THE POWER OF POSITIVE SOCIAL NORMS MESSAGING FOR EDUCATORS IN A RECREATIONAL CANNABIS STATE

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Participants will be able to identify the subtle difference between positive and negative social norms language and messaging.

- Participants will learn how to apply critical thinking skills and positive social norms messaging in the classroom to counteract social norms around cannabis use.

- Participants will practice transforming social norms from negative to positive messaging.

- Most Important Learning Bonus – Learning & Increasing Awareness from Each Other
OVERARCHING FOCUS

- The increased risks of mental illness from youth cannabis use is real. Research & data support this.

- The increased stress rates, mental illness, suicidality and risk of suicide among youth is also real and supported by data.

- How can we use language, data and images to navigate students towards healthier coping skills to avoid the risks of increased cannabis use, other substance use and mental illness outcomes.
Introductions:
Where do you lie in the Sphere of Influence?
More than One & How?
Share 1 with group
LET'S LOOK AT WHERE WE ARE

First things First
1 in 10 Americans experience substance use disorder

9 out of 10 people with substance problems started using by age 18

1 in 4 are addicted who started using before age 18 as compared to 1 in 25 for those who started at age 21 or older.

- U.S., the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University
CB₁ RECEPTORS ARE BROADLY DISTRIBUTED THROUGHOUT THE BRAIN, BUT SELECTIVELY ACTIVATED DURING ADOLESCENCE FOR HEALTHY BRAIN STRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT.

- CB₁ Receptors show disruption in their function when flooded by external cannabinoid exposure (to THC).

- The result of the flooded CB₁ receptors is altered structure and function of brain regions that control emotion, thought, memory and social interaction.

- These changes can persist well into adulthood and increase the risk for psychiatric illness as well as other drug addiction.

THC – The psychoactive & addictive cannabinoid in marijuana is much stronger today with some products up to 95% pure THC. Marijuana in 60s & 70s was 1-7%.

“OVERALL, EVIDENCE FROM EPIDEMIOLOGIC STUDIES PROVIDES STRONG ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO WARRANT A PUBLIC HEALTH MESSAGE THAT CANNABIS USE CAN INCREASE THE RISK OF PSYCHOTIC DISORDERS.” — ASSOCIATION BETWEEN CANNABIS AND PSYCHOSIS: EPIDEMIOLOGIC EVIDENCE - AUTHOR LINKS OPEN OVERLAY PANEL: SUZANNE H.GAGE; MATTHEW HICKMAN; STANLEY ZAMMIT
HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.1016/J.BIOPSYCH.2015.08.001

- Subsequent psychotic experiences
- Negative/disorganized symptoms
- Psychotic disorders, including schizophrenia & bi-polar disorder
- Cannabis Use Disorder

Risks increase with dosage, frequency and earlier age of onset.
Authors: Christopher Wong, 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DEPRESSION – 12-17 YEAR OLDS FROM 2004-2016

Figure 68. Received Treatment in the Past Year for Depression among Youths Aged 12 to 17 with a Past Year Major Depressive Episode (MDE) or MDE with Severe Impairment: Percentages, 2004-2016

After 2009, non-fatal, self-inflicted injury among females aged 10-14 years increased 18.8% per year, from 109.8% in 2009 to 317.7% in 2015.
Stress & Mental Health of Today’s Youth

- Stress has increased with Smartphones & continuous access to social media (social isolation, cyber-bullying, addiction, etc.)
- Unregulated and chronic stress can lead to mental illness and other negative health outcomes.
- Depression, suicide, suicide ideation are increasing.
- It is critical to monitor & manage student stress before it becomes a depression or suicide statistic.

Locally yet assumedly not unlike other national communities, a 2015 school survey of 2000+ students:

- 48% of Rocklin 9th and 62% of 11th graders said they felt stressed always or a lot stressed
  - 16% of 9th graders and 20% of 11th graders said they were struggling with mental health issues
  - More than half of 9th and 11th graders reported symptoms of stress – anxious/worry a lot, trouble sleeping, trouble focusing.

* 2015 CPY Rocklin Student Survey
THE ADDICTION CONTINUUM

Age 12
During adolescence, the brain goes through a lot of changes. Gray matter diminishes as connections between neurons are cut back.

Age 16
Because the brain is still developing, it is more sensitive to the effects of drugs.

Age 20
By adulthood, the changes caused by beginning drug use are less likely to "stick" and become hardwired as addiction.
AN INVITATION TO A PARADIGM FLIP

From Oral Solutions to Mind – Body Solutions
First we need to identify the subtle difference between positive and negative social norms language and messaging.
WHY THIS APPROACH?

