



INTRO TO PREVENTION SCIENCE: RISK & PROTECTIVE FACTOR THEORY

**Based on Communities That Care
Developed for WA Health Care Authority's DBHR**

**Participant Handouts
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The Center for
Communities That Care

Intro to Prevention Science: Risk and Protective Factor Theory

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Agenda

Thursday, March 5, 2026 • 9:00am - 4:30pm • Virtual

Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

- Define risk and protective factors
- Explain the relationship between risk and protective factors and population-level outcomes, including substance use and related behaviors
- Identify risk and protective factors at the individual, family, school, and community levels
- Identify how risk and protective factor framework informs identifying the community needs
- Explain how risk and protective factors guide prevention planning, including selecting evidence-based strategies

Time	Topic
9:00	Welcome!
9:10	What are risk factors? Relationship between risk factors and population-level outcomes, including substance use and related behaviors Lecture, small group work, and full group share out
10:00	Risk factors at the individual/peer, family, school and community level Lecture and full group discussion
10:30	Break (15 minutes) Risk factors continued What are protective factors? Relationship between protective factors and population-level outcomes, including substance use and related behaviors Lecture, small group work, and full group share out
12:00	Lunch (1 hour)
1:00	Review and Check for Understanding Lecture, small group work, and full group share out
1:30	How a risk and protective factor framework informs prevention planning
2:35	Lecture, small group work, and full group share out Break (15 minutes)
2:45	How a risk and protective factor framework informs prevention planning cont. Lecture, small group work, and full group share out
4:00	Summary, Aha's, evaluation Lecture and individual reflection
4:30	Adjourn

Risk Factor Chart

Risk Factors for Health & Behavior Problems	Substance Abuse	Delinquency	Teen Pregnancy	School Dropout	Violence	Depression & Anxiety
Community						
Availability of Drugs	•				•	
Availability of Firearms		•			•	
Community Laws and Norms Favorable Toward Drug Use, Firearms, and Crime	•	•			•	
Media Portrayals of the Behavior	•				•	
Transitions and Mobility	•	•		•		•
Low Neighborhood Attachment and Community Disorganization	•	•			•	
Extreme Economic Deprivation	•	•	•	•	•	
Family						
Family History of the Problem Behavior	•	•	•	•	•	•
Family Management Problems	•	•	•	•	•	•
Family Conflict	•	•	•	•	•	•
Favorable Parental Attitudes and Involvement in the Problem Behavior	•	•			•	
School						
Academic Failure Beginning in Late Elementary School	•	•	•	•	•	•
Lack of Commitment to School	•	•	•	•	•	
Individual/Peer						
Early and Persistent Antisocial Behavior	•	•	•	•	•	•
Rebelliousness	•	•		•	•	
Gang Involvement	•	•			•	
Friends Who Engage in the Problem Behavior	•	•	•	•	•	
Favorable Attitudes Toward the Problem Behavior	•	•	•	•	•	
Early Initiation of the Problem Behavior	•	•	•	•	•	
Constitutional Factors	•	•			•	•

Risk Factor Definitions



COMMUNITY RISK FACTORS

Availability of Drugs

The more available alcohol and other drugs are in a community, the higher the risk for alcohol and other drug use and violence. Perceived availability of drugs is also associated with increased risk.

Availability of Firearms

Because of the lethality of firearms, the greater likelihood of conflict escalating into homicide when guns are present, and the strong association between availability of guns and homicide rates, availability of firearms to youth is a risk factor for delinquency and violence.

Community Laws and Norms Favorable Toward Drug Use, Firearms and Crime

When laws, tax rates and community standards are favorable toward alcohol and other drug use, firearms or crime—or even when standards are just unclear—young people are at higher risk.

Media Portrayals of the Behavior

Research has shown a clear correlation between media portrayal of violence and the development of aggressive and violent behavior. Smoking depictions in movies increase risk of youth becoming established smokers. Exposure to alcohol use in movies increases risk for adolescent alcohol use.

