

**Making Risk and Protection
Come Alive for Your Audience!**



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Sharing the concept of risk and protection with different types of audiences can be challenging. This add a few more approaches to your tool box! We will discuss the basics of what is meant by 'shared risk and protective factors' and demonstrate 3 different approaches for introducing this rather abstract concept.

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Contact Info:

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Please share your great ideas and feedback!

We are always happy to hear great ideas from work on the ground in communities. Please feel free to contact us with new approaches and/or feedback from trying out these approaches in your community!



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Risk and Protective Factor Card Activity

Instructions

1

- Revise the "Fact" portions with relevant data -- local or state
- Print the cards out (preferably on heavier paper)
- Cut up paper so only one Factor and Fact appears on each piece
- Prepare enough cards for all expected participants

Note: please contact us to request the electronic version of the cards template.

Adults to Help with Serious Problems

- Young people who have a trusting relationship with at least one adult are more likely to stay involved in positive activities and less likely to engage in problem behavior.

Fact: In 2015, 71% of high school students in Colorado said they knew an adult in or out of school to whom they could go to discuss a serious problem, as reported on the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey.

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A Risk and Protective Factor Sculpture

(could be done in several groups around a large room, or in a single small group)

Advance Preparation: Descriptors for Volunteers

Instructions:

1. Use 8.5" x 11" sheets of paper
2. Write the label for each volunteer on a separate sheet of paper – large enough to be seen across a meeting room
3. Provide ribbon or string, and tape
4. Each volunteer can use the tape and ribbon/string to hang their descriptor around their neck

Descriptors

1. Young Person
2. **Protections**
 - i. Supportive Parent
 - ii. Supportive Grandparent
 - iii. Coach Who Builds Skills and Reinforces Thriving Behavior
 - iv. Minister Who Provides Clear Standards and Guidance
 - v. Positive, Supportive Friend
 - vi. Community: Clear limits on density of alcohol sales outlets
 - vii. Community: Well-managed Underage Carding Enforcement
3. **Risks**
 - i. Friends Who Engage in the Problem Behavior
 - ii. Family Conflict
 - iii. Community: Availability of ATOD
 - iv. Community: Laws & Norms Favorable to ATOD
 - v. Community: School board member who holds keg party for graduating seniors

(cont.)

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Leading the Activity

Introduction:

In order to help you experience how both risk and protective factors can interact, let's try an activity that will get us up and moving a bit!

Instructions (adjust the script, as needed, to reflect the gender of the volunteers):

May I have a volunteer to agree to represent an adolescent in the community?
This is [name]. She is trying to do well in school and wants to stay out of trouble and have a more successful life than many of the adults she sees around her.

Invite the volunteer to stand in the center of the area being used for the activity, and hang the "Young Person" label around her neck.

May I have a volunteer to represent [name]'s parent?
Dad is very supportive of [name]. He wants her to do well in school, stay out of trouble, and do more with her life than Dad has been able to do. But Dad is supporting his family alone and works long hours. [Name] is out of school several hours before Dad gets home from work.

Invite the volunteer to stand next to the volunteer representing the youth, and hang the "Supportive Parent" label around his neck.

Who would like to represent a grandparent?
Dad has arranged for [name] to go to Grandma's every day after school until Dad gets home. Dad and Grandma have negotiated a plan of homework, chores and support for [name] each day. They are really working well together to make this time productive for her.

Invite the volunteer to stand next to the volunteer representing the youth, and hang the "Supportive Grandparent" label around his/her neck.

Can we have a coach?
This is [name]'s basketball coach. Recently [name] has become interested in basketball and has made the JV team. Coach thinks she has real potential and spends a lot of time working to develop her skills and confidence. Coach also supports her students in academic and personal development.

Invite them to also stand next to the volunteer representing the youth, and hang the "Coach Who Builds Skills and Reinforces Thriving Behavior" label around his/her neck.

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Instructions (cont.)

Who will volunteer to represent [name]'s minister?

[Name]'s youth minister works with young people to help them find ways to contribute to the community. He provides guidance and support for them to be drug-free and successful in school, and to develop goals for themselves as well as to make important contributions to their community.

Invite them to join the group around the volunteer representing the youth, and hang the "Minister Who Provides Clear Standards and Guidance" label around his/her neck.

Who would like to be [name]'s friend?

[Name]'s friend is also trying to do well in school and wants to be successful. The two friends are a great support and encouragement to each other.

Move the group to form a circle around the adolescent, joining hands, facing in, and hang the "Positive, Supportive Friend" label around his/her neck.

This represents the circle of protection around the youth.

In most young people's lives, we have some risk factors at play.

(If available, refer the audience to a list of risk factors.)

Who would like to be a convenience store clerk?

The convenience store clerk is known to sell alcohol to minors. Which community risk factor would this be? (availability of ATOD; hang descriptor around volunteer's neck)

Have this volunteer come up to the front, and stand near the circle around the youth.

We also have another friend, who would like to be this person?

[Name]'s friend recently tried marijuana and wants [name] to try it, too. Which risk factor is that? (friends who engage in the problem behavior; hand descriptor around volunteer's neck)

Have this volunteer come up to the front, and stand near the circle around the youth.

[Name] has a brother. Who will be the brother for us?

[Name]'s brother has been involved with a group of friends who are receiving and selling stolen property, and making a good deal of money. Dad found out and there's been a lot of heating arguments about this at home. Which risk factor is this? (family conflict; hang descriptor around volunteer's neck)

Have this volunteer come up to the front, and stand near the circle around the youth.

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Instructions (cont.)

Next is the school board president...who feels "presidential?"

