

# Eyes Open

## Links to Relationships Education and Health Education for children in Key Stage 2

Eyes Open is a 50-minute performance and one hour workshop for Year 6 pupils. The play explores drugs and alcohol in a child-sensitive way, through recognisable characters from a family. During the play the following drugs are explored:

- **Cannabis**
- **Alcohol**
- **Nicotine/Tobacco**
- **Paracetamol**
- **Caffeine**
- **Ecstasy**

The play has been touring schools for the last 11 years, with regular script revisions to keep it current and relevant.

The play features:

**Ellie – an 11 year old girl, just moved into high school and struggling with friendships and boundaries. (Alcohol)**

**Abby – Ellie’s 16 year old sister. Sensible and studious. New boyfriend who she is keen to impress. (Ecstasy)**

**Josh – Abby’s twin brother. Doesn’t feel like he fits in, has been missing school and doesn’t know what he wants to do with his life. (Cannabis)**

**Roger – the Dad of the family, a joker but really cares about his family. (Nicotine/Tobacco)**

**Jan – the Mum of the family. Busy at work, but loves the kids and worries mostly about Josh. (Cannabis)**

**Daisy – Ellie’s best friend. They have recently moved into different secondary schools. (Alcohol)**

**Nick – Abby’s boyfriend. (Ecstasy)**

It is important to note that the play does not offer a simple ‘just say no’ message to children. It is designed to educate and inform children, to ask them to consider their options and choices, and to demonstrate the potential consequences of substance use and misuse.

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In 2020, the government will introduce statutory relationships and health education for children across all Key Stages.

We have long believed in the value of Eyes Open to support children's learning and development, at a pivotal time in their primary education.

In line with the new guidance, we have reviewed the script and workshop and developed this document – which outlines how Eyes Open links to the new guidance and where it offers positive support for children and teachers.

Families and people who care for me	✓
Caring friendships	✓
Respectful relationships	✓
Online relationships	
Being safe	
Mental wellbeing	✓
Internet and safety harms	
Physical health and fitness	
Healthy eating	
Drugs, alcohol and tobacco	✓
Health and prevention	
Basic first aid	
Changing adolescent	

In each box below, the guidance note is stated above. Below this we have detailed how Eyes Open helps schools to deliver this guidance.

## Drugs, alcohol and tobacco

### Children should be taught:

- **The facts about legal and illegal harmful substances and associated risks, including smoking, alcohol use and drug taking.**

The performance covers 6 different harmful substances, as detailed above.

During the performance and workshop children learn about the different drug categorisations, including the legal consequences for different categories of drugs.

The characters actions, and the consequences of those actions, help children to consider the risks associated with different substances. This is later explored further through a choices and consequences activity in the workshop, which further develops children's understanding of ecstasy, alcohol and cannabis.

Children learn about alcohol, about health guidelines for adults and children in relation to alcohol (units / alcohol free childhood) and about the risks associated with drinking alcohol.

Children learn about smoking, about the long-term risks of smoking and the short term consequences of nicotine and tobacco consumption both on adults and children.

Children learn about cannabis, about the impact of cannabis use on the body and the brain and about the consequences of cannabis use across both short and long term periods of time.

Children learn about class A drugs – with a focus on ecstasy – and the associated risks and potential impact. They learn about the illegal production of these drugs and the lack of regulation that leads to potentially harmful / fatal consequences.

Across the whole performance and workshop, they explore the impact on a family of drug and alcohol use, so that their technical and factual knowledge is framed within an emotional response based on the impact on people.

## **Families and people who care for me:**

**Children should be taught:**

- **That families are important for children growing up because they can give love, security and stability**
- **Characteristics of a healthy family life, commitment to each other, including in times of difficulty.**
- **That stable, caring relationships are at the heart of happy families.**
- **That others' families, either in school or in the wider world, sometimes look different from their families.**

The family members presented in Eyes Open all have their own issues and problems, but they model familial relationships based on honesty, love and care, support and guidance. The parents provide stability and support for their children and, at times, the children question and challenge the parents' choices. When Ellie drinks alcohol, her parents are angry but they are angry because they care about her and her safety – this is demonstrable in the play. Similarly, Ellie's anger with Josh's behaviour comes from a place of love and concern. When things go wrong for Abby at the end of the play it is her family who are there for her.

The McCleary family are Mum, Dad and 3 children. Mum works full time and provides a role model for her daughters as a working mum.

## Caring friendships

Children should be taught:

- How important friendships are in making us feel happy and secure, and how people choose and make friends.
- The characteristics of friendship.
- That friendships have ups and downs.
- How to judge when a friendship is making them feel unhappy or uncomfortable, managing conflict.

A pivotal section of the play revolves around Ellie and her best friend Daisy. They have begun attending different secondary schools and their friendship is less secure than it once was. Daisy has begun hanging around with a cooler crowd and her behaviour makes Ellie uncomfortable, but she doesn't know what to do about it.

The situation comes to a head when Daisy offers Ellie alcohol one night while they are at the park. Ellie doesn't want to drink, knows it's illegal and knows she will get into trouble. But her desire to keep her friendship with Daisy and the pressure Daisy gives, means she gives in.

The following scenes explore Ellie's mistake, her subsequent fall out with Daisy. Through a conversation with her older sister, Ellie considers what she could have said to Daisy and whether Daisy is really a good friend. These aspects are also explored in the workshop.

## Respectful Relationships

Children should be taught:

- Practical steps they can take in a range of different contexts to improve or support respectful relationships
- Self-respect and how this links to their own happiness

The performance models and demonstrates a huge range of relationships including:

- Parental
- Sibling
- Partnerships (including the McCleary parents)
- Friendships
- Parent/teacher/pupil

Throughout the play, characters have difficult and honest conversations with each other and children see a range of behaviours that they later reflect on in the workshop.

Self-respect is explored through the characters of Ellie, Josh and Abby in a variety of ways:

- Josh is using cannabis as a way of coping with his feelings of inadequacy
- Ellie worries about her identity and her connection to her best friend Daisy
- Abby is easily led by her older boyfriend

During the workshop, children have the chance to explore their own attitude to themselves and their happiness in relation to the wider world.

## Mental wellbeing

Children should be taught:

- **That there is a normal range of emotions and scale of emotions that humans experience**
- **How to recognise and talk about their emotions**
- **Where and how to seek support, including whom in school they should speak to.**

Drug and alcohol use relates to both physical and mental health and, in particular, the character of Josh demonstrates how people sometimes use drugs to disguise a mental health problem but the drug use exacerbates the issue.

The performance is, in turn, funny, sad and shocking. The young audience see characters demonstrating a range of human emotions, recovering from set-backs, managing conflict and feeling lost. In particular, children see Ellie – who is 11 years old herself – working through a range of problems with her family, her best friend and her own identity. As Ellie learns and develops, so do the children in the audience.

The workshop explores the characters choices in depth, including considering the alternative options and who the characters could have gone to for help and support.

During the workshop children have the opportunity to hot-seat the character of Josh, exploring the impact of the play's events on the family and the impact of his own drug use on his mental health. This activity gives children the chance to ask any questions they have about drugs, alcohol and, more broadly, health and wellbeing.