Transitions and Mobility

When children move from elementary school to middle school, or from middle school to high school, significant increases in drug use, dropping out of school and antisocial behavior may occur. Communities with high rates of mobility appear to be linked to an increased risk of drug and crime problems.

Low Neighborhood Attachment and Community Disorganization

Higher rates of drug problems, delinquency, violence and drug trafficking occur where people have little attachment to the community. Vandalism rates are high when there is low surveillance of public places. Neighborhood disorganization makes it more difficult for schools, churches and families to promote positive social values and norms.

Extreme Economic Deprivation

Children who live in deteriorating neighborhoods characterized by extreme poverty, poor living conditions and high unemployment are more likely to develop problems with alcohol and other drug use, delinquency, teen pregnancy and dropping out of school, and to engage in violence toward others during adolescence and adulthood.

Risk Factor Definitions



FAMILY RISK FACTORS

Family History of the Problem Behavior

When parents have histories of alcohol or other drug addictions, criminal behavior, teenage pregnancy or dropping out of school, their children face an increased risk of similar behavioral problems.

Family Management Problems

Poor family management practices include having a lack of clear expectations for behavior; failure of parents to supervise and monitor their children (knowing where they are and who they're with); and excessively severe, harsh or inconsistent punishment. Children exposed to these family management practices are at higher risk for substance abuse, delinquency, teen pregnancy, school dropout and violence.

Family Conflict

Conflict between family members appears to increase children's risk for substance abuse, delinquency, teen pregnancy, school dropout and violence—and it appears to be more important than family structure (e.g., whether the family is headed by two biological parents, a single parent or another primary caregiver).

Favorable Parental Attitudes and Involvement in the Problem Behavior

Parents who approve of, encourage or participate in problem behaviors increase their children's risk for these behaviors.



SCHOOL RISK FACTORS

Academic Failure Beginning in Late Elementary School

Beginning in the late elementary grades, academic failure increases the risk of substance abuse, delinquency, teen pregnancy, school dropout and violence. It appears that the experience of failure itself, not any lack of ability, increases the risk of these problem behaviors.

Lack of Commitment to School

Lack of commitment to school means that a child no longer sees the role of student as meaningful and rewarding. Young people who have lost this commitment to school are at higher risk for substance abuse, delinquency, teen pregnancy, school dropout and violence.

Risk Factor Definitions



PEER & INDIVIDUAL RISK FACTORS

Early and Persistent Antisocial Behavior

Boys who are aggressive in grades K-3 or who have trouble controlling impulses are at higher risk for alcohol and other drug use, delinquency and violent behavior. This risk factor also includes persistent antisocial behavior in early adolescence (such as misbehaving in school, skipping school and getting into fights with other children), which increases the risk for substance abuse, delinquency, teen pregnancy, school dropout and violence.

Rebelliousness

Young people who do not feel that they are part of society or bound by rules, who don't believe in trying to be successful or responsible, or who take an active rebellious stance toward society are at higher risk for drug use, delinquency and dropping out of school.

Friends Who Engage in the Problem Behavior

Even when young people come from wellmanaged families and do not experience other risk factors, spending time with friends who engage in problem behaviors greatly increases their risk of developing those behaviors.

Gang Involvement

Research has shown that children who have delinquent friends are more likely to use alcohol or other drugs and to engage in delinquent or violent behavior than children who do not have delinquent friends. Gang members, however, are even more likely to engage in these problem behaviors.

Favorable Attitudes Toward the Problem Behavior

During the elementary years, children usually express anti-drug, anti-crime and prosocial views. In middle school, as others they know participate in such activities, their attitudes may shift toward greater acceptance, placing them at higher risk.

Early Initiation of the Problem Behavior

The earlier that young people use drugs, commit crimes, first drop out of school or become sexually active, the greater their chances of having chronic problems with the respective problem behavior.

Constitutional Factors

Certain physiological, neurological or personality} characteristics including sensation-seeking, low harm-avoidance and lack of impulse control, increase the risk of drug use, delinquency and/or violent behavior.

