



ERIK'S CAUSE

**Kids like Erik are dying every week –
YOU CAN HELP!**

Help Stop the Choking Game

THE RISKS BASED ON DATA

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Frequently misunderstood by adults yet rampant on social media, pass-out challenges (often called the “Choking Game”) have been around for generations. Studies indicate that kids experiment with the intoxicating effects of these activities for non-sexual reasons such as curiosity, peer pressure, and the mistaken belief that it is safer than drugs. Easy access to millions of how-to-play videos on the internet permit this activity to flourish, allowing kids to believe it is safe without any understanding of its dangers.

The physical goal is to restrict cerebral blood flow to the point of nearly or actually passing out for a variety of reasons including curiosity, competition, dare, and/or to experience an altered state. This blood flow restriction is accomplished by a variety of methods, the most popular being:

1. compression of the carotid arteries using hands or a ligature,
2. compression to the chest after hyperventilation, and
3. competition or dare to see who can resist passing out the longest under a choke hold (e.g., tap-out or submission holds typically used in mixed martial arts).

CDC Youth Risk Assessment Survey (YRBS) Optional Question

The CDC offers an optional question that localities can add to its biennial Youth Risk Assessment Survey (YRBS). Up thru 2017, the question read:

*“Have you ever been **choked by someone or tried to choke yourself on purpose, such as with a belt, towel, or rope**, for the feeling or experience it caused? (This is also called the choking game, knock out, space monkey, flat-lining, or the fainting game.)”*

Data Since 2013: CDC’s YRBS Optional Question Results Yield a Credible Rationale for Further Study

Four states have added this optional question since 2013. Despite the fact that *this question only asks about only one way this activity is played* (the deadliest – with ligatures), the results of kids saying they have **“been choked ... on purpose ... with a belt, towel or rope, for the feeling or experience it caused”** are eye-opening:

- **2017 – Utah: 10.3% high schoolers responded “YES”**
- **2015 – Kentucky: 10.3% middle schoolers responded “YES”**
- **2015 – Florida: 7.6% middle schoolers responded “YES”**
- **2013 – Montana: 7.4% students responded “YES”**

New: CDC Revised Optional Question for the 2019 YRBS!

Based on a proposal submitted by Erik’s Cause, the CDC has revised the wording of its optional question which will be available for districts to include on the 2019 YRBS. The revised wording encompasses all three primary ways this activity is played:

*“Have you ever **participated in a game or challenge, by yourself or with others, that involved getting dizzy or passing out on purpose for the feeling it caused?** (This is also called the choking game, the fainting game, pass out, knock out, tap out or black out.)”*

Whether your community uses the YRBS or other risk assessment tools ... Ask your district to add survey pass-out challenge questions to student risk assessment surveys

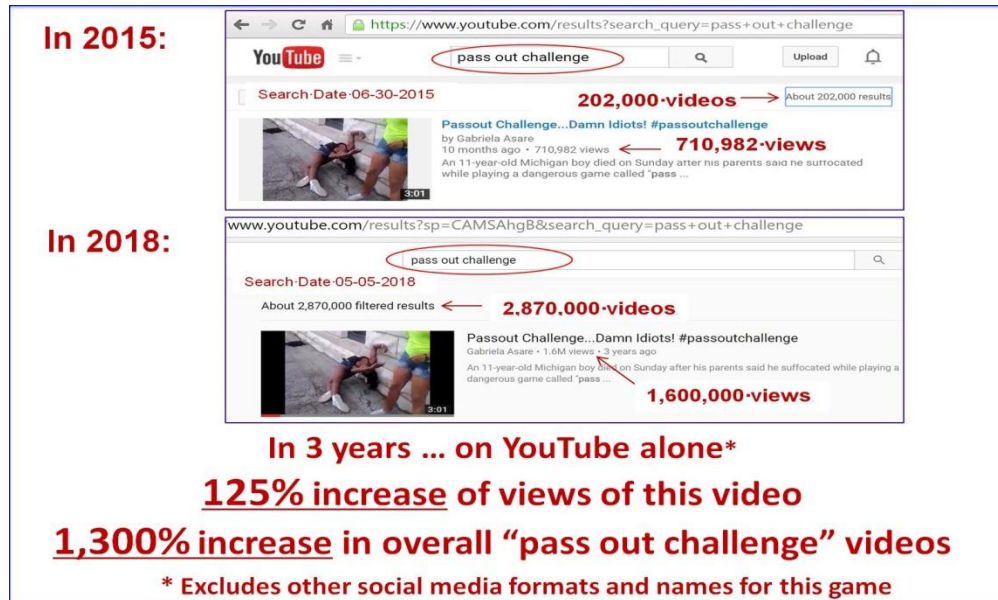
Recent Research – “The Choking Game and YouTube: An Update

In 2016 the University of Wisconsin published research in which they studied 419 “how to play” videos. Among other attributes, crucial findings indicated:

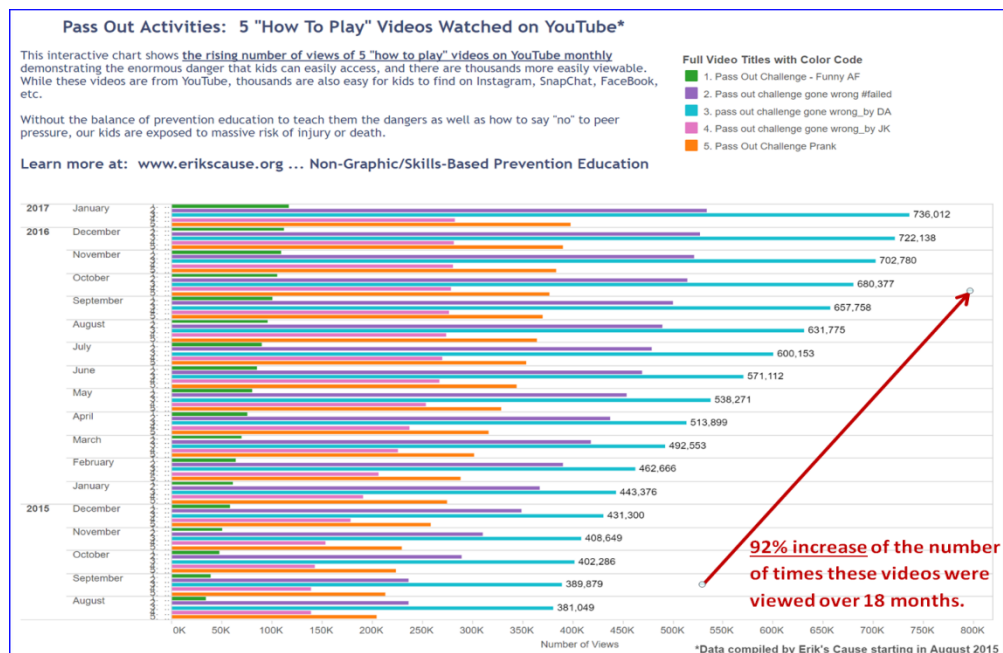
- 400% increase in YouTube videos in just 5 years
- These videos were viewed an aggregate of 22 million times
- Such wide-spread availability without the balance of prevention education leads kids to believe that this is safe to play

Data Collected by Erik’s Cause Supports these Findings

Unaware of the University of Wisconsin study, in 2015 Erik’s Cause began to track some of these videos on YouTube. Below is a snapshot of one video in found on YouTube 2015 and again in 2018, showing a dramatic increase in both the number of videos and the number of views of this particular video:



Erik’s Cause also tracked how many times five randomly chosen “how to play” videos were viewed on YouTube over 18 months. Below is a snapshot of the dramatic results (view in depth at goo.gl/qNAX88).



**Your kids are not immune. The risk is real. Some kids only tried this once or twice.
They didn’t know they were gambling with their lives.**

Learn how we can help your community at www.erikscouse.org