



Discussion Guide for use with *Chasing Hope:*
Middle and High School Edition

*This film and guide is a gift from the Spring Green Educational Foundation. For more information and resources, go to www.springgreen.org or www.chasinghope.org



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Part One (testing knowledge base)	6
Part Two (video prep)	7
Part Three (discussion format)	8
Handouts	14
Handout A (pretest)	15
Handout B (processing page)	17
Handout C (film participant's bios)	18
Handout D (referral form/student response)	20

****It is essential that each facilitator create a resource list from the community they are hosting the film viewing.***



Introduction

This discussion guide is meant to serve as a resource and supplement to the viewing of the film *Chasing Hope: Middle and High School Edition* released by Spring Green Educational Foundation (SGEF) as a gift to schools and youth serving organizations throughout the state of Ohio. While this film is valuable on its own, the guide is instrumental in effectively covering all areas surrounding opioid use and abuse, particularly the mandates given by Governor Kasich in 2016 for all schools serving students in grades 6-12.

This film began initially as a conversation between Amy Clark, Board President of SGEF and John Tharp, Lucas County Sheriff, in 2015 as an idea about how to combat what was quickly becoming one of the deadliest issues the state of Ohio has seen; overdose deaths largely due to addiction to opioids. Today, at the time of this print, the state of Ohio leads the nation in accidental overdose deaths with no end in sight. Dr. Robert Forney of the Lucas County Coroner's office reports perhaps one of the most alarming statistics of all, the numbers of deaths continue to rise making it nearly impossible to keep up with autopsies. The average age of death due to overdose is in the late 20's to early 30's, with most often drug use starting in adolescence and ultimately, claiming the life of the user. It seemed the wisest decision to make was to focus resources on educating and empowering our youth today on not only what they need to know, but what to do with the knowledge they have gained. Too often we teach fundamentals to children and teens, yet forget the life lesson of why we make the decisions we do and how these decisions directly impact our life physically, socially, emotionally and spiritually. We stress the importance of standardized testing and grades, yet we often forget to teach a child how to cope with stress, anxiety, or depression. And what about that child who is raised in abuse, neglect, or even an environment that promotes alcohol and drug use? Who is teaching them, listening to them, and empowering them to live differently?

Chasing Hope (CH) is different from many of the traditional "educational" films where often reenactment of situations are shown with facts given accordingly. In CH, the viewer can hear actual stories of individuals who have walked through drug abuse either through peer pressure, isolation and depression or innocently enough through prescribed medication due to a medical condition such as a sports injury or root canal. CH encourages a connection between the viewer and the film participants. It intentionally features individuals with diverse backgrounds making it highly likely viewers will identify with at least one if not more of the characters. It shows the physical response the brain experiences with even the minimalist introduction to alcohol or drug use, and it makes the easy connection between use and the impulsivity that



accompanies, often leading to devastating outcomes such as violence, incarceration, disease and even death.

After viewing this film each person will have had an honest and accurate explanation of the following points:

- Addiction. What exactly is it, and how easily and innocently it is started and developed.
- Why 9 out of 10 individuals in addiction started in their teenage years and how to identify if the viewer is at risk.
- The physical effects on the body under the influence of drugs. These include the withdrawal symptoms that most are not expecting, eventually becoming so debilitating that the person is no longer chasing the high but instead using to prevent severe illness. Along with this is the explanation of the development of the brain and how significantly this is altered whenever alcohol or drugs are ingested. Once addiction occurs, the brain is permanently changed to crave this drug.
- The other components of addiction that have little to do with the body but take over the life of the individual nonetheless. These include incarceration, violence, human trafficking and prostitution, committing crimes, lying and deceiving family and friends, and almost always isolation and depression.
- How connected the viewer's ability to cope with negative feelings is directly linked to their risk factor of becoming an addict. This film will ask each person to take an internal honest assessment of what it's like to be them every day.
- The strong similarity between prescribed medication such as Percocet and OxyContin and heroin. A visual is also provided to allow each person to see how closely related the prescribed medication is to the illegal drug.
- Our environment is crucial to our decision-making. Those who grow up around alcohol and drugs are at a much greater risk of becoming addicted. In addition, it highlights that genetic factors play a key role in adding even more danger to the risk level of the youth.
- Symptoms of substance abuse and how to recognize an overdose and what to do if noticed. This is critical due to reports of many believing their friend was "drunk" and would sleep it off; resulting in coma or death.