Common Protective Factors for Multiple Youth Outcomes

	*Substance Abuse	+Delinquency	*Risky Sexual Behavior	+School Drop-Out	+Violence	+Depression & Anxiety
Individual						
Cognitive Competence	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Emotional Competence		✓				
Social/Behavioral Competence	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Self-Efficacy			✓			
Belief in the Future	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Self-determination			✓			
Pro-social Norms	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Spirituality	✓	✓	✓			
Family, School and Community						
Opportunities for Positive Social Involvement	✓	✓				
Recognition for Positive Behavior	✓	✓			✓	✓
Bonding to Prosocial Others	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

***Substance Use and Risky Sexual Behavior: Systematic evidence.** The list of protective factors known to buffer against these outcomes comes from systematic reviews of the literature, finding a minimum of 2 high quality longitudinal studies and a preponderance of evidence documenting the predictive relationship between each protective factor and outcome. Substance use was comprehensively reviewed in a review of evidence for the Surgeon General's report on Facing Addiction in America, 2017. Risky sex was comprehensively reviewed in a special issue on positive youth development and sexual and reproductive health in 2010 in the Journal for Adolescent Health Volume 46 (3 supplement).

+Delinquency, Violence, School Drop-out & Depression/Anxiety: Developing evidence. The list of protective factors for these outcomes was developed by examining all the research published by SDRG. A check under these outcomes means that there are at least 2 high quality longitudinal studies that document the predictive relationship between the protective factor and the outcome.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of the Surgeon General, Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health. Washington, DC: HHS, November 2016. addiction.surgeongeneral.gov.

A Review of Positive Youth Development Programs That Promote Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health, Loretta E. Gavin M.P.H., Ph.D.; Richard F. Catalano, Ph.D.; Corinne David-Ferdon, Ph.D.; Kari M. Gloppen, M.P.H. Christine M. Markham, Ph.D., Journal of Adolescent Health, Vol 46, Issue 3, Supplement, March 2010, Pages S75-S91.

Common Protective Factors for Multiple Youth Outcomes

Protective Factor	Definition	Measured on the CTCYS
Individual		
Cognitive Competence	Includes a broad range of cognitive abilities, including academic performance, logical/analytic thinking, problem-solving, decisionmaking, planning, goal-setting and self-talk skills.	We have some measures but they are risk factors-academic failure
Emotional Competence	The ability to identify and respond to feelings and emotional reactions in oneself and others. Includes skills for identifying feelings, managing emotional reactions or impulses, building youth's self-management strategies, empathy, self-soothing, frustration tolerance.	
Social/ Behavioral Competence	The range of interpersonal skills that help youth integrate feelings, thinking and actions to achieve social and interpersonal goals. Includes skills such as communication, assertiveness, refusal and resistance, conflict resolution, interpersonal negotiation strategies, effective behavior choices and action patterns.	Social skills
Self-Efficacy	The perception that one can achieve desired goals through one's own action. Includes personal goal-setting, coping and mastery skills, techniques to change self-defeating cognitions.	
Belief in the Future	The internalization of hope and optimism about possible outcomes. Includes belief in one's own future potential, goals, options, choices or long range hopes & plans and healthy and productive adult life.	
Self-determination	The ability to think for oneself, and to take action consistent with that thought. Includes youth capacity for empowerment, autonomy, independent thinking, self-advocacy, and ability to live and grow by self-determined internal standards and values.	
Pro-social Norms	Clear and explicit standards for behavior that minimize health risks and support prosocial involvement.	Belief in the moral order
Spirituality	Includes concepts such as belief in a higher power, internal reflection or meditation, exploring a spiritual belief system or sense of spiritual identify, meaning or practice.	Religiosity
Family, School and Community		
Opportunities for Positive Social Involvement	Existence of accessible events and activities across different social environments that are health or development promoting including opportunities for prosocial actions. Includes ability for youth to actively participate, make a positive contribution, and experience positive social exchanges.	Opportunities for prosocial involvement
Recognition for Positive Behavior	Rewarding, recognizing or reinforcing children's prosocial efforts, behaviors, and accomplishments.	Rewards for prosocial involvement
Bonding to Prosocial Others	Strong relationships of attachment to prosocial peers and adults in the environment and strong investments or commitment to prosocial institutions.	Attachment to parents low neighborhood attachment, low commitment to school

