



Substance Abuse Awareness Activity: *Time of Truth*

• **Length:** 60 minutes

• **Set-up:** Large circle of chairs

• **Type:** 10 to 30 adults

Trainer Script:

In this activity we're going to look at the Story of Jane and how she came to her Time of Truth.

Instructions:

1. Give each person a clothespin to clip onto his/her clothing.
2. Give each person a set of cards.
3. Give participants the following information:
In this exercise you will identify or name people and things that are important to you. You'll be asked to write these things on the 12 colored cards. You may use words or, if you prefer, symbols or pictures to maintain privacy. At times during the exercise you will be asked to pass one of your cards to another participant. If you don't want others to know what the thing of value is, the symbol or picture will preserve your privacy.
4. Ask participants to write or symbolize the **4 people or relationships** that are most important to them. Write 1 person on each piece of pink paper.
5. Ask participants to write or symbolize **3 material objects** they prize most. These objects should be something tangible. Write 1 material object on each piece of green paper.
6. Ask participants to write or symbolize **1 treasured memory** on the 1 piece of yellow paper.
7. Ask participants to write or symbolize **3 things, tangible or**

Materials needed for each person:

- Clothespins (clip type)
- Sets of cards
- Pencils or pens

TO DO AHEAD OF TIME **Directions for making Time of Truth kits:**

For each participant . . .

- 1) Copy 4 of the "people or relationships" cards on pink paper
- 2) Copy 3 of the "material objects" cards on green paper
- 3) Copy 1 of the "treasured memory" cards on yellow paper
- 4) Copy 3 of the "value or belief" cards on lavender paper
- 5) Copy 1 of the "body or health" cards on blue paper
- 6) Cut cards apart.
- 7) Paperclip cards into stacks with the following 12 cards for each participant:
 - 4 "people or relationships" cards on pink paper
 - 3 "material objects" cards on green paper
 - 1 "treasured memory" card on yellow paper
 - 3 "value or belief" cards on lavender paper

intangible, that symbolize their values or belief system (i.e., a specific belief or value, spiritual or faith practices, church, community, mountains, ocean, or something from nature). These should be things that are most important to them. Write 1 value or belief on each piece of lavender paper.

8. Ask participants to write or symbolize **1 thing they value most about their body or health** on the 1 piece of blue paper.
9. Check that each participant has 12 pieces of paper with the information just described.
10. Read the Story of Jane out loud to participants. The story is about a person who, little by little, develops a substance dependence problem, and little by little, recovers.
11. Ask participants to make changes similar to the changes the person in the story must make. Also, ask participants to maintain silence while the story is read and they handle the pieces of paper.

- 1 “body or health” card on blue paper

Example:

Write down one person or relationship most important to you:

[4 of these cards printed on pink paper]

TOTAL of 12 pieces of paper with the following breakdown:

- 4 most important people or relationships
- 3 prized material objects
- 1 treasured memory
- 3 tangible or intangible things that symbolize your values or belief system
- 1 thing you value most about your body or health

Note: This activity works best with two facilitators: one to read the story and the other to break in by saying, “Stop,” reading the Good news/Bad news, and giving the instructions as to what to do with the pieces of paper.

The Story of Jane

Jane was a senior in high school who came from an upper middle class family. Her father owned a car dealership and made a good income. Her mother was on the Board of the PTA and played an important role in the community by getting parents involved in their children's education and school.

Jane was the oldest of four children in her family. She had two sisters and a brother. Her grandparents also lived in the same town and were involved in her family life.

When Jane turned 16 years old, her father let her have her pick of the cars in the dealership to drive. Jane was always very responsible and made excellent grades in high school. She planned to go to the university to major in psychology and earned a scholarship based on her academic achievements. She was on the varsity cheerleading squad at her high school. Because of her responsible behavior, she was allowed to drive to and from the games with her cheerleading friends.

During the fall of Jane's senior year, some of her friends threw a party. It was the first time Jane had been to a party where there was alcohol. Jane had a few drinks with her friends and drove herself home. Pulling into the driveway, Jane misjudged the distance and scraped the front fender on the mailbox.



- Trainer shares "Good news/Bad news"

Ask participants to **give up a prized material object. [a green card]**

***Note:** Participants are asked throughout this activity to give up something either by crumpling up the piece of paper which symbolized the object and throwing it into the center of the circle, or by entrusting it to someone else's care. If a participant entrusts their valued item to*

- Trainer reads story
- Trainer stops reading at signal
- Tell participant the "Good News" and "Bad News"
- At the time of "Bad News" ask participants to give up one of the things they value; follow directions in script

Good news:

Jane made it home safely.