➢ Words matter! Images matter!
➢ Learned behaviors start with exposure to language, images and behaviors
➢ Exposure creates perspectives/opinions
➢ Leading to self-talk
➢ Leading to physiological changes, choices and behaviors
➢ How we respond to the language of others also shapes perspectives, opinions, self-talk, choices and behaviors
➢ The language of parents and educators is key to empowering students to think critically when they hear the conversations around recreational cannabis.
LANGUAGE, WORDS & IMAGES SHAPE PERCEPTIONS – THE BRAIN LATCHES ON TO WHAT IS THERE, **NOT** WHAT IS MISSING

- “**My** migraine”
- “Don’t **forget**” vs. “Remember”
- “Don’t do that” vs. “Maybe you **can** do this, or this, or this.” - Redirecting focus vs. negative language or imaging
- Mental Health vs. Mental Illness

Other Examples ???
Perception of Harm

MARIJUANA: AS PERCEIVED HARM DROPS, USE GOES UP

1993: 26.0% USING, 35.6% PERCEIVED HARM
2003: 26.6% USING, 34.9% PERCEIVED HARM
2013: 19.5% USING, 36.4% PERCEIVED HARM

*Past-year use in 12th graders.

(saw great risk in smoking marijuana occasionally)
Which of the following would you — a parent who uses marijuana — worry most about your child doing?

- Smoking cigarettes: 29%
- Drinking alcohol: 26%
- Having sex: 25%
- Cheating on a test: 13%
- Using marijuana: 6%

*Survey of 1,122 adults was conducted March 1st through March 7th, 2017 by The Marist Poll, sponsored and funded in partnership with Yahoo News. Adults 18 years of age and older residing in the contiguous United States. [http://maristpoll.marist.edu/yahoo-news-marist_poll/](http://maristpoll.marist.edu/yahoo-news-marist_poll/)

Smoking
Vaping
Drinking
Sex
Cheating
Marijuana/Cannabis
APPLYING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS & POSITIVE SOCIAL NORMS MESSAGING IN THE CLASSROOM TO COUNTERACT SOCIAL NORMS AROUND CANNABIS USE.
SOME MESSAGES ARE MORE SUBLTLE

What are the messages here? Implied and through images?
THE POWER OF NEGATIVE SOCIAL NORMS

• **Youth** who perceive that the majority of their peers drink are more likely to drink themselves.

• **Parents** who believe most youth drink may be less likely to take protective actions with their own child.

• **School leaders** who believe most children drink may consider underage drinking a “rite of passage” and be unwilling to adopt appropriate policies.

• **Law enforcement** leaders who believe the community condones underage drinking may be less likely to strongly enforce underage drinking laws.

“A POSITIVE COMMUNITY NORMS COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGN SHOULD ADDRESS THE MISPERCEPTIONS HELD BY MULTIPLE AUDIENCES.”

Fear Doesn’t Work Either

“IT IS TIME TO MOVE BEYOND HEALTH TERRORISM. IF WE WANT HEALTH, WE MUST PROMOTE HEALTH.” - JEFF LINKENBACH

Fear appeals can backfire, and have unintended adverse effects. They can:

- Label and stigmatize,
- Expand social gaps
- Promote poor health as a value
- Cause a loss of engagement

PERCEPTION IS EVERYTHING. THEREFORE SO, TOO, IS MISPERCEPTION. – Jeff Linkenbach

How do we get from here to there?

The 2 Legs of Positivity:

1. Positive Data
2. Positive Framing
THE POWER OF POSITIVE SOCIAL NORMS

Social norms approach

- Traditional forms of drug education often rely on depicting extreme negative consequences of drug use.
- Whilst people may have a high recall rate for these types of messages there is little evidence that they are effective in changing behaviour.
- The social norms approach uses an alternative technique based on a very simple premise – if you can correct the misperceptions that people hold then alcohol and drug use will fall.

THE POWER OF DATA TO SHAPE POSITIVE SOCIAL NORMS

- **Injunctive norms** are *people’s perceptions* of what behaviors are approved of or disapproved of by others.

- **Descriptive norms** are people’s perceptions of how people actually act. Targeting descriptive norms by sharing *what most people actually do* works better to influence behavior than trying to change injunctive norms. “Join Your Fellow Guests in Helping to Save the Environment.” It was found that 75% of guests reused their towels after receiving the descriptive norm message.

Humor Always Helps!

Social norms approach

Most Ravalli teens (76%) are tobacco free.

Dogs know all MOST of us.
Some Images Reflecting Positive Social Norms

https://www.mindful.org/self-compassion-can-help-teens-de-stress/

CPY Graduation Campaign, 2017
“Most of Us” Campaigns

Finding the prevalent data that reflects healthier behaviors rather than riskier ones is paramount to shifting perceptions.

Illustrate reality vs. perception.

Youth-led Social Norms Campaigns.
Before Prom, the Main Community Youth Assistance Foundation developed the: “Positive Prom Car Project”

Instead of displaying a crashed car on the school lawn, they parked a new top-of-the-line sports car, with the above message.

The project team confirmed the data for the message with the Police Department and school. No alcohol or drug related incidents and no accidents were reported.

Everyone does it.