Definitions from: Positive Youth Development in the United States: Research Findings on Evaluations of Positive Youth Development Programs, Richard F. Catalano, M. Lisa Berglund, Jeanne A. M. Ryan, Heather S. Lonczak, and J. David Hawkins, Prevention & Treatment, Volume 5, Article 15, posted June 24, 2002

Social Development Strategy



Dylan & Eden

I would like to tell you a story about two 14-year-olds named Dylan and Eden. Dylan and Eden live in the community and can often be seen hanging around the neighborhood when school is out. They don't typically participate in organized extracurricular activities, and their parents work long hours, often meaning Dylan and Eden are responsible for supervising themselves when school is not in session.

The local YMCA director, Quinn, has noticed Dylan and Eden on numerous occasions while out and about in the neighborhood, but typically does not interact with them. Recently, Quinn noticed that some older youth in the neighborhood had been trying to recruit Dylan and Eden to join in activities that could lead to serious trouble. Slowly but surely, those opportunities began to look more appealing. Looking for a way to help keep Dylan and Eden on a positive path, Quinn decided to approach them with an opportunity to do some work at the YMCA in exchange for compensation. When Dylan and Eden heard the offer, they seemed surprised-but accepted.

On Monday, Dylan and Eden reported to the YMCA, where Quinn explained their tasks of setting up seating and running scoreboards for the Little League basketball, football, and soccer games. Quinn showed them where to find supplies, how to track and report their work hours, and other information they needed to be successful in their new roles. That day, Dylan and Eden enthusiastically set up the seating and ran the scoreboards, though Quinn noticed they forgot to return the scoreboard equipment at the end of their shift.

On Tuesday, Quinn reviewed the process for setting up seating and running scoreboards again. Over time, Dylan and Eden followed all the steps for their tasks and even went above and beyond by helping families carry belongings to their cars after games. As time went on, Dylan and Eden wanted to spend more and more time at the YMCA. They even began inviting other youth from the community to join them there. Quinn noticed their effort and consistency and continued to provide opportunities for them to stay involved at the center.

Whenever Quinn saw Dylan and Eden out in the neighborhood with their parents, friends, or even people they didn't know well, Quinn always made a point to mention how much their work at the YMCA was appreciated and how their efforts had made the Little League games smoother and more enjoyable for the community. Quinn also regularly pointed out how Dylan and Eden were showing leadership and how other youth in the community looked up to them. During these moments, Dylan and Eden felt proud of themselves and increasingly valued the guidance and encouragement they received from Quinn and the YMCA staff.

As time went on, Quinn often talked with Dylan and Eden about making healthy, positive choices in life. Dylan and Eden noticed how Quinn interacted with others, the decisions Quinn made, and how Quinn lived their life overall. Gradually, Dylan and Eden grew more confident in their ability to be leaders and make good choices.

So when the older youth later approached Dylan and Eden with opportunities to engage in behavior that could lead to trouble, what do you think they did? They confidently declined.

Operationalizing the SDS Story

SDS Component	Where in the Story
Opportunities <i>What opportunities does the story illustrate?</i>	
Skills <i>What Skills do young people learn in the story?</i>	
Recognition <i>How are the young person's efforts and achievements recognized? Is the recognition specific and meaningful?</i>	
Bonding <i>Is bonding an intentional goal? How is appropriate, healthy bonding encouraged and recognized?</i>	
Heathy Behaviors <i>What behaviors does the person wish to promote?</i>	
Healthy & Clear Standards <i>How are standards for behavior routinely communicated?</i>	
Individual Characteristics <i>How does the story show that individual characteristics were taken into account?</i>	

SDS Components

Opportunities

Opportunities for youth to engage in community change efforts are crucially important for personal and social change outcomes. Such opportunities foster critical awareness, activism, identity development, self-esteem, public efficacy/social responsibility, academic achievement, sense of belonging/connectedness, critical literacy, leadership skills, and overall psychosocial well-being.

