



VIDEO DISCUSSION GUIDE

Connection: Strong Relationships Prevent Substance Misuse

INTRODUCTION

The Partnership @drugfreeNH and UNH Extension created the video *Connection: Strong Relationships Prevent Substance Misuse* as part of a video series aimed to increase awareness and skills to prevent the misuse of opioids, alcohol, tobacco, cannabis and other substances. This video series is made possible through the SAMHSA Rural Opioid Technical Assistance grant funding the UNH Extension's NH Opioid Prevention Project.

We know that now, more than ever, young people need caring and supportive adults in their lives. They need time and space to explore and process who they are and what they are experiencing, and supportive adults to be there for them when they meet difficulty. Young people are experiencing mental health challenges including high rates of anxiety and depression. When we work to prevent substance misuse, we work to promote mental health and prevent these challenges.

This video is grounded in the concerns, experiences and insights of real NH youth. A dozen youth attending the NH Teen Institute's Summer Leadership Program (SLP) participated in a focused discussion where they shared what they need and want from adults in order to feel supported and thrive. They spoke openly about what makes them feel loved and supported at home, school, and in their community. It is no surprise these youth identified the same factors reflected in years of research on adolescent development.

Thank you to the youth participants at SLP, the youth at the Boys and Girls Club of Souhegan Valley, and the other community members who contributed to the filming of this video.

HOW TO USE THIS VIDEO

Connection: Strong Relationships Prevent Substance Misuse can be used in a variety of ways to start the conversation about what we can do to support young people during this important stage in their development. Show the video at:

- Community meetings
- PTO meetings
- Coalition meetings
- School Board presentations
- Professional development workshops
- Staff meetings
- Orientations

Often substance use prevention and mental health prevention are thought of as programs, curricula, or presentations. Facts about particular substances and the consequences of substance use are good for us all to know. However, alone, they provide little benefit to reducing substance misuse and improving mental health. Connection with family, school and community, as well as opportunities to learn skills and contribute, are the foundation for positive youth development.



YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE - YOU ARE PREVENTION!

WHAT IS PREVENTION?

In the video *Connection: Strong Relationships Prevent Substance Misuse* the narrator and young people themselves speak about what is important to help young people feel connected to their families, schools and communities. These are “protective factors,” which have been consistently identified in research to be the social conditions, relationships, and experiences that promote positive development, mental health and wellness, and prevent high risk behavior (such as substance use, violence). You hear these protective factors echoed throughout the video. The youth participants drafted each statement to speak to the adults in their lives.

The video highlights the following protective factors^{1,2} as they come up in the video.

<p>1. Positive connection to other adults</p>	<p>While primary caregivers are number one, it is important that young people also have other caring adults in their lives. The support and caring that youth receive from adults outside their family - teachers, coaches, friends’ parents- not only provides a safe and trusted adult to go to in times of need, but also provides the mentoring, recognition, and positive sense of self that helps boost a young person’s well-being.</p>
<p>2. Positive peer role models and healthy community norms</p>	<p>It is important for young people to have positive peer role models and live in a community with healthy norms. As adults, we can frame this by helping young people understand the reality that most young people do not engage in substance use. As adults, it is also important to remember this. For example, 73% of NH high schools students did not currently drink alcohol, according to the 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey. 61% of NH high school students had never tried marijuana and 73.9% did not currently smoke marijuana. Most young people are not using alcohol or marijuana and it is important to support our young people to continue not to use.</p>
<p>3. Participation in extracurricular activities</p>	<p>Being part of an activity that increases connection (with peers, school, community, or family) is an important protective factor. It opens up opportunities, introduces young people to other caring adults, keeps them supervised and occupied, and increases self-efficacy and self-esteem. Ultimately, we want to help young people find their “sparks”- interests and passions that light a fire in their lives and express the essence of who they are and what they offer the world.³ When caring adults support and encourage young people to try different activities and learn new things during adolescence, we help them thrive.</p>
<p>4. Resistance skills</p>	<p>Young people need to be taught the skills to resist negative peer pressure. It isn’t enough to think that they can just “say no”. Role playing scenarios, practicing ways to say “no thanks” to a good friend’s offer of a substance without worrying about damaging that relationship is important. And difficult. Talking with young people about these potentially difficult situations, with open nonjudgmental conversations, will help them feel safe and confident to resist peer pressure.</p>
<p>5. Building life skills and social competencies</p>	<p>Young people are just that - young. Their brains are still developing. They are learning to communicate, resolve conflicts, regulate their emotions, and manage their time and schedules. Teaching responsibility and helping them gain more life skills is important.</p>

<p>6. Family bonding and connectedness</p>	<p>Children who feel loved, understood, recognized and supported report high levels of family connectedness. By listening and being present we can encourage connectedness. Ask open-ended questions, listen to their response, avoid reaction and judgement to make a connection.</p>
<p>7. Positive parenting style</p>	<p>Youth thrive when they have clear, fair and consistent expectations for their behavior, so they know where they stand. This involves high expectations, clear family rules, fair and consistent discipline, age appropriate supervision and monitoring of who they are with, what they are doing, where they are, and when they will be back, delivered in a warm and supportive way.</p>
<p>8. Connectedness to school and a caring school climate</p>	<p>Whether youth feel that their school has a caring, supportive, and encouraging environment impacts many things in their lives - attendance, delinquency, substance use, and mental health. School connectedness is impacted by the school climate: feeling safe and “part of” school, finding belonging (clubs and activities), being treated fairly by teachers, and feeling close to students and adults at school.</p>
<p>9. Connectedness to community</p>	<p>Feeling safe, supported, and connected to one’s community adds to the scaffolding of all the other protective factors. We nurture these feelings by creating traditions and participating in healthy community events.</p>

1. Resnick, M.D., et al. (1997). Protecting Adolescents from Harm: Findings from the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 278 (10), 823-832; National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (1995-2003) Series of Monographs.
2. Hawkins, J.D., et al. (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.
3. Hawkins, J.D., et al. (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.

