

## Topic 6:

# Identifying Protective Factors of Drug Abuse



# Role and Importance of Protective Factors



The likelihood of youths engaging in drug abuse can be influenced by **risk factors and protective factors**.



Protective factors are conditions that **reduce the likelihood of problematic behaviours** or **mitigate the impact of risk factors**. These conditions can be found in various environments, such as at home or at school.



By **understanding what can influence** the likelihood of drug abuse, we can cultivate an environment that prevents drug abuse, and supports the health and social development of youths.

## Individual

- The risk of drug abuse can be reduced by the presence of individual traits, such as high self-esteem and problem-solving skills.



## Environment

- Environments such as schools and communities can provide positive influences for youths through academic engagement and access to role models.



# Protective Factors Within Different Spheres of Influence



## Family

- During adolescence, youths may be influenced to engage in drug-related behaviours by their peers or the media.
- However, these risks can be mitigated through positive familial influence.

# Individual Protective Factors

**Risk factors for drug abuse can affect individuals differently, depending on protective factors such as:**



Self-control and emotional self-regulation



Good coping and problem-solving skills



Positive relationships and ability to make friends



High self-esteem



# Familial Protective Factors

- Good family management practices are associated with reduced drug abuse rates among young adults (Stone et al., 2012).
- A stable and affirmative family environment can counteract external influences such as peers and media (Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, 2011).
- Factors that promote resilience from drug abuse can be categorised into:

## Supportive Familial Relationships



Close and supportive relationships between parents and children—especially during adolescence—can reduce the risk of drug abuse in early adulthood (Stone et al., 2012).



Emotionally, cognitively, socially and financially supportive parents can enable the development of secure and healthy parent-child relationships, as well as foster problem-solving and coping skills.



Parental support is associated with an approximately 50% reduced risk that their children will engage in chronic drug abuse (Stone et al., 2012).

## High Parental Involvement



Youths with more parental monitoring have been observed to be 44% less likely to experiment with drugs and alcohol (Atherton et al., 2016).



Helping youths develop their dreams, goals and life purpose can strengthen their personal commitments and promote healthy decision-making skills.



Communicating healthy family values and setting clear standards for behaviour can build awareness on drug abuse and help children understand its harms and consequences.

# Environmental Protective Factors

**Schools and communities can serve as positive spheres of influence by providing youths with:**



Academic engagement



Opportunities for engagement within their school or community (e.g. Co-Curricular Activities, employment, religion)



Positive peer relationships



Access to support services to develop their skills or interests



Positive role models (e.g. mentors)

# Drug Prevention Approaches

- A multi-pronged approach is most effective when general coping skills are combined with drug-specific skills.
- It has also been shown to be effective against cannabis and poly-drug abuse, with preventive effects lasting up to six years.
- These approaches are categorised into:

Normative Education	Resistance Skills Training <sup>1</sup>	Personal and Social Skills Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Address common misconceptions about drug abuse by sharing the facts and figures of its consequences</li><li>■ Provide accurate statistics on drug abuse prevalence<sup>2</sup></li><li>■ Educate youths about drug effects, legal consequences and current drug-related policies</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Increase awareness of situations where youths may be tempted by social influences to abuse drugs</li><li>■ Teach practical strategies for maintaining drug-free choices in challenging social situations</li><li>■ Strengthen ability to resist peer and media influence (e.g. through role-play)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ <b>Decision-making and problem-solving</b> Enable youths to evaluate situations and arrive at sound conclusions when faced with difficult choices</li><li>■ <b>Stress management strategies</b> Provide healthy alternatives to drug abuse</li><li>■ <b>Social and assertiveness skills</b> Allow youths to communicate their choices confidently and maintain healthy relationships</li></ul>

- Implementation of these approaches should be carefully tailored to match the developmental stage, cognitive abilities and social context of the target audience.

<sup>1</sup> For resistance skills training to be effective, it must be provided alongside normative education (Donaldson et al., 1996). Focusing solely on techniques to refuse drugs may cause youths to overestimate the prevalence of drug abuse and deem it normal and acceptable (Hansen & Graham, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> Please refer to the CNB annual reports [<https://www.cnb.gov.sg/about-us/annual-reports>].

