence of a stimulant drug like cocaine or crack?
  - What kinds of activities would be impaired by the use of cocaine/crack?
  - How can we keep ourselves safe from this precarious balancing act?

### **Alternative Activity:**

Have a large scale at the front of the whiteboard. As each group presents one of their findings, have a student volunteer add a marble or small stone to that side of the scale. Soon, the costs of using will outweigh the benefits and cause the scale to become permanently off balanced. In processing the exercise have students consider how the body was initially able to keep itself in balance until the consequences became too great.

- How might this look in real life if the scale was a person?
- How might a person get himself or herself back in balance? What might they need to do and who could help them do it?
- How can we keep ourselves safe from this precarious balancing act?

### **Conclusion:**

In its quest to maintain a balance or a state of "normalcy", the body will experience a rebound effect after a drug like cocaine or crack has worn off. This effect will be the opposite of the positive feelings and energy levels that the cocaine or crack had on the body. Introducing a drug like cocaine or crack into your system often results in a balancing act that resembles a rush to the crash. The crash increases the likelihood of people continuing to use the drug, therefore developing tolerance and possibly dependency. The more consequences the body experiences the more likely the body will lose its ability to balance itself and permanently crash.