[Name]'s school has policies about drug use by students, but no one really knows what they are. At graduation time, this school board president hosts a keg party on her ranch for the graduating class. Which risk factor is this? (community laws and norms favorable toward drug use; hand descriptor around volunteer's neck)

Instruct people representing risk factors to try to "get to" our adolescent through the circle of protection (without causing any injuries!). After a minute or two ask participants to debrief what they saw happening.

[Name] is pretty well protected here, and the risks are having a hard time impacting her.

We could even remove some of the risks with prevention programs...she would be even less likely to be impacted!

For example, we could form a group of parents to tell the convenience store operator that they have had enough and will not allow the sale of alcohol to minors. They could picket the store, etc. The convenience store operator may respond by stopping sales to minors, and would actually join the circle of protection.

Bring the convenience store operator into the protective circle.

We could talk to the school board president and insist that she ensure clear school policies for drug/alcohol use, AND that she model appropriate standards for behavior and ensure alcohol-free graduation events for all students.

Bring this person into the circle of protection, too.

Debrief:

Ask the "adolescent" how it felt to be standing in the circle of protection? Do these people around you make you feel protected?

Lead applause for participants. Debrief any other feedback.

This illustrates how protective factors and risk factors work together.

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Drawing a River

Instructions for Explaining Risk and Protective Factors

This is a talk and draw activity. You don't need to be an accomplished artist to present this! Stick figures are just fine.

Some of you may have seen videos on YouTube showing a drawing/story telling activity about 'upstream' work. This activity is like that, but helps you get into more specifics about risk and protection.

Instructions



Imagine that we live in a community near a large, swift river. In the river, just to the south of the town, is a waterfall, with jagged rocks at the bottom. (DRAW the river and waterfall, with a couple of children in the water).

What do you imagine that we might do if we saw children in the river, caught up in the current, and being swept over the falls?



I imagine that first we might send an ambulance crew to the bottom of the falls. (DRAW ambulance at the bottom of the falls). They could render aid to the children and get them help. We would likely leave a crew there if we knew that more children were coming.

We might also send some brave rescuers to the very edge of the falls, with big nets to scoop those young people who were obviously not going to be able to get to shore before being swept over the edge. (DRAW people with nets at top of the falls). We would likely want to leave them in place, too.



But once we had those systems in place, I would want to go upstream, and find out why there were so many children in the river, wouldn't you? We might find that the banks of the river were very steep and slippery...but with interesting rocks to climb on and lively wildlife along the stream. What might we do if we found this?



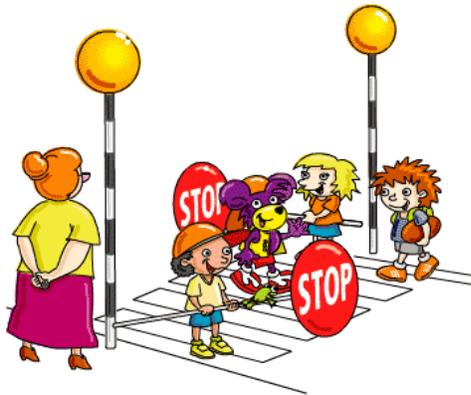
We could put up some fences where it was very slippery (DRAW fence). Or we could put up warning signs (draw signs). We might even have some people stationed there to warn the children of the dangers of the steep, slippery bank (DRAW watcher).

We could also offer swimming lessons, and hand out life jackets for the children who were playing near the water (DRAW signs offering swimming lessons, life jackets).

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*This river is a good analogy for what we are doing as a community related to many health/well-being problems. In older terminology, we called the people collecting hurt folks at the bottom of the falls **TREATMENT**, right? (**DRAW** the word **treatment** at the **bottom**). We even might include "reintegration" of the people into the community after treatment in our picture (**DRAW** the word **reintegration** there as well).*



*What might we call the efforts at the top of the falls? **Intervention!** (**DRAW** the word **intervention** at the top of the falls).*

*What I would really like to focus on though, is the upstream part of the drawing...that is where **PREVENTION** happens! (**DRAW** prevention over the upstream part of the river)*

*With prevention efforts, we reduce risks, right? What in the drawing represents risk reduction? The fences, the signs, the people providing warnings... (**LIST** risk reduction actions). The cool thing about these efforts is that they reduce risks for **MANY** health-wellbeing problems – because they have similar, or shared risk factors.*

*How about protection? The things that can help the kids survive the river, even if they fall in? **Swimming lessons, life jackets!** (**LIST** the protective actions). Again, many of these protective actions help protect against **SEVERAL** downstream health/well-being problems.*

Opening Up for Further Discussion:

Can you think of other things that we might do to reduce the risk? (Take answers from the group and add them to the drawing, if appropriate.)

What about other things that we could do to add protection? (Take answers from the group and add them to the drawing, if appropriate.)

Sometimes risk and protection are opposite ends of a continuum, like bonding to school. Having no bonding to school predicts involvement in problem behaviors like substance abuse, but being strongly bonded to school is protective, even in the face of other risks.

It is useful to think about increasing the likelihood of good outcomes (Protection) and increasing the likelihood of poor outcomes (Risk). It can also be helpful to think about how some protective factors buffer exposure to risks (allow them to climb back out of the river, even if they fall in).

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Opening Up for Further Discussion (cont.):

Can you see how this relates to the work that we are doing? What are some of the risk factors that you are working on? What are some of the protective factors?

Take any other questions. Encourage others to try coming up with a different, simple analogy that could be drawn to help people understand risk and protective factors related to prevention!

For example – some people use the concept of an umbrella. It's raining out (risk factors), but the umbrella (protective factors) helps keep us from getting soaked to the skin (health/well-being problems).

(cont.)

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Example River Drawing:

