

YC

YOUTH CONNECTIONS

MAGAZINE

Summer 2022 | lincolncountyuniteforyouth.org

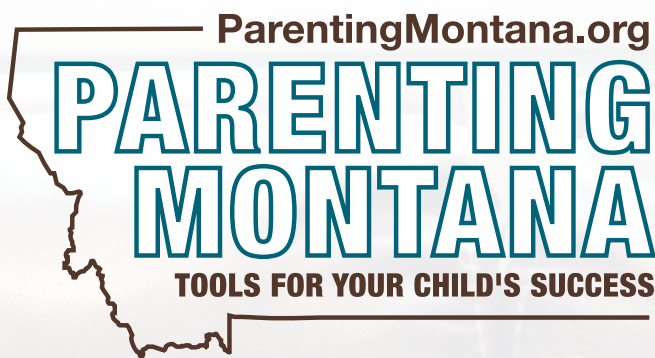
ALSO
*Dangers
of Dabs*

FEATURE: **BEHAVIORAL SHAPING**

- » Three Ways to Help Steer Kids to Positive Influences
- » The Benefits of Guardrails
- » Must-Know Brain Science of Boredom



TOGETHER ... SUPPORTING
YOUTH AND FAMILIES
FOR A STRONG, SAFE AND
HEALTHY COMMUNITY!



In Montana,
parents want
what's best
for their kids.



ParentingMontana.org has information
and tools for parents of children at every age.

.....

TOOLS FOR YOUR CHILD'S SUCCESS

SUMMER 2022

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ABOUT UNITE FOR YOUTH COALITION

In 2008, following the US Surgeon General's Call to Action to Reduce and Prevent Underage Drinking, a cross-section of the Lincoln County community gathered together for a presentation focused on the reality of youth binge drinking and drinking and driving across the lifespan in Lincoln County. At that time, Montana ranked first in the Nation for underage drinking and Lincoln County ranked 5th in the state. Nearly 84 percent of youth in grades 8-12 reported drinking alcohol in their lifetime and nearly half of high school seniors reported binge drinking on a regular basis. Additionally, Lincoln County had lost three young people to alcohol-related crashes in the 18 months prior to the event. The evening's presentation ended with a call to action. EVERY person in the room responded with a "yes" and committed to being part of Lincoln County Unite for Youth (UFY), a community coalition comprised of individuals, agencies and organizations dedicated to working together to create a stronger, safer, healthier community for youth and families.

As a coalition, UFY often poses challenging questions regarding how we as a community – *our beliefs, our attitudes, and our actions* – including long-standing community norms, contribute to or support the problems we face as a result of underage drinking and Rx drug abuse in Lincoln County. What we have learned is not always easy, but we understand that by keeping the health and safety of our community at the center of this conversation, we can arrive at consensus and through collaborative prevention efforts, begin to implement strategies shown to reduce youth substance use.

UFY's Mission is...*to leave a legacy of community health and safety by reducing youth substance use through collaborative, individual and systems-level prevention and intervention efforts.* UFY's mission statement serves as a guide for coalition building, strategy selection and action planning. In Lincoln County, the idea of leaving a legacy speaks to individuals from all sectors of the community interested in reducing youth substance use. It lifts them out of the (often overwhelming) day to day consequences of youth and community substance use, sets their eyes (and hearts) on a better future, and draws them in to the creation of a shared vision for community health and safety. With an established vision, coalition members can think creatively about the pieces of the community puzzle essential for achieving our common goals and are better able to see their place in the big picture.

Risk factors leading to youth substance use exist at the individual, peer, family, school and community levels. None of us is equipped to address them all, but together, as reflected in our mission statement, we can draw upon our collective strengths and expertise to raise awareness, provide support, build skills, change consequences, reduce access, change physical design, and implement policy-level changes aimed at promoting health and reducing youth substance use. As a result, we are creating a stronger, safer, healthier community for all of us!

WELCOME *Readers!*



**Vel
Shaver**



**Maggie
Anderson**

As we continue to utilize the *Communities That Care* model for prevention, Unite for Youth, in collaboration with our multiple community partners, remains committed to our vision of elevating the health and well-being of youth and families across Lincoln County.

