

# **THE CHOKING GAME**

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# THE CHOKING GAME

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# THE CHOKING GAME

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Young people have always participated in risky behaviors. The particular risks may vary from generation to generation, but the penchant for taking chances with unhealthy behavior remains the same. In the case of the unfortunately-named “choking game,” this risk can be deadly. Despite the name, this is no game—it doesn’t involve game playing any more than Russian roulette does. Most young people would not be willing to play the odds associated with putting a loaded gun to their heads, and yet a significant number of children, particularly those between 9 and 15, are willing to take their chances on dying of asphyxia just to experiment with a momentary high. Why? There are several factors—among them the innocuous-sounding nicknames for this dangerous oxygen-depriving activity, the fact that no drugs are involved, and the way that it innately appeals to the “I dare you” mentality of youngsters.

As with any risky behavior, the best antidote is knowledge. Most of the youth who participate in the choking game are smart and talented students—overachievers who most teachers and parents would scarcely suspect of indulging in such a risky behavior. These kids are not the ones typically associated with more widely-known forms of negative risk taking such as drinking alcohol and sexual activity. If students are given essential information and learn about positive alternatives to this “game,” it is likely that they will make safer, healthier choices.

Part of the knowledge that children need to receive surrounding the choking game involves the physiology of what happens when the brain is deprived of oxygen. There are several different ways that this “game” is played; all involve depriving the brain of oxygen as a means to bring about a feeling of euphoria. Without oxygen, tissue is damaged beyond repair. Mere minutes can mean the difference between life and death, or normal brain capacity and severe brain damage.

Many adults are not even aware of this game’s existence. Because of this, some deaths which should have been attributed to accidental asphyxia have been misclassified as suicides. The Internet is awash in web sites administered by bereaved parents who had never before heard of the activity that claimed their child’s life. Conversely, more than half of the respondents to a survey by a leading choking game awareness web site ([www.deadlygameschildrenplay.com](http://www.deadlygameschildrenplay.com)) indicated that they had not only heard of the activity but knew someone who had played.

Parents, teachers and students should know what symptoms to look for if someone is suspected to be playing the choking game. These include bloodshot eyes, marks on the neck, ligatures found tied in strange knots, complaints of headache, and an unusual need for privacy. Young people need to know specifics about what to do if they find themselves in a situation where this “game” is being played. They also need to know that it is crucial to tell an adult about the activity as soon as possible. *The Choking Game* program and Teacher’s Resource Book will empower teens by providing crucial information on this terrifying trend.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After watching the program *The Choking Game* and participating in the class activities included in this Teacher's Resource Book, your students will be able to:

- understand what the choking game is
- identify several of the game's aliases
- explain why this activity is so dangerous and life threatening
- recognize the serious, and even permanent consequences of oxygen deprivation upon the brain and other body organs
- identify symptoms associated with someone who has been trying to get high through oxygen deprivation
- weigh for themselves the risks associated with this extreme example of negative risk taking
- develop a list of alternative activities, including positive risks to take in their lives and in their community
- react appropriately if they find themselves invited or pressured to try the choking game
- know what to do if one of their friends has been participating

*The Choking Game* opens with a dramatic real-life 911 call placed by Samuel, a teen who has just found his twin brother Gabe unconscious and non-responsive in his room. The clip immediately grabs the viewer's attention. Through shrieks and cries, we hear Samuel explain that he thinks his brother might be dead.

Next, a title appears on-screen that asks what might be on many students' minds: *What Is the Choking Game?* Following this, several teens weigh in on the subject. One girl says, "The choking game is when you cut off your air supply so you faint and become unconscious for a while." Other teens elaborate on the activity, explaining that it brings about a sense of euphoria or "makes you feel good."

"The choking game goes by a lot of different names," explains Dr. Tom Andrew, a medical examiner. "It can be known as space monkey, space cowboy, flat lining, the American dream game...." Dr. Andrew goes on to explain that the game has been around for a long time, but that what makes it so dangerous today is that children are willing to play it alone. Samuel, the teen we heard before on the 911 call, now tells viewers how he and his brother Gabe used to play this dangerous game.

The next title appears: *How Does It Feel?* Julie Rosenbluth of the American Council for Drug Education elaborates on the sensations that result from oxygen deprivation—a major reason for the game's allure. "Kids who are playing the choking game generally feel a kind of euphoric high, from the oxygen being cut off to the brain," she says. "The best way to describe it would be a kind of 'out of it' sensation where it just feels really great like when you take a bite into a really great piece of chocolate, but times twenty."

After the question *Is It Safe?* is posed to viewers, teens identify some of the many reasons that participating in the choking game might constitute a dangerous choice. One teen says bluntly, "I don't think it's a game." Here Rosenbluth appears once more, offering insight into why some teens are willing to choke themselves when the risks seem so apparent. She lists what these risks are. They include bruises, bloodshot eyes, shortness of breath, head trauma due to falling, and death. Rosenbluth expands upon a point that Dr. Andrew made earlier about the game being much more dangerous now, since it is being played alone more frequently than ever. "Once they passed out from the game," she explains, "there was no one there to bring the flow of oxygen back."

*How Did You Hear About It?* is the subject of the video's next section. Teens now share the diverse ways that they came to learn about the choking game. Included are health teachers, other kids, neighbors and sleepovers. Some even know peers who have been hospitalized after taking part in it. Samuel says that another child taught him and his brother the game.

Rosenbluth and Dr. Andrew now explain some of the behavioral symptoms that might indicate that a child is playing the choking game, such as needing to be alone more frequently or displaying aggressive behavior.

Samuel returns to offer more details about Gabe and what happened the day that he was fatally injured participating in the choking game. He is joined by his mother Sarah. In a section entitled *Gabe's Story*, Samuel and his mother take turns describing what an exceptional child Gabe was. They describe that fateful day as one that began uneventfully until Samuel walked into the bedroom to find his brother unconscious. Both speakers mention some of the behavioral changes Gabe underwent prior to that day—warning signs that they did not recognize.

*Why Do Kids Play?* comes onscreen next. “Maybe they were just bored and wanted to do something,” suggests one teen boy. Other responses vary: maybe they wanted to be cool, or act grown-up, or maybe they thought it was okay because they weren’t really taking drugs, or maybe they didn’t know the risks.

Because so many choking game deaths are classified as suicides, the next section deals with the question *Is It Suicide?* While Rosenbluth acknowledges “a lot of kids have died as a result of playing the choking game,” she points out that these young people were just looking for a rush or high—they did not plan to lose their lives.

Kodee’s story follows. Trina, Kodee’s mom, tells viewers that her son’s death was initially classified as a suicide by the medical examiner in her area. She explains that she never accepted this determination. Months after Kodee’s death, Trina stumbled across a newspaper article about the choking game. “I found out that I’m not the only one who has lost my child this way,” she says. Trina subsequently had to educate not only herself but also the local authorities. Trina speaks powerfully about the tragic day she found her son hanging by a rope in the family basement.

Viewers need to know the risks associated with the choking game. “This game is really deadly,” says Rosenbluth, adding that it’s better to find alternative, positive risks to take. “With positive risks you still get that ‘I did something exciting’ feeling, but it’s not dangerous to you.” She suggests several positive examples of risk-taking, include trying out for a team or presenting something to the class.

The teens that have appeared throughout the video now return on-screen to talk about healthy risks that they have taken in their lives, such as “going out for sports,” “working on comics,” or “switching schools.” They also list many safe games and activities that they enjoy. Many of these involve drawing upon imagination and creativity. The speakers encourage viewers to look for safe games and activities of their own. The video closes with suggestions for viewers concerning what to do if they or someone they know are playing the choking game. Experts, parents and children are in agreement that it’s always best to tell a trusted adult and, as Samuel wisely points out, “to just stop.”

# STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Pre/Post Test

Decide whether the following statements are true or false.

1. TRUE or FALSE: The choking game is a safe alternative to using alcohol or drugs. \_\_\_\_\_
2. TRUE or FALSE: Playing the choking game is even safer when played alone. \_\_\_\_\_
3. TRUE or FALSE: Going without oxygen for a few minutes at a time is no big deal, as long as you don't go beyond four minutes. \_\_\_\_\_
4. TRUE or FALSE: Brain cells are constantly repairing and reproducing themselves. \_\_\_\_\_
5. TRUE or FALSE: There is no such thing as a safe or healthy risk. \_\_\_\_\_
6. TRUE or FALSE: Playing the choking game can cause a feeling of euphoria. \_\_\_\_\_
7. TRUE or FALSE: Restricting the amount of oxygen that your brain receives can cause severe headaches. \_\_\_\_\_
8. TRUE or FALSE: Playing the choking game can cause a person to feel more aggressive or angry than usual. \_\_\_\_\_
9. TRUE or FALSE: Any activity referred to as a "game" is safe and fun. \_\_\_\_\_
10. TRUE or FALSE: Simply walking away from dangerous activity is a good way to keep yourself safe. \_\_\_\_\_