Families can provide opportunities for their children by finding meaningful ways to contribute to the family (for example menu planning, household maintenance, household finance planning). Schools can ensure that youth have choices in their assignments, are invited to help create the class standards and have opportunities to be meaningfully engaged in learning. High quality out of school programs can also provide opportunities for young people to explore a broad range of new areas. Likewise, your CTC coalition should provide young people opportunities to be authentically and actively engaged in the process so they can build leadership, communication and activism skills.



One practical example of providing opportunities to those who typically don't have a voice is the Photovoice process. Photovoice provides young people the opportunity to identify issues, represent them, and change their community through a specific photographic technique. The process provides opportunity for young people *who seldom have access to those who make decisions over their lives* and enables them to act as catalysts for change in their own community. Another example is YELL (Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning). YELL is a youth-led, after-school community research and advocacy program that enables youth to engage in social change.

Tips for Providing Opportunities for Youth

When providing opportunities, keep in mind that opportunities should be:

- Age appropriate
- Meaningful
- Matched to the young person's individual characteristics and interests
- Challenging enough to be motivating, but not frustrating

SDS Components

Skills

While it's important to provide young people with meaningful opportunities, they need to be balanced with skill mastery. Too much opportunity without skill promotes frustration. Too much skill without enough opportunity results in boredom. When we provide a good match between opportunity and skill we maximize the potential for strong bonds. One example of this is Leadership Excellence, a small community-based program in Oakland, California that educates Black youth in personal and social change efforts. This process of engagement develops the capacity for youth to gain the skills necessary to engage effectively in community change efforts that reflect their values and beliefs of a just society.

In this fast changing and technological world, it becomes even more important to ensure that all young people are learning and practicing the social and emotional skills they need to be successful in life. These social and emotional skills also need to be taught in schools and reinforced in the community. The Collaboration for Social and Educational Learning (SEL) has been advocating for strong standards for social and emotional skills for schools across America (see CASEL <http://www.casel.org/statestandards-for-social-and-emotional-learning/>). SEL is the process through which we learn to recognize and manage emotions, care about others, make good decisions, behave ethically and responsibly, develop positive relationships, and avoid negative behaviors. All children need these characteristics to be successful, not only in school, but in life.



Social and emotional learning is gaining traction in states and districts across the country as they begin to develop and adopt specific standards for their students. Strong social and emotional skills contribute to better academic performance, improved attitudes and behavior in school, fewer negative school behaviors including class disruption and disciplinary referrals, and fewer reports of student's emotional distress. Schools that intentionally focus on social skill instruction and reinforcement foster stronger connections and a more nurturing environment. Across America educators are becoming more

aware of the need for direct instruction of social and emotional skills in classrooms. There are a variety of evidence-based curricula on the Blueprints for Healthy Development menu that provide schools tools to effectively instruct social and emotional skills, for example, PATHS, Positive Action, and Life Skills Training. Other schools employ specific SEL instruction into academic content such as math or social studies. Adult support and modeling of positive interactions and models of social-emotional competence increase overall student engagement in school.

SDS Components

Tips for Teaching Skills to Youth

Be Realistic: The skill should be appropriate for the youth's abilities. Children learn best and are willing to keep on trying when they gain success quickly. And remember that just because the one child learned a skill at a particular age, that doesn't mean that another child will necessarily be ready to learn that skill at the same age.

Start Small: If you want a child to learn a complicated skill, teach one part at a time. For example: If you want them to learn how to clean his room, start by teaching them how to put away their toys. Once they master this skill, teach them how to fold and put away clothes or make their bed. A child's inability or lack of readiness to learn a certain skill may be the result of our failure to break a difficult task up into manageable steps and teach those steps one at a time.