Since the launch of *Communities That Care* (CTC) in 2020, we have been both honored and humbled to witness the positive outcomes of true community collaboration! Each of you, with your hearts for kids and families, are an essential piece in our collective efforts to build capacity toward *Growing the Good* in our small (but mighty) communities!

This summer, CTC Community Boards in Troy, Libby, and the Tobacco Valley are busy developing community-guided action plans that align with CTC's Social Development Strategy by supporting and expanding opportunities for youth and families to learn, grow and play together.

These tested and effective programs and activities – chosen by each community to reflect their unique values and culture – are proven to lower risk-taking behaviors, strengthen relationships, and promote the well-being of young people.

In this issue of *YC Magazine*, along with timely and relevant articles and resources for parents, there are multiple examples of how caring adults and kids come together to play, learn, and support one another, all while increasing protection and lowering risk of harm – *don't you LOVE how that works?!* And, please check out our Difference Makers and Assets in Action sections. We are excited and truth-be-told, SO PROUD of the hearts and hands that continue to show up and help make Lincoln County an even better place to live!

We hope you have a beautiful summer and invite you to join us in our journey to keep on *Growing the Good*!

**With Gratitude,
Vel & Maggie**

Unite for Youth monthly meeting schedule:

First Tuesday of every month via Zoom meeting link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82731427355>

Meeting ID: 827 3142 7355

Communities That Care (CTC):

<https://www.communitiesthatcare.net/programs/ctc-plus/>

CTC Social Development Strategy(SDS):

<https://www.communitiesthatcare.net/prevention-science/>



As a parent, you are the biggest influence in your child's life and having open, honest conversations is one of the most powerful ways to connect with your kids and help them develop into healthy adults.

SOME THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND...

- Keep lines of communication open and make sure you come from a place of love and compassion – even when you're having tough conversations.
- Balance any consequences with positive encouragement.
- Frequent touch points and teachable moments come up all the time – use these as natural opportunities to discuss substance use.

STOP

A Message From Lincoln County Youth



PROCEED WITH CAUTION

PROVIDING alcohol for minors is
illegal and may result in fines of
up to \$585 and 6 months in jail

PLEASE...

PREVENT DON'T PROVIDE





Kid's Corner

AT THE MARKET



Eureka Farmers Market

Veteran's Park
3:30-6:00pm

June 22 August 10
July 13 August 24

Farmers Market at Libby

Libby Area Chamber of Commerce
3:00-6:30pm

May 5 July 21
June 16 August 18

Troy Farmers Market

Troy Museum
3:30-6:30pm

June 10 August 12
July 1 September 30

Trego Farmers Market

Trego Pub & General Store
4-6pm

June 30





For more information, please contact **Dorey Rowland** at drowland@libby.org

PARENTS, HAVE YOU HEARD THESE MYTHS ABOUT VAPING?

MYTHS vs FACTS



"I'd rather my kid vape than smoke."

Most kids who vape would have never smoked cigarettes to begin with, and kids who vape are 4x more likely to smoke cigarettes in the future.

E-cigarettes are addicting a whole new generation to nicotine; a generation that would have remained largely tobacco-free.

"Kids will be kids."



Nicotine is highly addictive and harmful to brain development.

Kids who are addicted don't really get to be kids.



"It's only harmless water vapor."

E-cigarette aerosol contains many chemicals and ultrafine particles that have been known to cause cancer and serious respiratory conditions.

Scientists are still studying the long-term health effects of vaping. In the meantime, today's kids are the tobacco industry's guinea pigs.



MONTANA
TOBACCO USE
PREVENTION PROGRAM



MY LIFE MY QUIT.
mylifemyquit.com
1-855-891-9989



PROTECT THEIR BRAIN DEVELOPMENT PROTECT THEIR FUTURE

IF MARIJUANA IS USED ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH, TEENS ARE:

- LESS LIKELY TO GRADUATE
- MORE LIKELY TO HAVE LOWER SATISFACTION WITH LIFE
- MORE LIKELY TO BE UNEMPLOYED

Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)



We Need Your Help



Community Need

The town of Eureka has a desperate need for a place for families, especially low to moderate income families, to enjoy themselves in both the summer and winter seasons.