*The Answer Key to this activity appears on the next page.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Answer Key

- |     |  |       |
|-----|--|-------|
| 1.  | TRUE or FALSE: The choking game is a safe alternative to using alcohol or drugs.   | FALSE |
| 2.  | TRUE or FALSE: Playing the choking game is even safer when played alone.   | FALSE |
| 3.  | TRUE or FALSE: Going without oxygen for a few minutes at a time is no big deal, as long as you don't go beyond four minutes. | FALSE |
| 4.  | TRUE or FALSE: Brain cells are constantly repairing and reproducing themselves.  | FALSE |
| 5.  | TRUE or FALSE: There is no such thing as a safe or healthy risk.   | FALSE |
| 6.  | TRUE or FALSE: Playing the choking game can cause a feeling of euphoria.   | TRUE  |
| 7.  | TRUE or FALSE: Restricting the amount of oxygen that your brain receives can cause severe headaches.                         | TRUE  |
| 8.  | TRUE or FALSE: Playing the choking game can cause a person to feel more aggressive or angry than usual.                      | TRUE  |
| 9.  | TRUE or FALSE: Any activity referred to as a "game" is safe and fun.   | FALSE |
| 10. | TRUE or FALSE: Simply walking away from dangerous activity is a good way to keep yourself safe.                              | TRUE  |

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Imagine that you and a friend are participating in an episode of Scare Factor, a popular new reality TV show. You have made it to the final round and now there is just one more group of fearsome tasks to complete before you will win your weight in gold!

The host, Bo Hogan, explains that you must complete seven of the following 12 tasks, but which ones should you choose? Six represent reasonable, positive risks to take on the road to fame and fortune. Four represent risks that could pose a danger to you and others. The last two tasks could go either way—bad risk or good.

First, read through the tasks.

*If you think it is a reasonable or positive risk, mark it with a **P** (for positive).*

*If you think it is a dangerous or negative risk, mark it with an **N** (for negative).*

*If you think it might be positive or negative, mark it with an **A** (for ambiguous).*

1. Eating earthworms
2. Executing a driving stunt without a seatbelt
3. Bungee jumping
4. Drinking two glasses of a mystery liquid
5. Jumping into a three-foot deep pool of chocolate pudding to find a key
6. Walking a tightrope, 100 feet up, without a harness
7. Drinking a glass of pine-scented toilet bowl cleaner
8. Sitting in a barrel full of crickets for five minutes
9. Trying to unchain your partner from the bottom of a pool while blindfolded
10. Shaving one another's heads
11. Running an obstacle course
12. Taking on Bo Hogan in a no-holds barred wrestling match

Now choose seven of the tasks, and explain your choices in a brief paragraph on the back of this sheet. Keep in mind that at least one of your choices could potentially go either way.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Pair off with a classmate for this role-playing exercise. One of you will play the role of Jessie Chambers, an ambitious television reporter who is hot on the trail of a dangerous new trend among teens. The other will play the role of Doctor Danger, an expert on all things dangerous. Using the questions below as a model, Chambers will conduct an interview with Doctor Danger about the choking game. Doctor Danger should answer as completely as possible using information from the program and fact sheets—including *Warning Signs*, *Oxygen Does a Body Good* and *Choking Game Statistics*. After 15 minutes, switch roles. When both teammates have given their answers, write up your interview on a separate sheet of paper.

Possible questions for Doctor Danger:

Is this practice safer than using drugs?

It sounds safe to me. So what's the problem?

People faint all the time. Why is this so dangerous?

What are some of the dangers of fainting?

My research indicates some teens hurt themselves by bumping their heads. How does this happen?

How many young people die from this so-called game?

Is it safe to play this with a friend?

Can't you go without oxygen for a few minutes without harming the brain or body?

Who is effected by this so-called game?

How many kids are trying this activity?

What are some warning signs that a person is doing this?

Can you tell me any other names this game goes by?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Match the word or phrase on the left with the definition or clue on the right. See the *Oxygen Does A Body Good* fact sheet for help.

