Evidence-based drug prevention strategies in schools

Ms. Hanna Heikkila
Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation Section
OUTLINE

• What is prevention & why to do it in schools?
• How to prevent drug use effectively & ethically in schools? Examples & take-home-messages

UNESCO/ Yongfeng =

• How to make it happen? Prevention planning in the context of education sector and wider frameworks
• UNESCO-WHO-UNODC joint booklet to guide prevention planning within education sector
Prevent, or delay =

INITIATION of drug use

TRANSITION to drug use disorders
WHAT IS DRUG PREVENTION?
Both illicit and licit substances
Prevention = supporting children and young people to reach their developmental goals
Drug use is a developmental problem
Substance use prevention = Supporting healthy development

PREVENTION ➔ ➔ BETTER SCHOOLS

EDUCATION ➔ ➔ PREVENTION
EXAMPLES OF EFFECTIVE PREVENTION STRATEGIES IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS
..based on UNODC International Standards on Prevention
Childhood
Early childhood education, example of results (Campbell et al 2002)
Middle childhood
Classroom environment improvement

• Characteristics associated with POSITIVE outcomes
  – Include strategies to respond to inappropriate behaviour
  – Include strategies to acknowledge appropriate behaviour
  – Active engagement of children
Example from an evidence-based programme: Good Behaviour Game
When reaching adulthood, boys that had shown signs of aggressive behaviour in the first year of primary school:

- 83% will suffer from drug dependency disorders
- 0% will smoke
- 50% will show violent or criminal behavior

Among those participating in this prevention program during first school year:

- 29% will suffer from drug dependency disorders
- 40% will smoke
- 34% will show violent or criminal behavior

AND

- 20% in the control group will graduate from high school
- 75% among those taking part in this program will graduate from high school
Example 2(/2) Policies to keep children in schools

- Characteristics associated with POSITIVE outcomes
  - Building new schools
  - Free meals in school and/or nutritional supplements
  - Conditional cash transfer to families to keep children in schools
Early adolescence
The “Imbalanced” Adolescent Brain - Double Jeopardy!

Emotional Reactivity

Cognitive Regulation
Prevention education

SOME of it is VERY effective

A LOT of it does NOT work AT ALL!!!
What works?

- INTERACTIVE methods
- A SERIES of structured weekly sessions (10-15)
- Delivery by trained facilitators/peers/teachers
- Learn and PRACTICE personal and social skills (e.g. coping with stress and negative emotions, decision making, resistance skills)

After the age of initiation:
- Change perceptions of risks associated with substance use, emphasize immediate and appropriate consequences
- Dispel misconceptions about the normative nature of substance abuse
What does NOT work?

• Utilise non-interactive methods (such as lecturing) as the primary delivery strategy
• Single or unstructured sessions
• Information-giving alone, particularly fear arousal
• Focus only on the building of self-esteem
• Address only ethical/moral decision making or values
• Use ex-drug users as testimonials
Example from an evidence-based programme: UNPLUGGED
Example from an evidence-based programme: UNPLUGGED

Lesson 11
Problem solving and decision making

A problem can stand before you like a block of concrete: impossible to move. It may paralyze you and keep you from thinking, working, or going on in any way. The five-step model you will learn about in this lesson is a strategy to prevent such frozen situations.

**CHOOSE ONE OF THESE PROBLEM SITUATIONS OR CREATE ONE YOURSELF**

- Rachel is always late for school because she sleeps past her alarm time. How can she overcome this problem to be on time for school?

- David failed his last math test and needs to pass the next one in order to maintain his school average. He has set a goal that he would like to work on math-related field and therefore places great importance on passing every test. What things can he do?

- marble in a theme where her parents travel all the time. She knows that second-hand smoke is toxic for you and does not want to continue breathing it. What can she do?

- Daniel got a bad of a package of cigarettes. He is very curious about trying them but wants others to try with him. He asks Michael among others in the class. Michael has decided he does not want to try, what does he do?

