

The Real Story About The 'Pass Out Challenge'

A not so new fad has made its way into the public eye; the "Pass out Challenge" has been around since 1995 but recently has surfaced as a real issue in today's teen and preteen social circles. This game has several different forms, all promising the participant a euphoric high. This is sometimes referred to as the "Good Kid's high". The best way to protect children from this potentially deadly game is to know a few things.

What Is the Pass Out Challenge?

First, what is the pass out challenge? If a parent knows what the game is about and when and where teens are being "challenged," they can then talk to their teens about it. Second, what are the signs that a teen has been playing this game/challenge; knowing the signs that a teen has been playing will help in starting the conversation between a parent and their teen. Knowing the signs also make it easier on the parent to confirm what they suspect may be going on behind the closed doors of a teen's life. Third, why do these teens play this game? What are the reasons for playing? Knowing the answers here can help parents understand the motivation behind this deadly challenge and make the conversation less tense and emotional.

Finally, and most importantly, what are the long term effects of the "Pass out Challenge?" What is happening to the teens playing this game? Is it really a victimless game? What are the long-term effects to the brain or the body of a person who plays? The answers to those questions will help a parent talk to and inform their teens about what is going on in their bodies to induce the euphoric feelings they are seeking for and what the side effects could be in the long run.

How to Do the Pass Out challenge?

The "Pass out Challenge" is a not so new fad in the social life of teens. There are several different ways to play this "game",

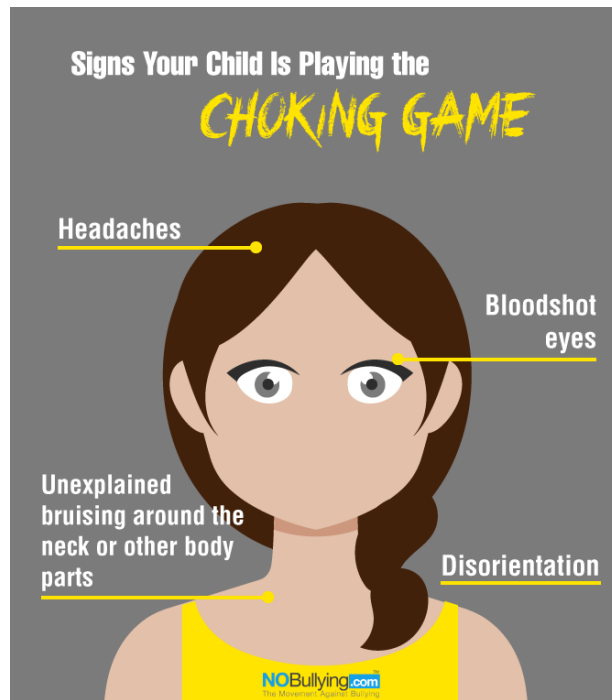
The popular version of this game involves strangulation. In this version of the challenge, one participants will choke themselves or another until they are almost at the point of passing out and then are to loosen the hold producing a "high" from the lack of oxygen to the brain (Weiner, 2012).

This is not only the most popular form of the challenge, but it is also the most dangerous. Children and teens participating in this form of the game believe they have more control than they really do. They believe they will always be able to control the pressure and release of that pressure every time they play it. This misconception is what makes this the most dangerous version of the game.

Children and teens are unaware of how quickly they can pass out and that the more they play the game the longer they will have to be strangled to achieve the desired high.

The Signs Your Child Is Playing the Choking Game

There are several general signs that a child or teen has been taking part in the "Pass out Challenge" or the "Choking Game."



Unexplained Bruising around the Neck or Other Body Parts

The participant in either “game” will have bruising that they are either embarrassed about or cannot or will not explain. These bruises can be from falling down as they pass out and hitting objects or from strangulation. If they are from falling down they will be located around the chest, head, legs, and arms and can be easily passed off as normal wear and tear on their bodies. Bruising from strangulation will be around the neck and there will not be a reasonable explanation for the bruising. Teens participating in this game will want to cover their necks as much as they can so they will not have to explain the bruising.

Headaches

The headaches will be severe and will continue for a few days after the event. They will be located in the frontal lobe of the brain and will affect vision and reason.

Bloodshot Eyes

The participant will have bloodshot eyes and look “stoned” for a time right after the event. They will appear tired and mellow.

Disorientation

The participant will seem to not be aware of the world around them in the same context as others. They may be confused as to where they are or who they are with. Participants may have problems with spatial orientation for a time directly following the event.

Why Do Children and Teens Play This Game?

The reasons children and teens play these games and take these challenges vary. It can be about popularity and a sense of keeping up with the others in their group. It can also be a dare. No matter what reason, children and teens need to know how dangerous any version of these challenges can be.

One disturbing reason found for some children and teens to play this game is the thought that it is a legal way to “get high” without all the side effects of illegal drugs. Other children and teens

use the “passing out game” as an outlet for emotional distress. It may have started out as a dare, or a way to fit in with others but they find that it provides an escape from their reality as well. These children or teens use the “high” as a means of dealing with stress and emotional problems either from home or social groups. Parents should contact professional help for their child or teen if they believe there is an emotional issue that needs to be addressed.

Long Term Effects of the “Passing Out Game”

While participating in the game children and teens are generally unaware of the effects it is having on their brains. Oxygen deprivation to the brain is called Hypoxic-Anoxic Brain Injury. This occurs when the oxygen is either completely or partially cut off from the brain. The disruption of blood flow to the brain is what causes the “high” children and teens are looking for when participating in this challenge or game.

HAI (Hypoxic-Anoxic Injury) has a lasting effect not just on the victim but also on the friends and family of the victim. These persons generally need long term, costly and substantial medical and rehabilitative services for recovery. Patients suffering from a HAI may also suffer from long-term disabilities both mentally and physically.

So what causes the “high” children and teens look for with the “Pass out Game”? The high is caused by the disruption of the neurotransmitters involved in mood control. Specifically serotonin, dopamine and norepinephrine; these three neurotransmitters are directly responsible for mood control. When the oxygen flow to the brain is disrupted causing the participant to pass out, these neurotransmitters attempt to compensate for the disruption, creating a “high” or euphoric feeling.

The long term effects can vary from just passing out and having the high to cell death in the brain or even death of the participant. Cell death can occur within minutes of the deprivation of oxygen. Depending on the location of cell death and the amount of cell death motor function impairment, visual impairment, speech impairment, and sometimes higher brain functions can result. Loss of motor function can be deadly while playing these games. When motor function becomes impaired the participant can no longer loosen the hold in the choking game almost always resulting in pass out challenge deaths by strangulation. Also this impairment may cause serious injury to a participant in the pass out game due to the inability to use their arms and legs to catch them as they fall. This may result in superficial and/or serious head, face and limb injuries.

Talking to Children about the Pass Out Game

It is increasingly important with social media, social networking, and the frequent use of the Internet by young people to discuss the dangers of this challenge with children and teens.

It is also important to remember while discussing this topic that these potential participants are not aware, or don’t want to be aware, of the dangers of the game and therefore need to be educated.

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