				ANSWER
1.	Strangle	A	Rupture or obstruction of a brain blood vessel	
2.	Suffocate	B	A mild brain injury from a blow to the head	
3.	Artery	C	To die from a lack of oxygen	
4.	Brain Death	D	A rupture of the blood vessels in the eye	
5.	Retinal Hemorrhaging	E	Complete lack of brain activity	
6.	Stroke	F	To choke to death	
7.	Concussion	G	Bleeding into tissue from capillary injury	
8.	Bruise	H	Carries blood from the heart	

*The Answer Key to this activity appears on the next page.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Answer Key

			ANSWER	
1.	Strangle	A	Rupture or obstruction of a brain blood vessel	F
2.	Suffocate	B	A mild brain injury from a blow to the head	C
3.	Artery	C	To die from a lack of oxygen	H
4.	Brain Death	D	A rupture of the blood vessels in the eye	E
5.	Retinal Hemorrhaging	E	Complete lack of brain activity	D
6.	Stroke	F	To choke to death	A
7.	Concussion	G	Bleeding into tissue from capillary injury	B
8.	Bruise	H	Carries blood from the heart	G

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

If you suspect that a friend is participating in the choking game or if you have important questions about this dangerous activity, talk to an adult you trust right away. But who are you going to tell and what exactly are you going to say? Sometimes it's best to plan ahead for these things so that you'll be ready if you have a problem.

Below, list five adults you trust and could confide in about dangerous activities within your circle of friends. It could be a neighbor, a parent, a teacher or a member of your community. Then give an example of exactly what you would say to an adult if you have questions or concerns.

Adult 1

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Adult 2

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Adult 3

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Adult 4

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Adult 5

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

The choking game has many aliases. However, this dangerous activity is absolutely NOT A GAME at all! Read the names listed in the *By Any Other Name* fact sheet. Choose five of the aliases and come up with five new, more accurate names that really give a better idea of how harmful this “game” can be. An example is below.

THIS NICKNAME	SHOULD BE CHANGED TO
<i>Example: Funky Chicken</i>	<i>Broiled Chicken</i>

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

ACTIVITY 8A

WORD PLAY

Eight choking game aliases are hidden in the puzzle below. See if you can find them all!

Airplaning  
Flatliners

Blackout Game  
Funky Chicken

Buzz  
Purple Dragon

Fade Out  
Space Cowboy

B R G T Y I W T Z F W P K S A  
F L X N P U U L U H U A A R L  
K O A I I O L S C R N Z A E P  
Y A E C E N O B P B G B F N P  
Q E S D K S A L D H Q H U I U  
O K A L X O E L N R M M N L W  
P F Y V E D U W P T R U K T U  
D M Z R R C U T P R O U Y A E  
M Y P A D S B W G L I Q C L H  
T N G H P E M G R A F A H F T  
N O Y R S P Y A Z F M A I F H  
N R U G Z U F I K M H E C W N  
Y O B W O C E C A P S I K K T  
Q W J J K Q V X F G H W E G N  
P Z B U Z Z Y P E P R J N O R

*The Answer Key to this activity appears on the next page.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Answer Key

B G T P S  
L N U U R  
A I O R E  
C E N P F N  
D K A L U I  
A O E L N L  
F D U P K T  
R T R Y A  
A G I C L  
G A A H F  
O M I  
N E C  
Y O B W O C E C A P S K  
E  
B U Z Z N

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

For each of the activities below, decide which type of positive risks it represents. If it is a SOCIAL risk, mark it with an “S.” If it is an EMOTIONAL risk, mark it with an “E.” If it is a PHYSICAL risk, mark it with a “P.” Refer to the *Positive Risks* fact sheet, which explains the three different categories of positive risks in detail.

		S / E / P
1.	Tracy asks her secret crush, Brian, to go out on a date.	
2.	Miguel and his dad go hiking and camping for the weekend.	
3.	Leigh tries out for the debate team at school.	
4.	Chan confesses to her friend that losing the soccer game made her cry.	
5.	Jonathan agrees to hang out with a new group of kids.	
6.	Richard tries water skiing one summer at the lake.	
7.	Natasha signs up to train for a marathon with a group of runners from different schools.	
8.	Jackson explains to his classmate and neighbor how it made him feel to not be invited to his birthday party.	
9.	Marta agrees to sing at the school assembly.	
10.	Pablo joins a discussion group for new kids at school.	
11.	Jackie takes a class to become a certified scuba diver.	
12.	Dwayne asks a classmate to the school dance.	

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**WHAT WILL YOU RISK?**

Think about some positive risks that you would be willing to take. Very often, positive risks are things that we'd like to achieve—in other words, new goals for our future. For example, maybe you have considered taking up a new hobby like skateboarding. Below, list three positive risks you would like to try. Explain the steps you'll have to take in order to succeed.