Build on Success: Provide new challenges. If a child experiences 100% success 100% of the time, she may have a tendency to give up the first time she encounters something difficult. On the other hand, if a child experiences frequent failures, he can become so discouraged he will stop even trying.

When teaching youth, consider using these steps:

- **SELL & TELL:** Explain why the skill is important & break skill into small steps
- **SHOW:** Demonstrate each step
- **DO:** Coach while the child practices
- **GIVE FEEDBACK:** Recognize effort
- **USE:** Make sure the child can use the skill

SDS Components

Recognition

It's interesting to understand the perspective of youth related to recognition. For example, in Washington State, when over 11,400 eighth-grade students were asked *My teachers praise me when I work hard in school*, 50% said Yes. When asked *My teachers notice when I'm doing a good job and let me know about it*, 67% said Yes. The 9,200 10th graders surveyed saw even less reward, with 40% and 58%, respectively, reporting Yes. This means we have a long way to go to create environments where young people perceive they are recognized not only for their accomplishments, but for their effort.

There are concrete things that communities can do to increase youth recognition. For example, one community has chosen to implement the Lions Quest program Skills for All to foster stronger social and emotional skills for students in their schools.

To do this, the school teamed up with Quizno's sub shop. Each week two students are recognized as the Quiznos Quest Kids of the week. They get free sub sandwiches at the sub shop, and have their pictures posted in the local paper. Another community fostered a link between businesses and schools to recognize students' achievement and expanded it into recognition not only for academics but active community involvement.



Recognition can also become embedded in the fabric of the community. One fast-growing community in Utah has a monthly recognition for youth who are nominated by schools and out-of-school-time programs at the city council meetings. Each month, young people are recognized for their social skills, as well as their contributions to the school and community. Nominated youth attend the city council meeting, receive a few gifts donated by community businesses, and are acknowledged by the mayor. This is the *feel-good* meeting of the month for the city council members because the chambers are filled with family and friends who are supporting the youths' recognition.

When youth are recognized for their skillful involvements it promotes strong bonds. Bonding is the motivation to contribute to and follow healthy and clear standards.

It is helpful to consider that some students are not going to feel good about being given an award at an all-school assembly, or in front of a large crowd. Knowing that the youth has a fear of being in front of crowds is important when providing feedback that will be meaningful and rewarding. For some, a quiet word or a note is more meaningful, for others, bring on the assembly and the news articles!

SDS Components

Regardless of past achievement, if students believe (or are taught to believe) that they can acquire new skills and improve existing skills through focus and exertion, their motivation to try will grow. Therefore, it is essential to help students learn to associate their achievement with their effort, which they can control, rather than with an innate ability they simply may or may not possess.

For educators implementing student-centered approaches to learning, this means that recognizing effort is critical. Recognition is most effective when it is specific to a skill or talent the student is developing, such as, *Maria, I can see your work to improve your writing. It has really improved. Your hard work is paying off.*

Here's an example of in the moment feedback in a martial arts class: *Dante, you did a good job on that round kick! You kept your hands up the entire time, pointed your support heel at the target, and ended up back in your guarding stance! Nicely done! I know you have been working very hard on getting back into your guarding stance every time!*

Tips for Providing Recognition to Youth

Be specific and positive: Notice what children are doing well, and recognize it. Encourage children for trying or getting started and course correct where necessary. For example, *It was great you got started on the dishes tonight without my asking.*

Give only one improvement suggestion: If necessary, give an improvement suggestion. It is difficult and discouraging to work on improving more than one thing at a time. For example, *Let me show you how to load the dishwasher.*

SDS Components

Bonding

The Social Development Strategy suggests that children learn patterns of behavior, whether prosocial or antisocial, from their social environment. Children develop strong bonds through three processes:

1. Perceived and actual opportunities for involvement in activities and interactions with others
2. Skills for involvement and interaction
3. Perceived rewards from involvement and interaction



When parents, teachers, friends and community members are consistent, that social bond of attachment and commitment develops between the child and those people.