We are beyond proud at SGEF for the creation of CH and are extremely grateful to the individuals who courageously offered their personal stories as a testimony to the power of drugs. We think you'll agree that this is so much more than a factual film on opioid abuse.



This is an opportunity to create an honest and open dialogue about teen issues, how they are coping (or not) and empowering each viewer to create a connection toward a path of support, healing and restoration.

We encourage the presenter to read through the entire guide before showing the film to the targeted audience.

The following guidelines are intended to be used at the discretion of the presenter, with the understanding that each person holding a viewing knows their group best and what they may or may not be able to comprehend. For example, some students may have a very hard time reading and for those it would be best if the presenter read along the questions provided as well as any silent portions of the film where writing is displayed without audio. It should also be noted that any captions that were not audible in the film are listed to be read aloud throughout the discussion guide; thus, no point is missed.

**This is not intended to be in place of health curriculum.*



PART ONE

This section is designed to get an understanding of where each student/youth is at with their knowledge base. It also allows the teen to start reflecting into their own perception and ideas of what addiction is.

Presenter may read aloud the following below:

“We’re going to look at a film dedicated to the opioid abuse crisis we are experiencing here in our community _____, but before we do, I’d like to ask you to answer some questions (**this could either be a point of discussion where students voluntarily answer or just rhetorical**): (see *handout A for written form*)

1. What is an Opioid?
2. Do you know of anyone who uses opioids? Do you know of anyone who abuses opioids? And do you know what the difference is between using and abusing?
3. How popular are opioids in your circle of friends/family? If so, what are some forms or types of opioids you have seen/used? (**Again, the facilitator is encouraged to use his/her discretion at asking questions about drug use in a group setting. Some may prefer if time allows for this to be a written portion**).
4. What is addiction? How does one become addicted?
5. Do you know what puts you at risk for becoming addicted? Would you know how to identify if someone was addicted? At what age do most addictions to substance abuse begin?
6. What does it mean when someone goes through withdrawal? What happens to the body during withdrawal?
7. Do you know what the use of drugs does to the brain? If so, what?
8. What is the leading cause of death to teens?
9. Do you believe emotions and stress have any connection with drug abuse? If so, how?
10. List three things that almost always happen when abusing drugs.
11. What do you do to cope with stress, anxiety, anger or depression?
12. What are the symptoms of substance abuse? How can you tell if someone has overdosed vs. is drunk?



Part Two (read aloud)

At this point we will be watching the video and ask that as you begin to observe, please keep this in the back of your mind at all times:

- These are actual stories of individuals who either have used or are currently using opioids. In some cases, you'll even hear from parents who have lost their children due to overdose. These are not actors, but rather people who have chosen to share their experiences in hopes of preventing someone else from falling into addiction and/or death.
- As stated, you will hear from several different individuals. Some male, some female. You will hear from athletes, straight A students, cheerleaders, a gang member, and more. Notice which one you identify with the most. How is their story of "life" like yours?
- Pay close attention to the graphics of drugs and the brain...they will be very close to where you are now in your development, it will give you an accurate picture of what is happening to your body right now and if you have used or are using drugs.
- These individuals, regardless of their ethnicity and background have something in common. See if you can identify what it is.

START VIDEO



PART THREE

This is the most critical component of the program. This can be done in two different formats; the first through discussion. Allow the teens a time for asking questions after. Be prepared that they may not feel emotionally safe to share their thoughts, feelings or responses and that is perfectly normal and acceptable. There is also an opportunity for them to write out any questions, feelings or concerns they may have and share with their teacher or whomever is administering the viewing. It is critical that they feel safe in this portion. Do not ask them to publicly share their use of drugs or disclose a friend or family members use, rather encourage them to write this down and submit to the presenter. All information shared must be confidential, which is why a written format works well for the closing portion of this program.