# Approaches at Different Ages: Children (6–11 Years Old)

## Characteristics of Age Group:



Generally more influenced by family than by friends



Have low interest in trying drugs

## Recommended Approach

- Provide facts on short- and long-term consequences of drug abuse
- Include parents in drug-related educational programmes (Lloyd et al., 2000)
- Encourage parents to be more involved in their children's lives and learn family communication skills to better support their children's needs (Robertsen et al., 2003)



# Approaches at Different Ages: Young Teens (12–15 Years Old)

## Characteristics of Age Group:



Susceptible to peer pressure and likely to mimic behaviour of peers



Capable of abstract reasoning, formal logic, higher-order thinking and independent thought

## Recommended Approach

- Provide unbiased and accurate information on the consequences of drug abuse
- Empower teens to develop their own personal views, rather than pressure them to uncritically accept standardised anti-drug messages
- Focus on skills such as resisting peer pressure, media literacy, communication and refusal
- Encourage participation in anti-drug initiatives
- Encourage youths to make a personal commitment to staying drug-free (Hansen & Dusenbury, 2004)
- Foster a sense of community that will support youths in succeeding in school and coping with stress (Robertson et al., 2003)

# Approaches at Different Ages: Emerging Adults (16–25 Years Old)

## Characteristics of Age Group:



Higher resistance to direct influence; may react negatively to conventional prevention strategies like refusal skills



More driven by intrapersonal motivations (e.g. finding their sense of self)

## Recommended Approach

- Help youths understand how drug abuse does not align with their personal values and goals, and can interfere with their desired lifestyle
- Share stress management strategies such as coping skills, problem-solving techniques and alternative stress relief methods
- Encourage them to reaffirm their commitment to refuse drugs
- Promote involvement in youth-led activities as a platform for engaging in community change and gaining access to positive influences

# Example of Approach: The RISE Model

## Teach Refusal skills

- Say “no” when offered drugs and avoid situations where impressionable youths might be tempted or pressured to try drugs.

## Use conversation Starters

- Have candid conversations on drug abuse (e.g. well-known personalities with a history of drug abuse, personal encounters with drug-related behaviour).
- Conversations about healthy ways to cope with stress are also important, as stress is a common reason for drug abuse.

## Look out for Indicators

- Behavioural, physical and psychological changes may signal that a person needs help.

## Engage meaningfully

- Build positive habits, spend quality time together and communicate in an open, non-judgemental manner.



# Key Takeaways



Protective factors are conditions that reduce the likelihood of individuals engaging in drug abuse. These factors can be categorised into individual factors, familial factors and environmental factors.



Knowing and understanding the protective factors will help with developing appropriate strategies to build resilience in youths.



Adopt age-appropriate approaches when educating and engaging youths to improve the effectiveness of the anti-drug message.

You play a vital role in creating a protective environment for our people, especially youths.

**Let's apply what you have learnt here to build a drug-free Singapore!**



# Test Your Knowledge



## For Topics 4 to 6

Complete these quizzes and kickstart your PDE initiatives now!



## For Topics 1 to 3

Complete these quizzes and kickstart your PDE initiatives now!



# Further Reading and Resources



**PDE Information Package**



**List of Controlled Drugs  
and Inhalants**



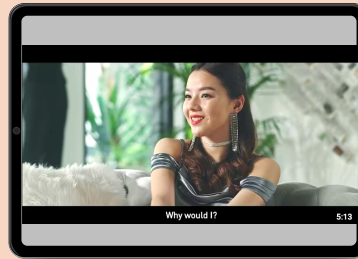
**Stories from Victims  
of Drug Abuse**



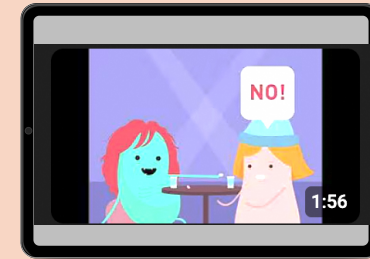
**Compilation of Narratives from Family  
and Loved Ones of Drug Abusers**



**Be Aware. Be Wise. Think Twice.**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VzQ0mVPuCz0>



**Down the Rabbit Hole**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y5A4sbCSuhQ>



**Mythbuster Series**  
[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL\\_z4\\_PYbFdxUtbG7-isKGSyyN0MX8LD77](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL_z4_PYbFdxUtbG7-isKGSyyN0MX8LD77)

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[CNB | Preventative Drug Education \(PDE\) Info Package](#)

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