It’s normal.

Most people...

It’s legal.

It’s natural; it’s medicine.

It’s safer than.....

A little bit once in a while won’t hurt anyone.
3 Positions of Framing a Positive Response

1. **Touch the students with your compassion.** – Teaching is positional power but influence comes with relationship. You influence them because you have a relationship with them.

2. **Observe the position of the students,** by understanding the impact of your words.

   *Paradox:* Students want to be different—just like everybody else.

3. **See yourself with the student**-while keeping this in mind:

   “Transformation comes with compassion & understanding. A student will never not use marijuana/cannabis, because you scare them.”

- Gary Yeatts, MSW, BCC, Clarity Technologies
Using Motivational Interviewing Basics to Respond to Students - O.A.R.S.
# Motivational Interviewing Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Technique</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permission</td>
<td>May we talk about…?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Question</td>
<td>What do you know about…?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed Question</td>
<td>How much do you smoke?</td>
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<tr>
<td>TELL</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Inform</td>
<td>Diabetes causes blindness.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Give Feedback</td>
<td>Your tests show…</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advise</td>
<td>Exercise will benefit you.</td>
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<tr>
<td>LISTEN</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Appreciate</td>
<td>You are very courageous</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflect</td>
<td>You want to change, but…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarize</td>
<td>Let’s see if I got it…</td>
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KEYS TO POSITIVE RESPONSES

- **Know your local numbers** – Recent student use rates by grade is best data so you can respond in general terms.

- **Take care to maintain trust and respect.**

- **Maintain calm tone.**

- **Avoid judgment.**

- **Find the point of agreement:**
  - “Yes, I agree that you have some strong beliefs about the benefits of cannabis.”
  - “I can appreciate that you don’t feel that there is a down side for teens to use cannabis.”
  - “I agree that you feel like you have credible enough resources about cannabis. When you become curious about other information, I can share that with you.”
  - “I can appreciate that you are not interested in getting help now, but when you feel like looking at what some options could be, I can share them with you.”

“Agree and...” or “Yes and...”
TRANSFORMING SOCIAL NORMS FROM NEGATIVE TO POSITIVE MESSAGING.
COMMENTS REGARDING CANNABIS USE
“YES, AND…” FIND THE POINT OF AGREEMENT

Student
- “It’s safer than taking pills.”
- “It’s a natural product.”
- “It’s legal.”

Teacher
- “Yes, I agree that you have some strong beliefs about cannabis and it sounds like you want to make sure you are using coping methods that are not a risk to your health.”
- “Yes, I agree that following the law is important to you and that if adults can do it, you may feel it must be safe for you.”
Reflecting back with Questions & Positive Social Norms Language – “Yes, and……?”

Yes, I can agree that it is better to make a choice that has less risks and...

Yes I can appreciate that you feel like it must be okay since it is okay for adults...

Are you interested in learning what some of the mental health risks of using cannabis may be and what some more commonly used safer alternatives by other students are that don’t pose risks?

Would you like to know why it is better to wait until the brain is fully developed, when it has more protection, before considering any substance use?
WHERE IS THE POSITIVE SOCIAL NORMS DATA AROUND CANNABIS?

- CO – 68% of municipalities did not allow cannabis dispensaries.
- Most students make good choices every day. (What are your local numbers?)
- There are a host of positive coping methods that don’t pose risks for teens.
- Focus on opportunities, redirection after identifying core need getting satisfied by substance-use
- Highlight student accomplishments, values and priorities.
Opportunities to Increase Critical Thinking Skills for Students in the Classroom While Expanding Positive Social Norms In the Classroom & School

- Research – literature search
- Media Literacy – Common Sense media
- Debate on credible sources vs. fake news
- Hunt for resources and positive coping skills
- Encourage students to develop their own positive social norms messaging campaigns. FNL guide.
### Re-Directing Towards Health-Increasing Coping Skills & Behaviors

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<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Possible Coping Strategy</th>
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<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>Mindfulness, time management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migraine</td>
<td>Yoga and mindfulness practice before sleeping – no devices before bed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insomnia</td>
<td>Increase exercise, no caffeine after 4pm, mindfulness before sleeping, no devices before bed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to decompress</td>
<td>Walk or bike rides, sports, prioritizing time to talk with friends, parents, counselor at least once a week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling Sad/Depressed</td>
<td>Talk to a counselor, coach, faith leader, mentor, other teacher.</td>
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Review

Positive Data

- Know your data
- Illustrate Reality vs. Perception
  - Use Positive Images & Humor when possible
  - Enlist students to find the Positive Social Norms in their social circles; themselves.

Positive Framing

- Identify point of agreement and provide access to credible resources when appropriate
- Use “Agree and…”
- Identify need under student rational/behavior
- Frame responses & questions from compassion & focus on health-promoting options, opportunities or just listen & reflect
- Use O.A.R.S.
REFERENCES


- U.S., the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University
THANK YOU!

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