

the Prevention CONNECTION™

For parents of children involved in the drug education program, Here's Looking at You®

What Is This Newsletter?

You're reading *The Prevention Connection*™. It's a newsletter for parents of children involved in the drug education program, *Here's Looking at You*®.

What Is Here's Looking at You?®

It's a program designed to prevent children from using tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, inhalants, and other drugs. How? The program is based on reducing young people's risky behaviors and promoting their healthy behaviors.



What Does Your Child Get From Here's Looking at You?

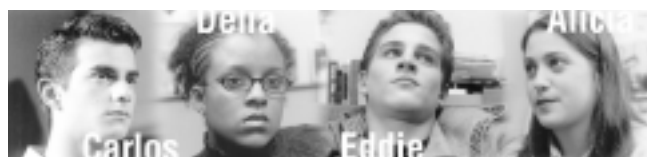
Well, some really important things. Students in grades 7-9 will:

- receive information about tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, inhalants, the consequences of using drugs, and the influences of advertising
- learn skills to stay out of trouble with their friends, to use self-control, and to make good decisions
- learn a strategy to identify and approach school adults they may want to talk over a problem with
- change norms that promote drugs and drug use and sustain norms that discourage drugs and drug use



How Do Students Learn All This?

In this grade level, students watch a video in five segments; the video serves as a springboard for class discussions throughout the lessons. The video focuses on four characters' lives and the issues they face in relation to the use of drugs. The class is arranged into groups representing each character, and students both learn and give each other valuable information as well as introduce the skills.



What Do These Lessons Have In Common?

Two things: They're interesting and fun for children; and they teach important messages about drugs.

What Puts Children At Risk? What Protects Children?

Are there things you can do to help protect your child from drugs? Definitely. Look at the chart on the next page. It shows you a few situations that increase your child's risk of having problems with drugs and a few ways you can either avoid them or help your child cope with them.



RISK	PROTECTION
Your child's friends favor the use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet your child's friends, and talk with their parents about both families' rules. • Encourage your child to make healthy friendships. • Be sure that your child knows how to resist pressure to use drugs.
Your child doesn't know what you expect or what you'll do if rules are broken.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let your child know clearly what's expected. • Let your child know the rewards for following rules and the consequences for breaking rules. • Follow through with positive as well as negative consequences.
Your child has a favorable attitude toward drugs, including tobacco and alcohol.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be sure that your child understands the harmful effects of using drugs. • Be sure that your child understands the consequences of using drugs, e.g., your disappointment, trouble with the police, and problems with school. • Take advantage of "teachable moments"—e.g., seeing someone drunk in public or watching a beer commercial—by discussing issues when they come up.



Teaching Children Skills

Here's Looking at You® gives students current and accurate information about drugs and drug use. But most drug education curricula do that; one of the things that make *Here's Looking at You* different is its emphasis on teaching social skills to students.

Why teach skills?

Teaching young people that drugs are harmful is one thing. And telling them to say no to strangers who want to give them drugs is another thing. But what about saying no to friends or older brothers or sisters? That's how most children first begin to use drugs.

The Refusal Skill™

***The Refusal Skill* teaches students how to say no to friends, keep their friends, and stay out of trouble.** The skill is taught so that students can use it in many situations that might be trouble for *them*. *The Refusal Skill* is one of several skills taught in *Here's Looking at You*, all of them with the same purpose—to reduce the risks of students using drugs and to promote healthy behaviors.

The research on drug abuse indicates that many children who end up in trouble with drugs first try drugs at an early age and also have friends who use drugs. That's why the *Here's Looking at You* curriculum teaches students *The Refusal Skill*. When they suspect a friend may be asking them to do something that may be trouble, students use the steps of skill.

Practice

Even though your child will learn the skill in school, it's important to use it outside the classroom. If you want to practice *The Refusal Skill* with your child, here's an idea of how the practice might look (the steps of the skill are italicized):

Friend: "Hey, (your child's name), you feel like trying something a little different tonight?"