**It should also be noted that all graphics in the video that did not have audio accompanying them are in italicized so presenter may read them aloud for those who may have not read them.*

Read Aloud:

I want you to look at your answers to the questions given before the video. How accurate were you? I'm going to go over key points to the film although there may be something that stuck out to you that you want to discuss that I do not mention. Please write this down and if we have time when we're finished you may bring this up. If not, you will have an opportunity to turn this question in for a response from me as soon as possible

- *Addiction. The repetitive use of a substance that continues despite its harmful consequences.* Typically, the harm becomes more and more severe as its use continues. This is true with alcohol, drugs, cigarettes and many other forms that lead to physical and emotional injury.

As you listened to the individuals talk, you heard them share a lot of the things they realize now contributed to their use and addiction. What are some things you may notice within your own life that puts you at risk? Is it your environment? Is it your friendships? What about genetics? Do you understand that if you have addiction in your biological family history, you may have a genetic makeup that makes you even more vulnerable to addiction?

- *Drugs are powerful; When drugs control your body, you have to keep taking more and more of them or you'll become violently sick.* What most people don't understand about opioid use is that your body becomes addicted quickly. Once this happens, the "high" that was originally felt is quickly diminished; this phenomenon is



referred to as “chasing the high.” This is because the first high is never experienced again, therefore the individual keeps trying to recapture it but cannot; causing the body to become addicted. At this point the body is no longer able to function without the drug in the system and will go into withdrawal when it begins to leave the body’s system. Early withdrawal symptoms include agitation, anxiety, muscle aches, inability to sleep, runny nose, sweating and yawning. Very soon after, these symptoms will develop into severe nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach cramps. This stage of withdrawal is most commonly described as “the flu x 1000.”

- *When drugs control your brain, they change who you are. You do things you thought you’d never do; things that are self-destructive, even life threatening.* Do you remember the graphic of the brain and its formation? In this moment, your brain is at the stage of growth where your personality is still being formed. You may remember they said your brain forms from back to front, so your frontal lobe is still very much in process of development. This basically means right now the part of your brain that holds memory, your impulsive behavior and how you make decisions is going to be changed once any type of drug or alcohol hits the brain. The great thing about our brain is it’s created to make quick connections, so we can learn fast, and since addiction is a learned behavior...we can become addicted fast.

So, think about this for a moment...you are at the time of your life where you are expected to remember facts for homework and test scores, but you are literally shrinking that part of your brain when using drugs. You can’t hold as much; you can’t remember as much...you cannot possibly perform as well. It’s physically and mentally impossible.

Here’s the other thing...your impulse center is totally messed with once drugs hit the brain. Do you remember what the leading cause of death listed for teens was? *The leading cause of death in adolescence is due to risky behavior, the second is suicide.* Just take that in for a moment; the number one cause of deaths to teens is risky behavior and risky behavior is commonly connected to impulsive thinking, doing what felt good or right in the moment without a lot of thought to the outcome or possible consequences. This could mean death, but other usual forms of risky behavior that are highly connected to this type of drug use are sexual activities that are often unprotected leading to sexually transmitted disease or unwanted pregnancy, sexting, violence, truancy, and so much more not even listed here.

Ok so let’s break it down just a little more because this is huge... if you’re feeling stressed, anxious, depressed or angry and your ability to control your impulses is compromised, what do YOU think can happen?



