

Risk vs Protective Factors



What are risk and protective factors for youth?

Just as eating a high-fat diet is a risk factor for heart disease and getting regular exercise is a protective factor for heart disease and other health problems, there are factors that can help protect youth from, or put them at risk for, drug use and other problem behaviors.

RISK FACTORS



Risk factors are characteristics in the community, family, school and individual's environments that are known to increase the likelihood that a student will engage in one or more problem behaviors. Therefore, a teen's exposure to a greater number of risk factors leads to an increase in problem behavior.

Some examples are:

- Low neighborhood attachment
- Poor family management
- Family conflict
- Lack of commitment to school


PROTECTIVE FACTORS




Protective factors are characteristics that are known to decrease the likelihood that a student will engage in problem behaviors. For example, bonding to parents reduces the risk of an adolescent engaging in problem behaviors.

- Community and family opportunities for prosocial involvement
- Family attachment
- School opportunities and rewards for prosocial involvement
- Belief in the moral order

For more information

 <https://preventionpartnersnm.org/>

 <https://www.facebook.com/RegionalPPNM>

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Start Talking

with your teens



Family Attachment is one of the greatest Protective Factors among middle school students.

(Communities That Care Survey 2023)

One of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of problem behaviors among youth is to help strengthen and develop their bonds with family members. Youth who have strong bonds to family members who have healthy beliefs are less likely to struggle with substance use and mental health. Having hard conversations about substance use and mental health with your teens can help build a positive relationship and provide them with a safe place to share their thoughts and emotions.

CONVERSATION TIPS



Show your concern

Express to your child that you are worried about them (example, "You haven't been yourself lately.")



Let them know their honesty is valued

Explain that you are willing to listen without judgement and value their thoughts and emotions.



Keep your cool & be direct

Clearly state any concerns and provide examples (such as, "Your grades have dropped"). Try your best to keep a calm tone and avoid raising your voice.

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Get your kids Involved

in your community



Kids and teens involved in their community are **less likely** to engage in problem behaviors.

(Communities That Care Survey 2023)

Providing opportunities for your children to participate in activities within our community is important for healthy social development. By becoming more involved with their communities, young people are more likely to develop healthy norms that **reduce the risk** of involvement in antisocial and problematic behavior.

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED



Join a club

There are many different club opportunities through Public Schools. Check out your child's school website for club offerings just like Tewksbury's below
[TPS Website](#)



Check out the Library

Most Libraries have many different opportunities for community groups and activities for kids and teens. Check out Tewksbury's
[Library Website](#) or visit your community library.



Try a new activity

[the Greater Lowell YMCA](#) provides both youth and adult recreation and wellness programs on an ongoing basis. You do not need to be a member to sign up. Check out the different offerings here:
[YMCA](#)

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Family & Caregiver

Resources

in your community

The following resources are provided to help communicate, understand, and support your child or teen. Supporting a child or teen can be challenging, and no parent or caregiver should have to do it alone. If you are uncertain about how to meet your child's needs, there are resources available to help.

Remember, seeking help is a sign of strength, and there are communities and organizations ready to support you and your child. The following resources are provided to help you better communicate, understand, and support your child or teen.



RESOURCES



Restorative Practices

Pathways to Restorative Communities offers tools to build meaningful relationships and address conflict in generative and trust-building ways. Learn more about restorative practices and how to effectively communicate to with your child.

[Restorative Practices for Caregivers](#)



Online Resources

The Massachusetts Partnerships for Youth has curated a collection of quick videos and handouts grouped by relevant topics. Each segment has proven, practical, and easy-to-implement video solutions on a wide range of parenting challenges.

[MPY Library](#)

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