**Drug Prevention Tools:**

**Key Elements of Effective Drug Prevention Curricula**

(Adapted from *Making the Grade: A Guide to School Drug Prevention Programs*, [Drug Strategies](http://www.drugstrategies.org/), 1999, p. 2.  Used with permission.)

*Extensive research suggests that the following are key elements of successful prevention curricula. Such curricula:*

(1)     Helps students recognize internal pressures, like wanting to belong to the group, and external pressures, like peer attitudes and advertising, that influence them to use alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

(2)     Facilitates development of personal, social and refusal skills to resist these pressures.

(3)     Teaches that using, alcohol, tobacco and other drugs is not the norm among teenagers, correcting the misconception that “everyone is doing it,” and promotes positive norms through bonding to school and constructive role models.

(4)     Provides developmentally appropriate material and activities, including information about the short-term effects and long-term consequences of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

(5)     Uses interactive teaching techniques, such as role plays, discussions, brainstorming and cooperative learning.

(6)     Covers necessary prevention elements in at least eight well-designed sessions a year (with a minimum of three to five booster sessions in one or more succeeding years).

(7)     Actively involves the family and the community, so that prevention strategies are reinforced across settings.

(8)     Includes teacher training and support, in order to assure that curricula are delivered as intended.

(9)     Contains material that is easy for teachers to implement and culturally relevant for students.

**Tips for Facilitators from *Pathways to Prevention***

**Building the Environment:** As a leader you can build an environment conducive to sharing and learning in your group.  Suggestions:

* + Put chairs in a circle, not rows.
	+ If possible, arrange for the seating options to be equal (don’t have 10 uncomfortable chairs and 2 recliners—the most popular/powerful people will get the recliners and the group will be unequal).
	+ Sit around tables when you want youth to work on something; sit on rugs on the floor when you want informal sharing or worship.
	+ Make members of your youth group interact with someone new.
	+ Establish clear rules, guidelines, and boundaries.

**Age Differences—Middle School vs. High School Youth:** A lot of changes happen to young people between the ages of 11 and 17.  Effective youth leaders know how to tailor their approach according to the age and maturity of the group.

* + Younger adolescents tend to feel more threatened by groups larger than 7.
	+ Older teens will pay attention to a discussion topic for up to 30 minutes while younger teens will normally only pay attention for 10-15 minutes.
	+ Older teens have a little bit more life experience and are more likely to go deeper in their discussions about illicit drugs.
	+ Both groups need a “jump-start” to their discussions with something tangible, visible or audible that provides a concrete image from which they can focus their discussion.

**Let’s Role-play:** Role-playing provides a time to try on a new identity and is also a good way to initiate discussion as to “why” someone would react that way or “what alternative” options or strategies could have been used.

* + Role playing does not require good acting or people who are extroverts.
	+ Lead by example: ask a youth to play his or her parent and you be the teenager.  You have broken a house rule.  Role-play the dialogue.

**Break Out:** To help divide youths into groups and better randomly mix the groups that usually form, bring an inexpensive bag of colored candy to the session.  As teens enter the room, have each person take a piece of candy or hand out the candy.  Once everyone has a piece of candy, ask that they arrange themselves in smaller groups according to the particular color/flavor the received.

**Little Lessons for Leaders:**

* + Lead by example.  Share from your heart and be vulnerable but don’t dominate the session.
	+ Listen.  Use your ears twice as much as your mouth.
	+ Use genuine and specific affirmation.
	+ Sometimes a group will benefit from a “spontaneous opportunity” to respond, especially shy youth.  Something as simple as tossing a ball to another person in the group who must respond when the ball is thrown to him/her allows ALL members of the group to participate.

**How to Ask Questions So You’ll Get Answers:** Youth spend a lot of time in a classroom where there is only one right answer.  They may be afraid to participate if they are not sure they have the right answer.  Young people respond well to creative or “open-ended” questioning where there is no particular right answer and there is no danger of “making a mistake” or “humiliation.”  Youth also benefit from narrowing the focus of a discussion and being able to think about their responses privately first.

[www.Urbanministry.org](http://www.Urbanministry.org). Excerpted from [*Pathways to Prevention: Guiding Youth to Wise Decisions*](http://www.urbanministry.org/pathways-prevention-guiding-youth-wise-decisions)by the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign (White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, 2003), pp. x, Y-8, Y-9, Y-12, Y-13, A-2, A-3, A-13.  Used with permission.

**Drug Prevention Tips for Parents**

- Focus on what "good things" you want to develop within your child. Develop these by spending time together as a family and individually with each child.

- Show plenty of affection often and in a variety of ways.

- Make sure your child knows how much you love him/her. Use hugs, kisses, and lots of words of encouragement - pay attention to what you say as well as how you say it.

- Strengthen your child's decision making skills by providing choices. These can include where to sit at the table or what game to play.

- Show your children how you want them to behave. Children learn by watching you. If you want your children to read, let them see you reading. If you want your children to stay calm when angry, then you stay calm when you are angry.

- Nurture your own development as an adult, spouse, and parent. Young children are challenging and demand much time and energy from you.

- Take part in activities outside of the home to enhance your own personal growth. You will find your self more relaxed and prepared to meet the demands of parenting.

- Work together with your family, friends, and community. Reach out for support and share some of the parenting responsibility.

- View discipline as a way to reach, not as punishment. Children learn from their mistakes, but they need to know what to do instead.

- Establish rules and routines and follow them consistently. If you're at the end of your rope, ask a neighbor to mind your child for a half hour -- and repay the favor later.

- Exchange your phone number with another parent and call when you need to talk to someone right away.

- Hug your children to let them know you think they're special and that you love them without reservation.

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