- Amanda has decided that she does not want to drink. Amanda is invited to a party and she knows that people will be serving alcohol mixed with juice and soda. What does she do?

---

**THE FIVE-STEP-PLAN TO PROBLEM SOLVING**

**Step 1:** Identify a problem
What is my problem? What is happening? What are reasons the problem is occurring? How do I feel?

**Step 2:** Think and talk about solutions
List down all possible solutions to the problem. Try to describe how each solution will work.

**Step 3:** Evaluate the solutions
Evaluate the solutions by comparing advantages and disadvantages and considering short-term and long-term consequences. Eliminate less viable solutions based on this evaluation.

**Step 4:** Decide on one solution
Picks one solution and act on it.

**Step 5:** Learn from the choice
Reflect on the results of the solution you chose. What did you learn? What did you change? Are you feeling better?
Piloting E B programme Life Skills Education Programme (UNPLUGGED) in Brazil

Relative difference (Δ%) of last year use of different substances
Adolescents (13-15 years old)
3 weeks after taking the programmes compared baseline

Experiment vs. Controls (16 schools, a sample of ~5000 students)
Adolescence and adulthood
What works in colleges and universities?

• Clear policy on drug use and substance abuse

• Easily accessible screening and brief intervention, counselling and referral
+ A channel to other settings

School

- Families
- Community and neighbourhood
- Enforcing policies
- Law enforcement
- Media
- Faith based organisations
- Health care
Parenting skills (universal OR selective)
★★★★★ - Very good indication of efficacy

- Family bonding, i.e. the attachment between parents and children
- Monitoring and involvement in the lives of their children (e.g. being involved in their activities, friendships, learning and education)
- Positive, developmentally appropriate and effective discipline
Serbian example of scaling up family program with the support of MoE
+ MANY MORE…
= A BROAD MENU OF EVIDENCE BASED INTERVENTIONS AND POLICIES!
# Prevention works!
## Healthy and safe development of children and youth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Prenatal &amp; Infancy</th>
<th>Early Childhood</th>
<th>Middle Childhood</th>
<th>Early Adolescence</th>
<th>Adolescence</th>
<th>Adulthood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prenatal Infancy &amp; visitation</td>
<td>★ ★</td>
<td></td>
<td>Parenting skills</td>
<td>★ ★ ★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interventions for pregnant women with substance abuse disorders</td>
<td>★</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Early Childhood Education</th>
<th>Personal &amp; Social Skills</th>
<th>Personal &amp; Social Skills &amp; Social Influences Education</th>
<th>Classroom Management</th>
<th>Addressing Individual Vulnerabilities</th>
<th>Policies to keep children in school</th>
<th>School Policies &amp; Culture</th>
<th>Alcohol &amp; Tobacco Policies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>★ ★</td>
<td>★ ★</td>
<td>★ ★ ★</td>
<td>★ ★ ★ ★</td>
<td>★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★</td>
<td>★ ★</td>
<td>★ ★</td>
<td>★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Community-based multi-component initiatives</th>
<th>Media campaigns</th>
<th>Mentoring</th>
<th>Entertainment venues</th>
<th>Workplace Prevention</th>
<th>Brief Intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>★ ★ ★ ★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Schools = a powerful socialization agent and a setting for prevention, across countries and cultures
Build resilience, do not focus on substance use or related information

- Good prevention in schools PRIMARILY teaches personal and social skills to prevent future problems and negative coping behaviours
  - The focus on the actual substances is less central
  - The positive results are felt also with regard to other risky behaviours
Prevention in schools can be very effective and cost-effective

• HOWEVER, TO ACHIEVE THIS: no more small, spontaneous, isolated activities raising awareness: rather investing in evidence-based programmes
• Do not improvise – build on the evidence – iatrogenic outcomes are a real risk
Ultimately ...