

## **Attention Parents - 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Guidance Lesson**

Next week the 6<sup>th</sup> graders will be receiving a guidance lesson unlike most lessons. They will be watching a video regarding the "Choking Game" developed by the organization, GASP. The Choking Game is not a game in the traditional sense but a method of self-asphyxiation whereby a person cuts off the oxygen to their brain for a "rush" or "high".

Although this is an unsettling topic, the fact is children and teens ARE playing this game. We feel it is important for them to understand the deadly consequences this game can have. The video they will be watching explains what the Choking Game is and the physical harm it causes. The 20 minute video is available for viewing at [www.gaspinfo.com](http://www.gaspinfo.com) .

### **The Choking Game**

What makes the Choking Game so appealing? Children tend to believe it is a legal and safe way to have fun without using drugs or alcohol. When playing the game, participants will use a signal called a "tap out" to indicate when they are about to pass out and should stop the game. This gives its players a false sense of security. What they do not realize is how quickly asphyxiation can happen thus limiting their ability to stop the effects of the game. Other names for this game include: wrestling, space monkey, flat liner, blackout, passing out, bear hug, sleeper hold, funky chicken, tingling, and fainting game.

This is NOT A GAME!!! In fact, there have been numerous fatalities across the country from variations of this game. The Fox Valley has had several confirmed deaths in past years. Although we are not aware of any current situations in Little Chute, we have had children experiment with playing the game in the past. We need everyone to realize how serious this game has become with youth. Some are taking it to the extreme, using belts, plastic bags, ropes, and bed sheets to help them pass out. Usually the game involves at least two children, but they have been known to try it alone as well. Each time this game is played and the oxygen is cut off to the brain; it causes permanent damage to a large number of brains cells that cannot be repaired. It only takes just one occurrence to put you at risk of: seizures, stroke, permanent brain damage, severe injury and even death.

You may be thinking "my child is too young, or too old to play this game" or "I'm sure my child knows better than to play this game". This is not just a middle school issue - this does happen at the

elementary and high school levels as well. Children between the ages of 9-14 tend to be at the highest risk for playing this game. Many play out of curiosity – not rebellion, depression, or anger. That means, even students who may be doing well in school, have a healthy social group, and are close to their families are at risk. Please keep in mind how physically addicting this activity can become-much the same way alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs are.

### **Here is a list of things to watch for:**

- Reports of severe or frequent headaches
- Disoriented after spending time alone
- Little purple dots around outside of the eye (broken blood vessels)
- Marks on the neck
- Bloodshot or red eyes
- Raspy breath
- Belts, bags, ties found around the house and closed doors or an unusual need for privacy.

Pay attention to the websites your child visits on the Internet. Look for sites that include words “passout”, “blackout”, “space monkey”, “space cowboy”, “knockout”, “gasp”, or “rising sun”. Also check web blogs or chat rooms where children may be discussing the game.

### **What Can Parents Do:**

1. Talk with your child!!! Stress to them that this is not a game and is extremely dangerous. Kids are curious and know it's not safe but are allured by that. It's imperative that we make it clear that it can be DEADLY.
2. Monitor bathrooms, bedrooms, closets, etc. for opportunities where they can be alone together and could play the game.
3. Understand that risk taking is a natural part of growing up. It's a means to relieve stress but we need to make sure they have alternatives for safer risk taking that will produce a natural “high”. (ie. Skateboarding, school clubs, sports, rock climbing, helping others in the community)

It is vital that you communicate with your child about the dangers of this game and similar activities. Just because it's not talked about very often doesn't mean it's not happening-no one is exempt from its allure. If we don't educate them, their friends will! We'd like to make sure this information comes from accurate and reliable sources – the parents and school. As a result, each year 6<sup>th</sup> graders receive a guidance lesson with all of this information and materials from [www.gaspinfo.com](http://www.gaspinfo.com).

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Tracy Schmidt, School Counselor at [tschmidt@littlechute.k12.wi.us](mailto:tschmidt@littlechute.k12.wi.us) or 788-7607.

**Additional Resources**

[www.gaspinfo.com](http://www.gaspinfo.com)

[www.connectwithkids.com](http://www.connectwithkids.com)

[www.cnn.com/2005/US/08/09/choking.game/](http://www.cnn.com/2005/US/08/09/choking.game/)

[www.fwps.org/info/press/](http://www.fwps.org/info/press/)

[www.guidancechannel.com](http://www.guidancechannel.com)

[www.seattleschools.org/area/safety/index.dxml](http://www.seattleschools.org/area/safety/index.dxml)

*Information for this article came from a variety of sources including the websites listed above and from an article in People Magazine, August 22, 2005.*