For instance, if you want to learn to skateboard, you'll need to save your allowance to buy a skateboard and protective gear, do some research to find safe spots in your community to practice, and find someone to teach you the latest cool tricks.

Risk 1: \_\_\_\_\_

I will need to take these steps to achieve my goal:

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Risk 2: \_\_\_\_\_

I will need to take these steps to achieve my goal:

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Risk 3: \_\_\_\_\_

I will need to take these steps to achieve my goal:

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

As you saw in the program, not everyone survives the choking game. Read the two real life stories below. Then write a brief essay about one of the kids—what you would have said to him if you had a chance? What would you have told them about the dangers associated with the choking game? You may want to refer to the *Helping a Friend* fact sheet.

### Dylan Blake

Dylan Blake was a bright young man who loved animals, walking on the beach, and traveling with his mom Kate. The two were close—“best friends,” says Kate. Together they set out on many adventures, always learning something new along the way. In his new home in Florida, Dylan spent hours exploring the new landscape and wildlife with his family and friends.

However, one day in October, 2005, Kate walked into 11 year-old Dylan’s room to find him fatally injured from playing the choking game. Dylan died in his mother’s arms. She now blames her ignorance about this deadly practice for her tragic loss. Kate remains active in spreading the word about the dangers involved in this activity.

### Nick Serna

Nick Serna was sixteen when he died as a result of playing the choking game. Nick was a great big brother to two sisters and a talented chess player. He loved sports, too, and played on his school’s football team. He had planned to get a part-time job to earn some money.

When Nick decided to play the choking game, all of his future plans came to a halt. On January 29, 2005, he died as a result of injuries sustained from his decision to risk his life for a quick “high.” Today his family is devoted to getting the word out about the so-called game that claimed Nick’s life.



# FACT SHEETS

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

There are many warning signs to indicate that someone you care about—a friend or a sibling—might be playing the choking game. Here are some clues to look for:

### Red Marks on the Neck

Because the choking game involves cutting off the air supply to the brain, children who are participating often develop red marks around the neck.

### Changes in Behavior

Varying the amount of oxygen that reaches your brain can cause mood swings and aggression, as well as other changes in behavior. Experts believe that this may be because the neurons in the part of the brain that regulates emotions—called the amygdala—are being stimulated.

### Bloodshot Eyes

Sudden changes in pressure, like those that take place in one's head during choking, can cause bloodshot eyes. The fancy name for this is a subconjunctival hemorrhage. The condition itself is not usually serious, but it could indicate that someone you care about is playing a deadly game.

### Straps, Ropes, Belts

The tools that kids might use to choke themselves or each other are often common items that are found around the home or in their rooms. If straps, ropes or belts are lying around in strange areas without explanation, then this might signal that something is wrong.

### Headaches

Restricting the amount of life-giving oxygen that reaches the brain can cause excruciating headaches.

If you suspect that someone you know is experimenting with the choking game, be sure to tell a parent or another trusted adult as soon as you can! You might save a life.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

How could something as innocent-sounding as *funky chicken* cost you your life? The fact is that the choking game is deadly, no matter what you call it. If someone tries to encourage you to participate in any of these following games, remember this: they're all the same and they all lead to the same dead end.

Airplaning

AMERICAN DREAM GAME

BUZZ

California Blackout

Elevator Hits

FADE OUT

HYPOXIA HIGH

HYPERVENTILATION

Crazy Monkey

*Fainting Game*

PURPLE CITY

**BLACKOUT GAME**

California High

Flatliners

*Funky Chicken*

**Space Cowboy**

Suffocation Roulette

California Choke

Purple Dragon

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever ran so hard that you couldn't seem to catch your breath even after you stopped running? It's not such a great feeling is it? Well the brain feels even more urgency when it is deprived of the oxygen that it needs to function. For those playing the choking game, this makes life a gamble. If you deprive your brain of oxygen for only a few seconds too long—it's game over forever.

The following is a list of some well-known and not so well known facts about oxygen—something that every cell in your body is begging you to not take for granted.

1. Your body needs oxygen to produce the energy it uses 24 hours a day.
2. It can take as little as four minutes without oxygen for brain death to occur.
3. A lack of oxygen can cause your cells and muscle tissue—including your heart muscle—to die.
4. When a brain cell dies, it's permanent. Nothing can bring back a dead brain cell.
5. Oxygen is essential for respiration, the process by which your body produces the energy it needs.
6. The longer a person remains unconscious due to a lack of oxygen to the brain, the less likely he is to recover back to normal.
7. A lack of oxygen has been associated with a wide range of symptoms—including poor digestion, fatigue, muscle aches and pains, and memory loss.
8. Oxygen is a clear, odorless gas.
9. Only about 20 percent of the air we breathe is oxygen.
10. Breathing is an automatic bodily function. This means you don't have to think about doing it.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Not all risk-taking is dangerous. There are many risks that are healthy and positive, and can help you move towards a better future. Below are three categories of positive risk-taking.