Bad news:

Jane scraped her beautiful car on the mailbox pulling into the driveway.

- Participants should throw card on floor

someone else, that person must clip it to a part of their clothing (or “self”) with the clothespin. Participants may only “give away” their own pieces of paper. If someone gives you a piece of paper, you may not give it away! It must remain in your care!

Jane didn’t want her parents to know that she had been drinking and driving so she lied to them about how her car got scraped. Her parents believed her story.



Trainer shares “Good news/Bad news”

- Ask participants to **give up an important person or relationship. [a pink card]**

Jane got a part-time job at a “Shop and Go” during Christmas break of her senior year to save money to help with college expenses. All of her friends were planning to go to a big New Year’s bash at the home of one of the varsity football players but Jane was scheduled to work and she couldn’t get off. She felt pretty low about not being able to go to the party and told one of her co-workers, a sophomore at the local university that she was thinking about calling in sick. He told her not to do that. He said she might be surprised at how much fun they’d have at work on New Year’s Eve. She just needed to come to work and wait and see.

When Jane got to work that night, she noticed that someone had brought five one-gallon bottles of wine and put them in the ice cooler. All through the evening, Jane and her co-workers drank. Jane told herself she could drink as much as she wanted because it wasn’t fair that she had to work while her friends were all out having fun. She remembered having about three drinks and feeling drunk but she couldn’t remember anything else about the rest of the evening. She was surprised when she woke up the next morning in the apartment of one of her co-workers. She couldn’t remember how she had gotten there.

Good news:

Jane’s parents believed her story.

Bad news:

Jane began keeping secrets from her parents. It was the beginning of a breakdown in their relationship.

- Participants should throw card on floor



Trainer shares "Good news/Bad news"

- Ask participants to **give up a treasured memory. [the yellow card]**

Jane's parents were frantic with worry. When she showed up at home the next morning, they grounded her from driving for two weeks.



Trainer shares "Good news/Bad news"

- Ask participants to **give up a prized material object. [a green card]**

During Jane's first year of college, she met the man she wanted to marry at a party hosted by some of her friends. They both hit it off and had a lot of the same things in common: friends, ideas and values. They both liked to party and enjoyed drinking, too. After her freshman year, Jane dropped out of college and she and her boyfriend got married.



Trainer shares "Good news/Bad news"

- Ask participants to **pass one of their goals, beliefs, or values to the person sitting next to them on their right. [a lavender card]**

Good news:

Jane survived the blackout and was "safe" at her co-worker's apartment.

Bad news:

Jane couldn't remember what she had done or how she had gotten there.

- Throw card on floor

Good news:

Jane got home safely.

Bad news:

Jane lost her driving privileges.

- Throw card on floor

Good news:

Jane married the man of her dreams.

Bad news:

Jane put off her dream of finishing college.

- Participants clip neighbor's card onto clothing with clothespin

For a wedding present, the best man gave her and the groom a bong pipe. Jane didn't know what it was until her new husband told her it was for smoking marijuana. Jane didn't smoke at all and thought smoking marijuana was wrong. She didn't know her boyfriend, now husband, used drugs and she wasn't too happy about the present. But her new husband showed her how to use the pipe and told her to get used to it.



Trainer shares "Good news/Bad news"

- Ask participants to choose someone in the circle to be their spouse/partner. **Give your spouse/partner one of your goals, beliefs, or values. [a lavender card]**

During the first four years of their marriage, Jane and her husband had three children. A year after they were married Jane had twins: a boy and a girl. Eighteen months after the twins were born Jane gave birth to another baby girl. Her husband worked off and on during this time and both he and Jane partied a lot with their friends. Jane had developed a tolerance for alcohol. Jane didn't drink or smoke while she was pregnant, but started up again after the babies were born. Drinking and smoking kept her from having much of an appetite so she easily lost the weight she had gained during her pregnancies.



Trainer shares "Good news/Bad news"

- Ask participants to **give up the one thing they value most about their body or health. [the blue card]**

Good news:

Jane married the man of her dreams.

Bad news:

Jane gave up her value of "not using drugs" in order to go along with her new husband.

- Participants clip neighbor's card onto clothing with clothespin

Good news:

Jane has three beautiful children and a lovely figure.

Bad news:

Jane is thin because she can't keep food down. Her body isn't able to take in nutrients because of the alcohol and drugs.