CONVERSATION STARTERS WITH AN ADULT AUDIENCE

This short, 4-minute video provides content for a rich conversation about how we think about prevention and ways that we each can play a positive role in young people’s lives, helping them build resilience and thrive.

Below you will find quotes from the video and some questions that can open up and guide the conversation. Each statement connects to the protective factors listed above. As the discussion unfolds, connect back to the research-based protective factors. Not only are young people saying this is what they need but, there is research that shows that when a young person has these relationships and experiences, they will have more positive outcomes.

<p><i>“Every kid needs someone who believes in their potential and has their back during challenging times.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who does your child/your student go to during a challenging time? • We know that in addition to a warm, caring relationship with parents/ caregivers, having a caring, trusted other adult is critical for young people. How can we build these connections for our kids?
<p><i>“Talking and listening to young people is one of the most important things we can do.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you connect and talk/listen to your child/youth in your life? • This can change over time. What are some tips/strategies for talking/ listening to a young person in your life? What are some of the roadblocks? • How can we avoid those roadblocks?
<p><i>In one scene an adult and two children walk and scooter and in another scene two adults and two teens play a board game together.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do young people benefit from playing a game or spending leisure time together? • How do we continue to do this through the teen years/ adolescence when adolescents seek more independence and time away from home and to be with their friends? • How do you do this in your life? What are some of the barriers?
<p><i>“Most substance use begins in adolescence or young adulthood, at the height of brain development. Substance use during these years can lead to problems that have a lifelong impact on their brains, impacting memory, mood, and motivation.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the culture and understanding of substance use in your family/ school/community? • What does your child/ student know about the risks of substance use? What should they know? How can you have that conversation with them? <p>Additional Point: We know that the earlier an individual starts using substances, the greater the risk for developing a substance use disorder. It is important to delay first use as long as possible, until the brain has had the chance to develop. When other risk factors, such as family history of substance use disorder are high, this delay in first use is even more important to help prevent developing a substance use disorder.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some strategies to delay first use?
<p><i>“Young people need and want close relationships with their parents and other caring adults.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think about this statement? What rings true? What doesn’t? <p>Additional Point: Adolescents often push their parents/caregivers away as they seek independence and their own identity. They seem to not want to be with adults sometimes. It is important to not take this personally or think that means they never want to be close. Being there for them whenever they are ready is important.</p>
<p><i>“We all have a responsibility to do everything we can to help young people grow up.”</i></p>	<p>Now that you are aware of the protective factors, what are you going to do with this information?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List 2 things you will do now that you’ve seen this video...

YOUTH VOICES IN THE VIDEO:

Below are the statements by the youth in the video. Ask viewers what statements stood out to them and discuss the connection between the statements and the protective factors (each statement aligns with one of the protective factors described above). Offer one or two that stand out to you to get the conversation started if necessary.

I may assume sometimes that all my friends are vaping or getting high. It helps when you remind me this is not true. The reality is ... most of my friends do not use drugs.

With sports and everything that I play, I feel like it keeps me away from all the drugs and the vaping and smoking. It's like a nice little comfort zone for me.

I do not want to regret doing something I did not want to do. I want help telling my friends I am not interested in using drugs.

I don't like it when you say I am being dramatic. My world is very emotional. I am still developing my prefrontal cortex and learning to control my emotions.

I know I get overwhelmed easily. I know you juggle a lot more than I do, but I can't help it. I'm not ready to grow up. I need time to mature, so I can handle more stressful situations and control my emotions. Please do not expect me to act like an adult yet.

I want my parents to respect me just because I am me and not compare me to my siblings.

I always know where I stand with you - you've got my back. You know where I am.

I like it when you keep track of what I am doing and who I am with. It makes me feel safe when you set limits because I can't.

You don't have to agree with me, but at least validate my feelings. I like it when you just listen to me and you don't try to shut me down and say my ideas and interests are weird.

I like it when my teachers get to know me as a person before we have a conflict or a problem.

I like it when my town has community events like the Farmer's Market and parades. I feel connected to the community. I see my friends and feel like I belong.

I like thrills and adventure, but sometimes I don't know my own limits. I like it when you say "no" so I don't have to.

I cannot be strong all the time. I need permission to fall apart without thinking I'm failing. Let me know I do not need to be perfect.

CONCLUDING THE CONVERSATION

Summarize: As the discussion ends, ask the participants to summarize the key themes of the discussion. Young people need and want CONNECTION to their family, peers, school, and community. They want and need to be recognized and valued for who they are and given the opportunity to build skills and contribute. They aren't always perfect while learning these new skills and navigating this transition to adulthood. Caring adults who support them, guide them, and are there for them regardless, have an incredible impact on their positive development and mental health.

Action: What is a key take-away you have from this discussion? What is one thing you will do / try when you get home?

For more information visit The Partnership @drugfreeNH.org



/DrugFreeNH



@DrugFreeNH



@drugfreeNH



The Partnership @drugfreeNH



© 2021 The Partnership @drugfreeNH. All rights reserved. This factsheet is sponsored by the NH Department of Health and Human Services, the NH Governor's Commission on Alcohol and other Drugs, the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, and is partially supported by the FY2020 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Rural Opioid Technical Assistance Grant # 1H79TI083274-01. It is managed by JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc. The contents of this factsheet may not represent the views or policies of our funders.