- *What stresses you? How do you deal with your emotions? What do you do to feel better; to be cool; to fit in; to hide who you really are?* Every one...EVERY ONE...has stress in their life. Everyone goes through bad times, some of you are going through it right now. Think for a moment about what you do when you're feeling lonely, sad, or even angry. What do you do with those feelings? Do you understand they must be released in one form or another? What's it like to be you? If people really knew you, what would they know?
- *Justin buried his feelings and found an outlet in sports. What do you do with your feelings? Justin gave up his football scholarship and was kicked out of his house, becoming a homeless addict. During his addiction he was arrested over 50 times. Justin struggled with never feeling like he was good enough, can you remember a time you felt like this? Do you now?*
- *Ashley became addicted to pain pills, then heroin. To support her addiction she turned to prostitution. She tried to commit suicide twice. She overdosed and flatlined four times. Ashley was a cheerleader, in the National Honor Society and a straight A student, but inside struggled with who she was, afraid everyone would see her the way she saw herself if they really got to know her. Can you identify with this feeling? She talks about having that voice of reason telling her what she was doing was wrong, but she ignored it because she cared more about fitting in. Can you think of a time in your life when you knew inside what you were doing was wrong but did it anyways? Do you remember why you did it? How do you feel about it now?*
- *Jacob dropped out of school and was kicked out of his house. He began selling heroin at 16, became addicted at 17 and went to prison at 18. We heard him share his experience of being physically and sexually abused but never disclosing it. The weight of carrying this pain and secret took its toll on him emotionally. Have you ever been abused by anyone and if so, did you tell? How did you cope? Are you still?*
- *Josie dropped out of school. She is addicted to cocaine and heroin. She spends between \$100 and \$300 a day on drugs. She turns tricks and commits other crimes for the money. Josie spoke openly about growing up around drugs and alcohol and her perception at the time of how much fun it looked, how she couldn't wait until she could start that. Perhaps the most powerful statement she made was her comment about laughing, joking and giggling all the time but inside she didn't feel that at all. So, here's the question; have you been around a lot of adults who use drugs and alcohol? How do you see that? Do you see any negative impact from their use in their personal life? And have you ever felt like Josie where you walk around with your face showing one feeling but inside feeling something totally different?*



- *Rick made \$87,000 the year after graduating from high school; enough money to become the life of the party. His drug and alcohol abuse led to seizures which prevented him from working. He went to prison for robbery.* Rick's experience of drugs and alcohol was similar to what Josie described, with his exposure growing up as this being a "good time" and what everyone does. Is there someone in your life that you see abusing drugs and believe they are having a good time in life? Do you really know them? Do you really know what it's like to be them every day? Is there a chance they are using this as a form of coping much like all the participants in the film?
- *David was an addict-in-training when he was five. He was in and out of foster care and juvenile detention. During his 20 year addiction he committed petty theft, forgery, grand theft, aggravated burglary, felonious assault, kidnapping, and faced 33 years in the penitentiary.* David shared his journey of growing up without a father and how whenever he would see other kids walking around with their dads it was a reminder of what he didn't have. The absence of a parent in anyone's life is huge, and felt deeper than most care to talk about. Whether it be through divorce, abandonment or loss, the pain is real. Can you identify with missing someone whether it be a parent or someone else in your life whom you love, leading you to feel a sense of emptiness? Rejection? Abandonment? If so, have you shared this with anyone else?
- *Nicole became addicted to pain pills, then heroin. She became a stripper then a prostitute. After her pimp nearly killed her, she turned herself into the police to save her life.* For Nicole, her life started to change once she reached high school. Her brother was a football player, she was a cheerleader, both were popular yet she said she still always felt like she was "one step behind" everyone else...that she wasn't quite as "cool" as the rest of the group. Have you ever felt like you were different; less than? Can you think of a time you were told by family and/or friends how popular or great you were but inside just didn't feel it? Do you understand why you feel this way?
- *Tim became a master electrician. He battled his addiction to pain pills, then heroin, spending at least \$1000 a week. He began stealing from his employers and ended up in jail.* If you recall, Tim talked about his father, how important it was to make him proud. Never did he think he would be in the position of having his father find out he is addicted to heroin. Try to remember a time you knew you hurt your parent(s) or someone you admire and respect. What did you do? How did you feel after? Can you imagine your parent's response to finding out you have used opioids? What would that look like?