Once strongly established, the social bond acts as a motivator to follow the beliefs and standards through establishing the youth's stake in conforming to the norms, values, and behaviors of the family, school, community and peer group. The behavior of the individual will be

prosocial or antisocial depending on the predominant behaviors, norms, and values held by those individuals or institutions to whom/which the individual is bonded.

Think about gangs. Do gangs provide opportunities for involvement? Skills? Recognition? Do gangs promote a strong bond or commitment? Do gangs have clear standards for behavior? The answer to all of these questions is of course, yes. The challenge is that if we don't provide positive nurturing environments powered by the social development model, young people will seek out bonding in negative ways and are more likely to follow a negative path.

Bonding is a key element of the social development strategy and it is developed through three important processes—opportunities, skills and recognition. While these are important they may be limited due to a youth's individual characteristics, income, race, or culture. As communities are working to promote protection for youth it will be important to understand and address issues of inequality that might constrain young people from feeling connected or bonded to positive adult role models. Your community might choose to actively address these constraints so that the SDS can be a protective process for all young people in your community.

Questions to Consider

- What families or youth in our community are systematically excluded from opportunities to be involved (consider language, income and cultural barriers)?
- What can we do to expand opportunities, skills and recognition activities to ensure that these families and youth are not systematically excluded?

SDS Components

Healthy and Clear Standards

Clear standards for behavior that are shared between family, school and community are important for young people to understand what behavior is expected. Yet, having clear standards and ensuring they are consistently enforced can be a challenge. For example, some families might be unclear about whether it's appropriate for their 17 year old student to drink alcohol. Some schools might have a clear no use alcohol policy, but it might not be constantly enforced—for example when a star athlete might miss the big game if they enforced the alcohol policy after they were caught drinking. Communities also might have an under 21 no use policy—but when they find youth using in public places...they ask them to pour out the alcohol while telling kids not to use.

Further, we know that there are disparities in healthy beliefs. For example, researchers recently found that when over 15,000 youth in 7th to 12th grades were asked whether they expected to live past the age of 35; there were very differing beliefs based on their race. Only one out of every two Black youth reported that they believed they would still be alive past age 35. The rate was 46% for second-generation Mexican Americans and 38% for foreign-born Mexicans compared to 66% for White youth. Our beliefs about our future are a core aspect of our identity. Some schools are using Possible Selves as a practice meant to help students self-regulate and increase motivation towards achieving personal goals. In order to do this, students are asked to visualize multiple possible selves, or versions of themselves in the future. As one part of the strategy, students envision what a positive future would look like, in which they achieve specific academic, vocational, or other goals.



As another part, students imagine a negative future in which these goals were not achieved. While the end points envisioned are important for both of these exercises, the focus of this strategy is on understanding the choices and forks in the road that separate the paths to the two outcomes. After thinking of the positive future, students think about the efforts necessary to make it a reality. This is then used as a tool to formulate a detailed plan towards achieving their goals. Similarly, students discuss what choices might lead down the path to the negative future and how to handle these barriers as they arise. In controlled trials, reflecting on future selves increases growth mindset, self-efficacy, motivation, goal setting and management, relevance and purpose, academic initiative, effort, and performance.

Possible Selves is just one example for helping develop healthy beliefs. Consider the tips below for establishing healthy and clear standards.