Your child: "Like what?" (*Ask questions.*)

Friend: "Something my cousin gave me this morning."

Your child: "What did your cousin give you?"

Friend: "A marijuana joint. It's really good stuff; he got it from some friends of his."

continued

Your child: "Are you kidding? That's against the law and my family rules!
(*Name the trouble.*)
If I do that, my folks will ground me for a year. We'll get kicked out of school, we'll get taken down to the police—(*Identify the consequences.*)
Besides, it's just wrong.
(*moving away*)
Look, instead why don't we play some video games tonight.
(*Suggest an alternative.*)

Friend: "I don't know."
Your child: "Well, if you change your mind, give me a call. I'm finished eating about 7:00." (*Leave the door open.*)

Friend: "Okay, maybe I'll call."



Here are a few ideas about practicing with your child:

- ✓ Before you start, identify who is playing which role.
- ✓ Let your child think about the situation before actually practicing it.
- ✓ Use situations and language that are realistic and appropriate for the age of your child.
- ✓ Highlight the steps.
- ✓ If you're coaching your child on what to say, say exactly what you want repeated, and try to use consistent phrases.
- ✓ End the practice successfully, showing your child that the skill can work.
- ✓ Progress from easy to difficult situations, but keep the practices simple and clear.
- ✓ Vary the practices to keep them interesting; you can use props, too.
- ✓ Give your child a lot of positive feedback.
- ✓ Switch roles so that both of you get a chance to practice the skill.
- ✓ Have fun!

Here are the five **steps of The Refusal Skill™**, the reason for each step, and the key phrases your child learns to say:

STEP	REASON	KEY PHRASE
Step #1 Ask questions.	to determine if a situation is likely to be trouble	e.g., "What ...?" "Why ...?"
Step #2 Name the trouble.	to make the friend think more seriously about the trouble	"That's ..."
Step #3 Identify the consequences.	to identify different kinds of consequences—legal, school, family, health, and personal consequences, e.g., moral or religious feelings	"If I do that ..."
Step #4 Suggest an alternative.	to let the friend know that the activity is being rejected, not the person	"Instead why don't we ..."
Step #5 Move it, sell it, and leave the door open.	to help the person using the skill to stay in control; to let the friend know that the skill-user is serious; to make the alternative sound fun or challenging; to give an opportunity for the friend to reconsider	"If you change your mind ..."

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What Else You Can Do

You can do things that will ensure that the curriculum continues after the unit is over and after your child leaves the classroom:



FIRST: Make sure that *you* use the skill. Young people look to their parents, their older brothers and sisters, and other relatives to be role models. It would be much more difficult to get your child to stay out of trouble with friends if no one else in the house did.

SECOND: Continue to talk with your child about situations in which using *The Refusal Skill™* might be appropriate. Help your child to rehearse the situation and to think about obstacles that may hinder using the skill. Take advantage of “teachable moments” when your child could be using the skill.

FINALLY: Follow up with your child. Your child will have many opportunities to use the skill. Offer encouragement when your child uses the skill successfully, and try to find out what’s not working, too.

When the subject is drugs, your child’s education never ends.



A Family Activity

What: “Goals,” an activity to develop goals for each family member

Why: Identifying and promoting goals gives people positive orientations toward their lives and keeps them focused on safe and healthy activities.

How: With the other members of your family, make a list of at least five goals you’ve set for yourself. Each person should make a list: The goals could be short-term or long-term. Goals might be exercising daily, smiling more often, cleaning up around the house, or getting better grades.

When everyone is finished writing, share goals. Some people may have suggestions for others, and some people may want to borrow others’ goals for their own lists.



Now talk about which obstacles people might see in reaching their goals. Think about ways people could help each other overcome their obstacles and reach their goals.

As people change, so do their goals. Think about doing this activity every month or so to check on people’s progress and on how appropriate the goals still are.



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NOTES from School:

