

# **The Choking Game**

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- The “Choking Game” is a traditional, worldwide activity trend popular with youths ages 9 to 15, although some adults also engage in the activity.
- The choking activity involves cutting off one’s oxygen supply to the brain.
- This lack of oxygen then results in a euphoric rush, or high, as the blood rushes to the brain and brain cells burst once the oxygen flow is resumed.
- Youth do it for the euphoric rush, sexual pleasure, as a dare, or as a bullying tactic. It is amusing to some to watch others losing consciousness or behaving erratically, and some find the prospect of an altered state of consciousness, the experience of a brownout or, more recently, copycatting elements of the film “Flatliners”, attractive.
- A brownout, sometimes referred to as a *grey-out*, is a transient loss of vision characterised by a perceived dimming of light accompanied by a brown hue and a loss of peripheral vision. It is a precursor to fainting or a blackout and is caused by hypoxia, a loss of blood pressure or restriction of blood flow to the brain.
- The choking game can be done in pairs, in larger groups, or by oneself.
- If done in pairs or groups, one person applies pressure to either side of another’s neck. The “chokee” often passes out and feels the euphoric high when awakened.
- When done alone collars, ropes, belts, bed sheets, T-shirts, ties, bags, chains, or other items are used to self-administer the choking.
- There are actually two distinct methods of “play” involved in the choking game. Both result in unconsciousness by depriving the brain of oxygen, but each has a very different mechanism. The two tend to get confused or treated as one. The two mechanisms are strangulation and self-induced hypocapnia.
- Strangulation restricts the blood flow to the brain by compressing the carotid artery in the neck. This is achieved either by pressing the thumbs against the arteries on both sides of the neck simultaneously or the use of a ligature, or constricting band.
- Self-induced hypocapnia involves no compression of the neck but requires hyperventilation for a minute, or until tingling, light-headedness or dizziness are felt, followed by a breath-hold. The effect is greatly enhanced if lung air pressure is increased by holding the breath 'hard' - forcing exhalation while allowing no air to escape. This alone causes a blackout, but often a number of other actions such as a bear hug given from behind or pressure applied by another person under or over the heart is used.
- In both *strangulation* and *self-induced hypocapnia* blackouts, the victim may experience dreaming or hallucinations, though fleetingly, and regains consciousness with involuntary movement of their hands or feet much to the amusement of onlookers.
- Recovery is usually made within seconds, but many deaths/invalidities occur every year, particularly when played alone or with a ligature. Permanent brain damage may not be immediately apparent.

- If unconscious for too long, the choking game can lead to serious, permanent neurological damage, short-term memory loss, cardiac arrest, stroke, seizures, comas, brain death (permanent vegetative state), retinal hemorrhaging, death.
- Concussions and other injuries can result from falling while playing the choking game.
- When oxygen and/or blood is deprived from the brain, **CELLS DIE** immediately. Any of the above mentioned problems could happen the **FIRST** time.
- The choking game is free, legal and appears innocuous to those without a proper understanding of the game.
- The game can be learned from friends, on the internet, in the neighborhood, in schoolyards, and at camp; including church camps.
- Typical players are bright, happy, popular teens who often avoid alcohol and other drugs, do not get into trouble, but are curious.
- Both girls and boys play the choking game
- The choking game can be addictive, and addiction is often found in those who do it alone.
- It is estimated that 1,800 youths die each year in the U.S. from engaging in the choking game; although exact statistics are difficult to obtain as choking game deaths are sometimes ruled as suicides.
- **Slang terms for the Choking Game:** Tapping Out, Space Monkey, Space Cowboy, Black Hole, Cloud Nine, The Fainting Game, Airplaning, America Dream Game, Black Out Game, Breath Play, California Choke, California Dreaming, California High, California Knockout, Choke Out, Dream Game, Dreaming Game, Flatline Game, Flatliner Game, , Flatliner Funky Chicken, Harvey Wallbanger, Hyperventilation Game, Knockout, Knockout Game, Pass-out Game, Passing Out Game, Natural High, Sleeper Hold, Suffocation Game, Suffocation Roulette, Teen Choking Game, Rising Sun, High Riser, Tingling Game, Trip to Heaven, and a Rocket Ride.

### **Warning Signs of the Choking Game:**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ inexplicable bruises/red marks around the neck</li> <li>▪ changes in personality—often aggressiveness or agitation</li> <li>▪ disorientation after spending time alone</li> <li>▪ unusual need for privacy (locked doors...)</li> <li>▪ blood shot eyes, pinpoint bruising around the eyes</li> <li>▪ wear marks on furniture (bunk beds, closet rods...)</li> <li>▪ ligatures: straps, ropes tied in knots-explanation avoidance</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ flushed face</li> <li>▪ headaches</li> <li>▪ angry outbursts</li> <li>▪ loss of concentration</li> </ul> |
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- Injury and death have occurred with no warning signs.
  - Youth say that one of the lures to this game is that it isn't talked about much.

### **Resources:**

[www.stop-the-choking-game.com](http://www.stop-the-choking-game.com)
<http://www.deadlygameschildrenplay.com/en/home.asp>  
<http://www.dylan-the-boy-blake.com/>
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Choking\\_Game](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Choking_Game)  
[http://www.connectwithkids.com/tipsheet/2005/235\\_jun29/choke.html](http://www.connectwithkids.com/tipsheet/2005/235_jun29/choke.html)