- *Tito's father went to prison for murder and the family struggled to make ends meet. Tito turned to music as an escape and was signed by Sony Records and won a Grammy. The music business fueled his addiction and eventually he lost everything to drugs.* Tito talked throughout his story of feeling angry, often not knowing why he was so mad but realizing the anger turned to rage which took over. His anger came out through violence where he admits to fighting as soon as those feelings of anger started. So, what about you, what do you do with your anger? Do you feel like it takes over at times and hurts others or yourself? Think about a time you said or did something based on your anger, what happened? What were the feelings immediately after?
- *Jordan was a spelling bee champion, young astronaut gifted student, fisherman, hockey player and had a passion for astronomy and studying the cosmos. Jordan died of an accidental overdose.* Jordan's mom shares her lack of awareness that her son was struggling as much as he was. She admits to knowing somewhat that he had problems, but had no idea how severe they were. Do you talk to your parents about what you feel or if you're having a problem? Why or why not? If not, who do you talk to?
- *Brandon knew the faster he recovered, the faster he could play. He didn't know that pain medication and heroin are nearly identical and can lead to addiction. Brandon died of an accidental drug overdose.* Brandon was a successful athlete who was prescribed pain medication for sports injuries. Brandon, much like Tim's story, started out with a legal prescription but quickly transitioned into heroin when it became clear he was addicted. Opioids are prescribed as pain killers for various reasons such as sports injuries or even recovering from a simple outpatient surgery. Have you ever taken an opioid as prescribed by a physician? Do you remember how it made you feel? Did anyone explain to you how easily these can become addictive?
- *Most addicts begin using alcohol and other drugs between the ages of 12 and 14.* How old are you now? How many people do you know who are using drugs either through experimentation or regular abuse?
- *Symptoms of substance abuse are sudden change in friends, loss of interest in favorite activities, isolation, mood swings, apathy (not caring), depression, bad grades, sloppy hygiene. Do you think you might be at risk? Be honest with yourself, if you think you are at risk, ask for help.*
 - Let's look at this a little further. If anyone told you that you are signing up for a life of loneliness, sadness, failing grades and oh yeah, you'll start wearing the same clothes over and over without washing them, you'll brush your teeth less and probably start to smell from lack of bathing, who would do it? That's the thing, you don't even realize it's happening. These stories are all from people



who took pride in how they looked, yet they all began to show these very signs. Think back to all the mugshots you saw; do you remember what they looked like?

- It's that controlling, it's that powerful. So, if you believe you are at risk, who would you go to? **(this is excellent opportunity to list local agencies with numbers and include school resources as well, such as teacher, dean, counselor, etc.).**
- *How to recognize an overdose: You might think your friend is drunk but it could be more. Check for slow breathing, pinpoint pupils, confusion, passing out, cold and clammy skin, pale face, limp body, blue fingernails and unable to speak. Keep in mind if it is an overdose they can easily suffer brain damage, fall into a coma or die.*

As you can clearly see from the film and our discussion, it's not about just "taking a pill" we're talking about. It's the why, it's the how, it's the power of awareness. Think about what Tim said, "If you knew half of you would die from getting on a ride, you'd never get on...yet here are all these people still in line."



HANDOUTS

The use of these handouts is completely up to the discretion of the presenter. The purpose of these is twofold; first if there is a challenge with time and it is not possible to carry on a dialogue with students in a large group setting, the handout will serve the purpose of providing information and allowing the students to process through their personal experience and knowledge. Second, this is an excellent tool for gaining information from the audience, including what they know, what they are exposed to, who they believe they can talk to and some issues they may be currently battling with.

It is extremely critical that these handouts are reviewed as soon as possible as they very well may disclose information that must be addressed immediately such as abuse. Explain that while the answers they provide are confidential, there are three things that cannot be kept confidential: if they are being abused, if they are abusing someone else or if they are hurting themselves.

Appropriate referrals may need to be made based on the feedback the presenter receives from the teens completing these sheets.

- Handout A- focuses primarily on knowledge base, allowing both the presenter and the teen to get an idea of what they know.
- Handout B- is the sheet that allows the youth to process through what they struggle with and how it may directly tie in as a risk factor. This is also the sheet that will give them the opportunity to disclose any information that requires support or possible referrals to appropriate agencies. Be aware that students will be asked to identify with a character they connected with the most. They may need some reminders of names, so you may need to refer to Handout C to refresh their memory.
- Handout C- is a brief bio on each participant that presenter may refer to or copy and distribute to audience as a reminder when answering questions at end of video.
- Handout D- a referral sheet that allows a student to confidentially disclose their questions, concerns or comments. This should be given to appropriate referral source such as school counselor.





Chasing Hope: Middle and High School Edition Handout A

Answer the questions below to the best of your ability. If you do not know the answer, simply respond “don’t know.” This is not for a grade, it’s simply to get an idea of your knowledge around addiction.

