

Protective Factors and Risk Factors

Strengthening protective factors around young people has multiple lifelong benefits. Protective factors buffer against the effects of risk factors.

Use this checklist of some protective factors and risk factors to identify how you can support a young person.

Some protective factors

Individual

- Internal locus of control
- Positive sense of identity and belonging
- Social skills
- Critical thinking and decision making skills
- Spiritual connection
- Hope for the future

Peer

- At least one close, supportive friend
- Participation in positive peer activities (e.g. sports, drama)

Family

- Family connectedness
- Parent supervision and interest in development

School

- School connection
- Vocational pathway
- Academic achievement

Community

- Positive adult relationship outside of the family
- Positive activities
- Cultural connection
- Feeling safe in the community

Some risk factors

Individual

- Emotional distress
- High levels of risk taking
- Poor social skills

Peer

- Peer substance use/favourable attitudes to use
- Peers who engage in problem behaviours

Family

- Parental substance use
- Poor family relationships
- Neglect or abuse
- Family poverty and isolation

School

- Low school connection
- Low academic achievement
- Peer rejection

Community

- Lack of support, training, employment opportunities
- Neighbourhood problems/poverty
- Lack of positive activities

Handout



Reflection Exercise

(order the scenarios from less bad to more bad by writing the scenario letter next to the appropriate ranking)

Less Bad

More bad

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.

We can support students to live in a world where alcohol and other drugs exist by:

Every student will make a decision whether or not to use alcohol and other drugs.

Many will try alcohol and other drugs.

Some will have short term harms.

A few will develop long term problems

Promoting a positive school environment, focusing on wellbeing, student connectedness, and help-seeking. Giving lots of opportunities for students to engage in school activities.

Providing opportunities to develop critical thinking skills, using learning contexts that reflect real life.

Identifying students whose attendance or achievement is slipping, and checking if alcohol and other drugs are affecting them.

Offering proactive support

Your Notes