



HOW ADULTS CAN BUILD PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR YOUTH

SUBSTANCE USE OFTEN BEGINS DURING ADOLESCENCE

The earlier substance use begins, the greater the likelihood a person will develop a substance use disorder later in life. Adults play a critical role in preventing youth substance use by building protective factors that enable a child to successfully manage and adapt to various life circumstances.

IT IS CRITICAL FOR ADULTS TO REALIZE THAT THEIR BEHAVIORS AND ATTITUDES STRONGLY IMPACT CHILDREN

This includes maternal behaviors during pregnancy such as getting proper nutrition and abstaining from alcohol, tobacco, or other drug use.



PROTECTIVE FACTORS IN INFANCY

In the early years of development, the family is the critical component in a child's development. It is important to build a strong foundation with positive family dynamics by:



- Building a strong bond in infancy by being attentive, responsive, supportive, and involved, and continuing these actions throughout the life course.
- Developing strong parental skills through maintaining consistent rules and routines, setting age-appropriate expectations, praising success, and displaying warmth.
- Helping a child develop behavioral control by encouraging positive behaviors and discouraging negative attitudes and behaviors.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS IN CHILDHOOD

As children transition into school, positive behaviors and behavioral control lead to successful interactions with others and academic success. Be a positive role model and encourage other involved adults to act as positive influences for your child as well.



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PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT BUILDS A CHILD'S LINK TO SCHOOL THAT PROTECTS AGAINST LATER HIGH RISK SUBSTANCE MISUSE.



Parental engagement should begin as early as preschool/kindergarten. This includes effective communication with children and their teachers and being involved through volunteering or helping with activities and homework.

Parental engagement results in higher grades for children, better social skills, more positive behaviors, and fewer risky behaviors.

ADULTS SHOULD ALSO ENSURE THAT CHILDREN ARE PROVIDED WITH OPPORTUNITIES FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SOCIAL INTERACTIONS WITH PEERS AS BOTH ARE CRITICAL TO HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT.



PROTECTIVE FACTORS IN ADOLESCENCE

During adolescence, youth are highly likely to be exposed to drugs and alcohol and can be heavily influenced by peers.

It is vital to establish clear and consistent rules. Youth with parents who are clear on their disapproval of smoking, alcohol, and drug use are less likely to engage in those behaviors.

Adults need to monitor their teen's activities and know who their friends are. Watch for behavioral changes and signs of bullying.

Keep youth busy in healthy activities such as sports, youth clubs, or volunteering.

Engaging with your teen through active listening, one-on-one time, and keeping them connected to school reduces the likelihood that they will use substances.



One of the most important things adults can do to help prevent youth substance use is to set an example by avoiding the use of alcohol, drugs, or tobacco within the home as normalizing these behaviors decreases perception of harm.

To help raise drug-free youth, check out the Resources section of our website at: www.dfaf.org



References: ¹National Institute of Health, National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2020). Chapter 2: Risk and protective factors. Retrieved May 13, 2020, from <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/principles-substance-abuse-prevention-early-childhood/chapter-2-risk-protective-factors> ²National Institute of Health, National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2020). How are risk and protective factors addressed in prevention programs? Retrieved May 13, 2020, from <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/preventing-drug-use-among-children-adolescents/chapter-3-applying-prevention-principles-to-drug-abuse-programs/risk-protective-factors> ³National Institute of Health, National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2020). Principles of substance abuse prevention for early childhood. Retrieved May 13, 2020, from <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/principles-substance-abuse-prevention-early-childhood/principles-substance-abuse-prevention-early-childhood> ⁴National Institute of Health, National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2020). What are risk factors and protective factors? Retrieved May 13, 2020, from <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/preventing-drug-use-among-children-adolescents/chapter-1-risk-factors-protective-factors/what-are-risk-factors> ⁵National Institute of Health, National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2020). What are the early signs of risk that may predict later drug abuse? Retrieved May 13, 2020, from <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/preventing-drug-use-among-children-adolescents/chapter-1-risk-factors-protective-factors/what-are-early-signs> ⁶National Institute of Health, National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2020). When and how does drug abuse start and progress? Retrieved May 13, 2020, from <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/preventing-drug-use-among-children-adolescents/chapter-1-risk-factors-protective-factors/when-how-does-drug-abuse-start-progress> ⁷U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2012). Parent engagement. Retrieved May 13, 2020, from https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/protective/pdf/parentengagement_overview.pdf