1. What is an Opioid?
2. Do you know of anyone who uses opioids? Do you know of anyone who abuses opioids? What is the difference between using and abusing?
3. How popular are opioids in your circle of friends/family? If so, what are some forms or types of opioids you have seen/used?
4. What is addiction? How does one become addicted?
5. Do you know what puts you at risk for becoming addicted? Would you know how to identify if someone was addicted? At what age do most addiction to drugs and alcohol begin?
6. What does it mean when someone goes through withdrawal?

What happens to the body during withdrawal?
7. Do you know what the use of drugs does to the brain? If so, what?



8. What is the leading cause of death to teens?

9. Do you believe emotions and stress have any connection with drug abuse? If so, how?

10. List three things that almost always happen when abusing drugs.

11. What do you do to cope with stress, anxiety, anger or depression?

12. What are the symptoms of substance abuse?

How can you tell if someone has overdosed vs. is drunk?





Chasing Hope: Middle and High School Edition Handout B

You just watched a video where you heard personal stories of Justin, Ashley, Jacob, Josie, Rick, David, Nicole, Tim and Tito who have all struggled with addiction. Each of them gave you a brief explanation of why they believe they began using and what happened because of it. Who did you identify with the most? In the space below choose one (or more) film participant whom you felt most closely related to your life. Explain why you chose him/her. What are the similarities? What are the differences? What has this person's story caused you to think about? (feel free to use back of sheet if needed)

Finish the sentence "If you really knew me..." Talk about what it's like to be you. What do people see on the outside, and what is going on inside?

Finally, all the participants had something in common other than their addiction to heroin, can you identify what it is?





Chasing Hope: Middle and High School Edition Handout C -

Justin

Football player who received full scholarship, but gave it all up and ended up on the streets addicted to heroin. Despite receiving accolades throughout the school and surrounding community for his athletic skills, Justin never felt like he was good enough. His family never talked about feelings and mom left when he was a child, no one ever talked about why or how to cope.

Ashley

Straight A student, cheerleader and in National Honor Society, but did not love herself and never really knew who she was inside. Started hanging out with people who were getting into trouble and even though she had the voice inside of her telling her what she was doing was wrong, she chose to ignore it because fitting in was more important.

Jacob

Physically abused at the age of 8, Jacob was then later sexually abused but never told anyone. He tried to get into the popular crowd but kept getting kicked out of sports and felt like he just never belonged, eventually dropping out of school and selling drugs until he became addicted.

Josie

Josie grew up describing her house as like a “bar,” where she was surrounded by heavy drinkers. She recalls thinking this looked fun and couldn’t wait until she could join in. She describes herself as someone who walks around on the outside laughing and giggling but inside she is a wreck, no idea how to deal with her feelings and eventually became addicted to crack and cocaine.

Rick

Both sides of Rick’s family were big drinkers and he grew up thinking drinking and smoking weed just meant it was always a good time. When he was dropped from the wrestling team, his drug use escalated. After high school his addiction led to his seizures, he eventually lost his job, and without the ability to work ended up in prison for robbery.

David

David recalled his grandfather giving him a capful of liquor as a child, so at a very early age he knew what alcohol would do for him. His father was never in his life and he struggled as a child growing up watching other kids have a dad in the picture. David spent time in foster care and juvenile detention, which led him to choosing to “numb out,” using drugs to make him forget his pain.



Nicole

Life began changing for Nicole in high school where despite being a popular cheerleader and hanging out with what she described as the “cool crowd,” she always felt like she was one step behind all of them. She felt accepted once she began going to parties and drinking and using drugs, like she finally fit in. Eventually she became addicted to pain pills and became a prostitute where she was badly beaten.

Tim

Describing himself as having a good relationship with his father, Tim never imagined he would have to tell his father that he was using heroin and was fully addicted. He was never into the “party” scene and ended up becoming a master electrician. After becoming addicted to pain pills, he turned to heroin, began stealing from his employers and ended up in jail.

Tito

His life of watching his father abuse his mother and then go to prison for murder eventually caught up with him, where his anger turned into rage. Tito describes being angry all the time and never knowing why, but would easily strike out at someone as soon as his feelings of anger would show. With a gift of music, he signed with Sony Records where he won a Grammy, only to lose all of it to his addiction.



