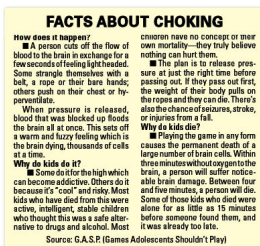


## A deadly practice

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

Wednesday, 07 April 2010 21:53 -

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### Wiggins: Kids choking intentionally is dangerous.

The death of an 11-year-old David City boy who recently died after playing what is known as a “choking game” should be a wake-up call.

Gothenburg High School counselor Jerry Wiggins, who worked in the David City Public School system in the mid 90s, described the game as extremely dangerous because it can result in brain damage or death.

Wiggins said he knows of a couple of cases in the local school system in the past two years in which students choke themselves or each other for a high feeling experienced when blood returns to the brain.

“It’s not much of a high and is very short-lived,” he said.

Wiggins said young people can do it several different ways but the bottom line is that the choking causes suffocation.

“The brain is depleted of blood which can cause death or permanent brain damage,” he explained.

The counselor said kids, from about age 8 to 17, play what they call a game because there’s not the risk of getting caught with drugs or alcohol.

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“They’re also experimenting and view it as safe but it’s not,” Wiggins said.

The practice is extremely dangerous when done in isolation, he said, when the person uses a belt, rope or other device to stop breathing. He or she can die because no one is there to help if he or she suffocates.

That’s what happened to Drew Fiala of David City who was found with a belt around his neck on March 12.

Victims can also pass out and fall and hit their heads or suffer a stroke without anyone around to call 911.

“Three minutes without air can cause brain damage and four to five minutes means a kid can die,” Wiggins pointed out.

A rush from oxygen deprivation can also be addictive.

Done with friends at first, Wiggins said a teen may feel the need to then start doing it in isolation.

Wiggins said parents should be aware of the practice and look for marks around their child’s neck, bloodshot eyes or eye stress or notice ropes or knotted pieces of clothing that are not normally found in their child’s room.

“Kids should report it to a responsible adult if they know other kids are doing it,” he said.

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Perhaps the David City sheriff summed it up the best, Wiggins said, when the sheriff said calling it a game is the worse thing because it's not a game.

For more information, contact Wiggins at 537-3651 or go [on-line](#) .

ebarrett@gothenburgtimes.com 308-537-3636