

BERNARDS TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear Parent/Guardian:

We have been informed that one of the tragic losses of student life we have experienced this year was the result of what is known as the “choking game”.

The “choking game” is also known by several other names including “space monkey,” the “fainting game” and “flatliner.” Children perform a choking-like act either alone or with a friend to temporarily lose consciousness, with the intent of awakening with a rush of euphoria. It is important to emphasize that research shows children who experiment with the “choking game” alone often tragically die after the first or second time. The act can involve breath-holding or robbing the brain of oxygen using ligatures about the neck. Any type of asphyxiation, even if temporary, may cause strokes, seizures, retinal damage, brain damage, or even death. Many of our children have easy access to videos via YouTube depicting others participating in this activity.

We have learned that students in the 9-16 year age group are the most likely to experiment with this type of risky behavior. The early-adolescent brain does not process information in the same manner as an adult brain, and so children in this age group are not able to fully understand the serious consequences that might result.

We recommend that you talk with your children about the dangerous consequences of this “game” and review the search history on all their media devices. Some warning signs to look for include bloodshot eyes, broken-blood vessels on face/eyelids, mood swings, signs of disorientation after being alone, frequent and sometimes severe headaches, and bruises or marks around the neck. Clues to look for in your home include knots in neckties, belts, ropes, or plastic bags left in bedrooms or other private locations.

The links below may be helpful in educating yourselves and your children about this risky behavior. Please take the time to discuss this important information with your child(ren). If you have concerns regarding your child, please reach out to the school counseling department.

Choking Game Informational Sheet

https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/erikscause/pages/15/attachments/original/1491533791/Fact_Sheet.pdf?1491533791

G.A.S.P. (Games Adolescents Shouldn't Play)

Please be aware that the video content provided at this website may be disturbing.

<http://gaspinfo.com/en/home.html>

CBS News, New York report, September 2016

<http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2016/09/06/choking-game/>

As you discuss this with your child(ren), please remind them that they can approach any trusted adult in the school building to seek assistance for themselves or someone else. Parents and guardians may contact the School Counseling Department with questions or concerns at any time.

Sincerely,



Nick Markarian