Check Your Understanding

Prevention Science

1. Finish this sentence: *To prevent a problem before it happens you must change . . .*
 - a. the problem.
 - b. the predictors of the problem.
 - c. the laws that affect the problem.
2. Prevention science has proven effective in preventing which of these adolescent health and behavior problems? (circle all that apply)
 - a. Depression & anxiety
 - b. Teen pregnancy
 - c. Violence
 - d. Illegal music downloading
 - e. Substance use
 - f. Delinquency

The Science of Risk Factors

1. Risk factors are (circle all that apply):
 - a. conditions that decrease the likelihood of health & behavior problems
 - b. present prenatally and throughout children's developing years
 - c. found in communities, schools, families, peer groups and individuals
2. How can a community reliably measure risk and protective factors?
 - a. By observing how children interact with each other
 - b. By using the CTC youth survey
 - c. By mapping graffiti and other types of vandalism
3. How can addressing risk factors give you more bang for your buck?
 - a. They can help a community identify the young people at highest risk and focus prevention efforts specifically on them
 - b. They are cheaper to address than problems
 - c. Many risk factors predict multiple problems, so reducing one risk factor can impact not just one but several health and behavior problems

Check Your Understanding

4. Why is it important to know about the risk factors in your community?
 - a. Knowing the risks that are active in your community is the key to effective prevention – to get ahead of the problems affecting the youth in your community
 - b. Knowing about risk factors helps you target prevention programs to the individual children who are already in trouble and need them most
 - c. Knowing about risk factors helps you understand your community's unique situation so you can focus your community's treatment programs for young people with health and behavior problems

Community Risk Factors

1. Finish this sentence: *Community risk factors are . . .*
 - a. risk factors in neighborhoods and communities.
 - b. always the strongest predictors of adolescent health and behavior problems.
 - c. pretty much the same in every community.
2. The risk factor *Availability of Drugs and Firearms* means that the easier it is to get drugs, alcohol or firearms, the more likely young people are to use them.
 - a. True
 - b. False
3. Other community risk factors include (circle all that apply)
 - a. Community laws and norms favorable to drug use
 - b. Low neighborhood attachment/community disorganization
 - c. Media portrayals of violence or drug use
 - d. Absence of messages about how frightening prison is
 - e. People moving a lot – transitions and mobility
 - f. Poverty
4. It's not possible to change community risk factors. They're engrained in the way communities function.
 - a. True
 - b. False

Check Your Understanding

Family & School Risk Factors

1. Finish this sentence: *A family risk factor is . . .*
 - a. a condition in the family that promotes positive development.
 - b. a condition in the family that predicts later health and behavior problems for the children.
 - c. a condition that puts the family at risk of falling apart.
2. The risk factor of family management problems includes which components? (circle all that apply)
 - a. Failure to set clear expectations
 - b. Failure to monitor children's behaviors in developmentally appropriate ways
 - c. Failure to teach children skills for financial planning
 - d. Excessively severe and inconsistent discipline
3. What are the school risk factors? (circle all that apply)
 - a. Dropping out of school
 - b. Low commitment to school
 - c. Failure to respect the teacher
 - d. Academic failure beginning in late elementary grades
4. Most of the family and school risk factors predict ALL of the youth health and behavior problems.
 - a. True
 - b. False

Peer & Individual Risk Factors

1. *Finish this sentence: Peer and individual risk factors are . . .*
 - a. typically the most important risk factors for prevention.
 - b. characteristics of young people themselves.
 - c. the same in every community in one way or another.
2. Other peer and individual risk factors include (circle all that apply)
 - a. Gang involvement
 - b. Being left handed
 - c. Rebelliousness

Check Your Understanding

- d. High sociability
 - e. Friends who engage in the problem behavior
 - f. Favorable attitudes toward the problem behavior
3. Because having friend who engage in delinquent behaviors are the strongest are the strongest correlation of delinquent behavior, it's best to wait to begin delinquency prevention efforts until middle school when youth begin to develop these friendships.
- a. True
 - b. False
4. Constitutional risk factors are violations of individual's legal rights that lead them to commit crimes.
- a. True
 - b. False

The Social Development Strategy

1. The Social Development Strategy
- a. Organizes the knowledge about protective factors
 - b. Maintains that development is a social thing
 - c. Is about treating children's problems once they've been diagnosed
2. When are young people more likely to follow your community's clear standards for behavior?
- a. When they know they'll be punished if they don't
 - b. When they feel a sense of bonding or attachment to the people providing the standards

The Prevention Paradox: Portion of the Population Binge Drinking