- Throw card on floor

Over the next several years Jane and her husband's drinking progressed until Jane was less and less able to get the children dressed and ready for school. Her husband didn't go to work regularly anymore because he was either too drunk or had a hangover. Jane's sisters became concerned about the welfare of their nieces and nephew. They told Jane that unless she stopped drinking they would report her to child welfare services. Jane was upset about the possibility of losing her children and tried to talk with her husband about it. But he went on a drinking binge and didn't come home for three weeks. Jane called her mother who agreed to take care of the children until Jane could get her life turned around. The children went to live with their grandparents.



Trainer shares "Good new/Bad news"

- Ask participants to choose someone in the circle to be their "parent." **Give your "parent" an important person or relationship that you value. [a pink card]**

Jane started going to counseling for her drinking problem. She continued in treatment even after her husband returned from his three-week drinking binge. When he saw that the children weren't living at home, he promised to sober up. For the next four months, he cleaned up his act and went back to work. He stopped drinking, but he still smoked pot. Through treatment, Jane maintained sobriety for five months. Her mother returned the children to Jane's household. But one week after the children returned, Jane's husband started drinking again. Jane tried to persuade him to stop, but after a few days she began drinking again, too. Jane's husband stopped going to work and after several days of absenteeism his boss called to tell him he was fired.

Good news:

Jane is aware of the severity of the problem and is concerned that she might lose her children.

Bad news:

Jane must allow someone else to take her children and care for them because she is unable to.

- Clip card to clothing



Trainer shares "Good news/Bad news"

- Ask participants to choose someone in the circle to be their "boss." **Give your "boss" a prized material object. [a green card]**

Jane panicked and called her mother. When her mother arrived at the house and saw what was going on, she took the children home with her again.



Trainer shares "Good news/Bad news"

- Ask participants to choose the same person they chose previously to be their "parent." **Give your "parent" an important person or relationship that you value. [a pink card]**

Jane entered treatment again and made a commitment to get her life back on track and make a home for her children. Jane told her husband that if he didn't follow through with his commitment to stop drinking and using drugs, he would have to find another place to live. She didn't want to continue living the way they had been. Unless he chose to make these changes with her to create a more healthy home and life for themselves and for their children, she didn't want him to live with them anymore. Jane's husband told her the problems were all hers and he moved out.

Good news:

Jane's husband stops drinking and goes back to work.

Bad news:

Jane's husband starts drinking again and loses his job.

- Clip card to clothing

Good news:

Jane started treatment and had some success.

Bad news:

Jane relapsed when the environment at home didn't change.

- Clip card to clothing



Trainer shares "Good news/Bad news"

- Ask participants to **give up an important person or relationship that they value. [a pink card]**

Now almost twenty years have passed. Jane has been divorced from her husband for eighteen years. Her children are grown and the youngest is almost finished with college. Jane completed a college degree and earned a Master's in Social Work. Last week her mother called to tell her that her former husband had been admitted to a nursing home. He was diagnosed with severe emphysema and cirrhosis of the liver. His health had deteriorated so much that his new wife couldn't take care of him at home anymore. Jane decided to tell her children how sick their father was so that they could decide how they wanted to say "goodbye" to him.



Trainer shares "Good news/Bad news"

- Ask participants to **crumble up their last piece of paper and throw it into the middle of the circle [a lavender card]** without speaking or interacting with each other.

LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

15 minutes

Large group in circle



Trainer Note: Ask participants to sit quietly for a minute to let the story and what they've just experienced soak in. Give them sufficient

Good news:

Jane stops drinking and commits to a sober life.

Bad news:

Jane's husband moves out.

- Throw card on floor

Good news:

Neither Jane's nor her ex-husband's substance abuse keeps her or her children from accomplishing their life goals.

Bad news:

Jane's ex-husband is facing death at an early age due to his addiction and his children must say good-bye.

- Throw card on floor

- Facilitate discussion

time to settle.

- What happened? What did you experience?
- What did you feel when you had to give something up?
- How did you feel when someone chose you to be responsible for something they valued? Was it as simple as “helping someone who asked for help?”
- How can we recognize the difference between helping and enabling?
- How would you define or describe “co-dependency?”
- Was Jane co-dependent?
- Was Jane’s mother helping or enabling Jane and her husband when she took the children?
- Were there alternatives for this family?

Note: The following is a definition of co-dependency.

“A psychological condition or a relationship in which a person is controlled or manipulated by another who is affected with a pathological condition, such as an addiction to alcohol or other drugs.”

—from Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 10th edition

Taken from Hayton, R., Cormack, S., Baehni, S., & Pilot, M. (2002). *Foundations of Substance Use, Abuse, and Dependence*. Kansas City, MO: Mid-America Addiction Technology Transfer Center.
