



# Parenting for Prevention: *Risk & Protective Factors*

No one can predict with certainty who will experiment with alcohol, who will abuse marijuana or who will remain drug- and alcohol-free. Parents can, however, learn to recognize the characteristics unique to their child and identify factors in their child's environment that may influence – negatively and positively – the choices your child may make regarding alcohol and other drug use.

The presence of **Risk Factors** (negative influencers) has been shown to increase an individual's risk of substance use, while **Protective Factors** (positive influencers) have been shown to buffer the potential effect of negative risks. It is important to remember that just because a child is exposed to risk factors does not mean that they will drink or use drugs.

**The good news is the more that youth are able to develop important protective life skills and are exposed to supportive peer/family/school/community dynamics, the greater their chances are for a substance - free and healthy life.**



	<b>RISK FACTORS</b> Make an individual vulnerable to substance use	<b>PROTECTIVE FACTORS</b> Make an individual resilient to substance use
<b>SELF</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genetic predisposition to alcohol or other drug use</li> <li>• Low self-esteem</li> <li>• Mental health/behavioral health issues</li> <li>• Impulsivity/risk-taking behaviors</li> <li>• Positive attitude/low perception of risk towards substance use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong social skills</li> <li>• Self-discipline</li> <li>• Resilient temperament</li> <li>• Ability to establish positive relationships/close bonds</li> <li>• Social competence</li> <li>• Involvement in clubs/activities</li> <li>• Negative attitudes/perception of high risk towards substance use</li> </ul>
<b>PEER</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Few friends/older friends</li> <li>• Has friends who think alcohol or drug use is "cool"</li> <li>• Peer group participates in deviant/unlawful behaviors</li> <li>• Peer group reinforces negative social norms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthy peer groups</li> <li>• Friends with negative attitudes towards alcohol or drug use</li> <li>• Involvement with substance-free activities</li> </ul>

	<b>RISK FACTORS</b> Make an individual vulnerable to substance use	<b>PROTECTIVE FACTORS</b> Make an individual resilient to substance use
<b>FAMILY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family history of substance abuse or violence</li> <li>• Parents who use/abuse alcohol or other drugs</li> <li>• Family members who do not spend a lot of time together</li> <li>• Parents with a permissive attitude toward teen substance use</li> <li>• Parents do not set clear expectations or “no use” rules regarding teen substance use</li> <li>• Family conflict</li> <li>• Abuse or neglect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents who provide consistent structure</li> <li>• Parents who set clear expectations and “no use” rules regarding teen substance use</li> <li>• Use of positive coping skills</li> <li>• Family is nurturing and supportive</li> <li>• Practices open communication</li> <li>• Positive bonding between family members</li> </ul>
<b>SCHOOL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little feeling of connectedness to school</li> <li>• Low academic expectations</li> <li>• Unsupportive school climate</li> <li>• Limited parental/community involvement with school activities</li> <li>• Inconsistent policies/consequences for youth alcohol and other drug use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High academic standards</li> <li>• Positive school culture</li> <li>• Supportive school climate</li> <li>• Clear behavioral expectations</li> <li>• Clear “no use” alcohol and other drug policies</li> <li>• Supportive teachers and administration</li> </ul>
<b>COMMUNITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of youth recreation activities</li> <li>• Lack of adult involvement or interest in youth</li> <li>• Community norms that support teen substance use</li> <li>• Easy alcohol and other drug access/availability</li> <li>• Inconsistent policies/consequences for youth alcohol and other drug use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities for youth involvement/recreation</li> <li>• Norms that support healthy behaviors/discourage underage alcohol and other drug use</li> <li>• Community engagement</li> <li>• Strong community collaboration across schools, law enforcement, businesses, faith organizations, and other community groups to support healthy youth</li> </ul>

Adapted from *Key Features of Risk & Protective Factors*, <http://captus.samhsa.gov/prevention-practice/prevention-and-behavioral-health/key-features-risk-protective-factors/1>;  
*Risk & Protective Factors*, <http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/youth-topics/substance-abuse> and *Risk & Protective Factors*, <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/substance-abuse/providers/prevention/risk-and-protective-factors.html>

## PARENT RESOURCES

### Students Against Destructive Decisions

<http://www.sadd.org/prevention.htm>

### Find Youth Info

<http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/youth-topics/substance-abuse/risk-and-protective-factors-substance-use-abuse-and-dependence>

### Mass.gov

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/substance-abuse/providers/prevention/risk-and-protective-factors.html>

### Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

<http://captus.samhsa.gov/print/prevention-practice/prevention-and-behavioral-health/key-features-risk-protective-factors/1>

*Parenting for Prevention is a Decisions at Every Turn Coalition educational series for parents and other caring adults to increase awareness and knowledge about important youth issues and to encourage dialogue about making healthy choices.*

Please visit <http://www.AshlandDecisions.org/parent-tip-sheets.html> for our complete library of tip sheets.

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