## Social Risks

These risks involve putting yourself in social situations where you might worry about seeming not so cool in front of your peers. Some examples include:

*Auditioning for the school choir*

*Volunteering to visit with the elderly on weekends*

*Inviting friends to look at a painting you've been working on*

## Emotional Risks

Sometimes in order to gain trust and a deeper connection with others we must put ourselves on the line and make ourselves vulnerable. Some examples include:

*Asking someone out on a date*

*Confiding in a friend about a problem you're facing*

*Sitting at a new table at lunch*

## Physical Risks

There are plenty of risks that you can take involving your body and physical action that are good for you! In some extreme cases, these risks should be only be tried under adult supervision. (A little instruction never hurts, either.) This is good news for the daredevil in us all. Some examples include:

*Rock climbing*

*Skateboarding*

*Rollerblading*

*Skiing*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Sometimes our friends can get themselves into a real jam. Perhaps they're not lucky enough to have your excellent sense of judgment. Or maybe they've just fallen in with the wrong crowd at school. Either way, they might benefit from a friendly word of advice. Here are some tips for what might be a difficult conversation.

1. Be prepared—know what you want to say beforehand.
2. Speak in a calm tone of voice.
3. Use “I” statements to make your points.
4. Don't attack your friend with words—this will only make him or her feel like you are angry, not worried.
5. Let your friend know that you are worried.
6. Ask what you can do to help.
7. Share what you know about the dangers associated with the choking game.
8. Offer to accompany your friend to discuss the matter with an adult you both know. Your friend might not like the idea, but it's important to let a grownup know what is going on.
9. Listen attentively to anything your friend has to say.
10. Ask your friend about seeking professional help.
11. Never directly accuse a friend of something unless you have proof.
12. If you have seen your friend participate in a dangerous activity, tell him/her how it made you feel.
13. Pick a time to follow up on the conversation. It may take a few discussions for you to make your point. This is an ongoing process.
14. Remember that getting better is a choice that only your friend can make.
15. Take care of yourself and participate in healthy activities to take your mind off this difficult task.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

The statistics surrounding the choking game are shocking. Did you know:

- 75 percent of those surveyed have heard of the choking game
- 35 percent knew it by some other name
- 58 percent have known someone who has participated
- 15 percent know someone who is still actively participating
- 32 percent admit to having participated themselves
- 11 percent still actively participate
- 37 percent of those who have witnessed the practice did so in a friend's home
- 17 percent have instructed someone else on how to participate
- 53 percent of boys surveyed admit to having participated themselves
- 82 percent of those who participated were not aware of the risks
- 94 percent of victims' parents were not aware their child was participating
- 94 percent of victims' parents were unaware of the warning signs
- The average age of participants is between 9 and 15 years old

*Source: The Dylan Blake Foundation*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Peer pressure is all around us. Even our friends might ask us to do things that we don't really want to do. But there is no need to be caught off guard when it comes to asserting yourself and using your common sense. Here are some suggestions for what to say and do if a friend approaches you about participating in this dangerous game.

### Just Walk Away

This strategy will never fail. If you find yourself in a dangerous situation, or one that just plain makes you feel uncomfortable, turn on your heels and get out of there. No explanation is needed.

### Make a Joke

If a friend suggests playing the choking game, make a joke out of your refusal to go along. Practice saying something like, "No thanks, I don't have any brain cells to spare," or "Thanks, but I already choked last night at dinner." This way, you can share a little bit of what you know about the negative risks, while gracefully getting out of going along with the crowd.

### Explain What You Know

Knowledge is power! So spread it around if you find yourself in the presence of someone who wants you to take part in a dangerous activity like the choking game. Tell them what you know about the risks, and be specific. Mention lost brain cells, damaged retinas, bumps and bruises and death.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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#### WEBSITES

Deadly Games Children Play. (<http://www.stop-the-choking-game.com>)

SADD *Teens Today*. (<http://www.sadd.org/teenstoday/survey04.htm>)

The Dylan Blake Foundation. (<http://www.chokinggameinformation.com>)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (<http://www.health.org>)

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