



PREVENTION TALK

PROTECTIVE FACTORS - WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

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This month's Prevention TALK is the first in a two-part series that takes a look at the foundation for alcohol and other drug prevention work. The foundation or science used to address this national concern is known as Dr. J. David Hawkins' and Dr. Richard F. Catalano's **Risk and Protective Factor Theory**. This month highlights protective factors that parents can build upon to increase family influence and buffer their young people from risk.

This prevention theory is based on the public health model that educated the American public about the risk factors for heart disease and what Americans should do to buffer the effects of the risk factors in their lives. In doing the research to uncover the risk factors that put our young people at risk for developing health and behavior problems, Dr.'s Hawkins and Catalano revealed three protective factors. These protective factors help to buffer young people against the risk factors they are exposed to in all areas of their lives.¹ Listed below are the protective factors with a brief definition for each.

REMEMBER:

Bonding gives teens a reason to listen to and follow the guidelines/standards of the family.¹

HEALTHY BELIEFS AND CLEAR STANDARDS

Parents and other role models need to share healthy beliefs with their teen. Once these are shared, guidelines or standards need to be communicated and consistently followed. The healthy beliefs and clear standards serve as guardrails that give young people the support they need to make good choices.² An example of a clear standard around alcohol might be if your child is riding around with friends and stops at a party where alcohol is being served, he/she is to call you for a ride home.

For more information call:

BONDING

Bonding is the positive feeling of belonging to a group such as a family unit, community, school or peer group. In order to create bonds in the family, parents need to: (1) provide meaningful opportunities to be involved in the family; (2) teach the skills to be successful; and (3) celebrate or recognize the efforts of the involvement.³ The three key words to remember when building bonds are Opportunities, Skills, and Recognition. An example of a creative opportunity for your teen might be teaching him/her the skills to balance a checkbook and celebrate at the end of the month when it balances.

INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS

There are three characteristics children are born with that give them added protection against problem behaviors: Resiliency, Sociability, and Intelligence. Resiliency is the ability to bounce back from adversity. Sociability is being good natured and friendly. When a child is born with intelligence it helps protect them from violence, delinquency, teen pregnancy, and school drop out. However, it does not protect against substance use and abuse.² Parents can provide opportunities for their children to develop resiliency and be more social. Parents need to remember intelligence does not protect a teen from substance abuse.

ACTION STEPS:

- Decide on healthy guidelines/standards for your family when it comes to substance use.
- Communicate those guidelines to your teen.
- Teach the skills to follow the guidelines/standards
- Celebrate with teens when they follow the guidelines/standards and correct them when they make unhealthy choices.

SOURCES:

- 1 Hawkins J.D., Catalano, R.J., & Miller, J.Y. (1992). Risk and protective factors for alcohol and other drug problems in adolescence and early adulthood: Implications for substance abuse prevention. *Psychological Bulletin*, 112(1), 64-105.
- 2 Hawkins, J.D., Catalano, R.J. (2002). Getting started - how to prevent drug use in your family. In Channing Bete (Ed.), *Guiding good choices program: Family guide*. South Deerfield, MA: Channing Bete Company, Inc.
- 3 Kumpfer, K.L., & Alvarado, R. (1998, November). Effective family strengthening interventions. *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*. Washington DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.