

McGruff's Gang Alert

Synopsis

McGruff the Crime Dog helps youngsters to understand that they don't have to turn to street gangs for companionship or approval. Most people do seek friendship through groups such as scouts and sports teams. But gangs focus their energies on vandalism, destruction, violence, and sometimes drugs. They may injure or even kill not only rival gang members but innocent children and adults not remotely involved with a gang.

"Gangs take away your freedom," McGruff says. He's talking about the freedom to dress as you want, to go where you want, and to choose your own friends. Sometimes youngsters join gangs out of loneliness, poor self image, or fear. To illustrate his point, McGruff tells the stories of four young boys.

Fernando, age 10, falls into gang membership out of loneliness. He doesn't entirely like the idea of joining a gang, but doesn't know how else to find the companionship he seeks-and he doesn't know how to say "no" when the gang pressures him to join.

Fernando survives his "jumping in"-his initiation beating. When he tires of the gang's focus on vandalism and drugs, he tries to quit. But his "friends" let him know the jumping-out beating will be worse than his induction. He decides to stay with the gang.

When Tony, also age 10, is pressured to join a gang, he speaks to a school counselor, who suggests healthier alternatives. Tony becomes a successful member of an after-school baseball team. He avoids gang members and has the freedom to do what he wants to do.

Eddie, age 11, is a member of a skinhead gang. He thinks many of the gang activities are wrong, but isn't willing to risk criticism or rejection by gang members. While burglarizing a neighborhood grocery

store for the gang, he is caught by police, tried, and sent to juvenile hall. He feels terrible; his parents are hurt, and he knows his criminal record will make it difficult for him to get a good job.

John, age 11, is the pitcher for his softball team. He chooses not to dress like a gang member, not to frequent places where gang members hang out, and to go out of his way to avoid gang members. He knows how to say "no" to invitations to participate in gang activities. He chooses to spend time with friends who like him for who he is, not for what he does for them.

Finally, McGruff says to youngsters, "You have the right to make your own choices. Stand up for yourself and for what you think is right."

Questions to ask before viewing

1. Why do you think people want friends? (Accept all responses without correction.)
2. How can a person make friends? (Accept all responses. Lead discussion to include joining school, church, and community activities.)
3. What can you do when you've been friends with somebody and then stop being friends? (Accept all responses. Lead discussion to include choosing simply to stop spending time with the ex-friend.)
4. If you join a gang so you'll have friends then decide you don't want to be a member, is it easy to quit the gang? Explain your answer. (Accept all responses. Lead discussion to include reference to pressures to stay with the gang and to possible punishment or retaliation for quitting.)

Questions to ask after viewing

1. According to McGruff, why do people join groups? (People just like to be around other people.)
2. What bad things do gangs do? (McGruff refers to graffiti, fighting amongst themselves and with other

gangs, using and selling drugs, destruction of property, and causing injuries and death.)

3. According to McGruff, do gang members have a lot of freedom? Explain your answer. (No. Members go where and dress as the gang dictates.)
4. According to McGruff, why do kids join gangs? (They feel scared, lonely, bad about themselves.)
5. Tell Fernando's story. (See Synopsis for details.)
6. Why did Fernando decide to stay with the gang even though he wanted to quit? (Because he feared a bad beating during his "jumping out.")
7. How did Tony avoid joining a gang? (He talked to a counselor and found he had other choices.)
8. Who has the most freedom, Tony or Fernando? (Tony.)
9. Tell Eddie's story. (Refer to the Synopsis for details.)
10. Why did Eddie and Jim go through with the burglary of the store? (They didn't want gang members to think they were chicken.)
11. How does John manage to have friends without being in a gang? (Refer to the Synopsis for details.)
12. Why does John do his schoolwork even though it isn't always fun? (It makes him proud; he knows that it will improve his opportunities later in life.)
13. What does John do when he's feeling down about himself? (He talks to his parents or other responsible adults.)
14. Tell some of the things you can do if you want to make friends without joining a gang? (Make a list on the chalkboard and discuss as needed.)

McGruff is a registered trademark of the National Crime Prevent Council.

Related Titles in the AIMS collection

9733	Crime Prevention: It's Elementary
8212	McGruff on Halloween
9914	McGruff's on Personal Property
8136	McGruff on Vandalism
9913	McGruff's Drug Alert
9914	McGruff's Guide to Personal Safety
8211	McGruff's Self-Care Alert

Annotation

McGruff tells the stories of four young boys who, like most of us, seek companionship and recognition by others. Two of the boys choose gang membership to achieve that end-and wish they hadn't. Two use strategies described by McGruff to make friends without joining a gang.

Length

- 16 Minutes

Subject areas

- Guidance and Counseling, Crime Prevention, Safety

Audience Levels

- Primary-Intermediate

Catalog number

- 8135

AIMS Multimedia
9710 DeSoto Avenue
Chatsworth, Ca 91311
(818) 773-4300
(800) 367-2467
www.aimsmultimedia.com

AIMS
Discussion Guide

McGruff's Gang Alert

Objectives

- To encourage discussion about gangs
- To show that gangs are harmful to individuals and the community
- To reinforce understanding that most people need companionship and the approval of others
- To teach that individuals can take responsibility for themselves
- To teach that kids can handle the pressure to join a gang by talking with an adult