Vision

- 1 Ice Hockey Rink
- 1 Roller Hockey Rink
- 7 Soccer Fields
- 1 Tennis Court
- 1 Basketball Court
- 1 Volleyball Court
- 1 Playground
- 1 Running & Biking Trail

EYSL

(EUREKA YOUTH SPORTS LEAGUE)

IN CONJUNCTION WITH

BSA EAGLE SCOUT
CANDIDATE
BLAKE LANCASTER

More info

406-291-8622
INFO@LANCASTERANDCO.COM
<https://eureka-mt.com>



CONFESSIONS FROM THE KITCHEN TABLE

BREAKING UP IS HARD TO DO

Breakups are inevitable. Preteens and teens make and break relationships at a rapid pace in middle and high school. I still remember being dumped, ghosted, or even shunned from friends and social groups. I also remember being the one to break up with incompatible or toxic people. Whether you are the one leaving or the one being left, you can work to soften the blow of a hard breakup. Here are the dos and don'ts of breakups:

DO: COMMUNICATE CONSTRUCTIVELY

If a relationship isn't working, then the other person needs to know. Don't be afraid to tell it like it is, but do consider how to say it. "I feel" statements are often better than "you are" statements and lead to a better understanding between two people in a friendship or two partners in a relationship. For example, instead of saying, "You never listen," say, "I feel like I am not heard in this friendship."

DON'T: GHOST PEOPLE

Unfortunately, this breaking up method feels easy and nonconfrontational in the moment, but often leads to hurt feelings and even aggressive behaviors later on. Ghosting is not an effective way to leave. It denies everyone in the relationship an explanation and a sense of closure. Clear communication is always preferable.

DO: BE CLEAR AND FIRM

When breaking up, clear and definite terms are easier to understand. Instead of saying, "Maybe we are not good together," say, "I want to break up." Firm boundaries are not negotiable. Your safety and well-being are always important. It is okay to say "no" or "leave me alone" after a relationship has ended.

DON'T: BE HOT AND COLD

It is confusing when an ex-friend changes their behavior towards you every few days (or hours). It sends mixed messages. Walk away – and stay away – from this kind of behavior. If you are the one who exited the friendship, be respectful, but not overly friendly, when you see the other person around.

DO: REPORT BULLYING OR ABUSE

Report any physical, mental, or emotional bullying/abuse

immediately. No amount of banter, physical aggression, or teasing is acceptable if it hurts someone. Tell a trusted adult at school and at home if you feel uncomfortable with a former friend or partner.

DON'T: FEEL GUILTY

A relationship only works if both people are happy to be in it. It is your job to advocate for yourself and make sure the other party knows how you feel. If they are not taking you seriously, or guilt tripping you for the breakup, they are out of line. Repeat your position and walk away.

DO: FOCUS ON SAFETY

Any time a relationship puts your safety at risk, it is time to break up. Any time a breakup puts your safety at risk, you need to ask for help. If you believe the other person is not handling a breakup well and might hurt themselves (i.e. drinking, substance abuse, risky behavior, or suicidal thoughts), it is NOT your problem to solve, but DO tell a trusted adult right away.

DO: FIND NEW RELATIONSHIPS

Sometimes a breakup with one person means a change in friend groups, which makes it even more difficult to move on. Work to foster new friendships with new groups of people. Allow space for your former partner to seek out other friends, too.

DON'T: TAKE IT TOO PERSONALLY

Not all relationships work out. If you go through a bad breakup, it does not mean you are a bad person, and it certainly does not mean you are unlovable. It may take some time, but hearts heal and new relationships and friendships come along.

DO: BE THANKFUL

Look back at the good times and try to be thankful for the time you had with them. All relationships have ups and downs. So, focus on the upside.

Breakups with friends and partners are tough all around, but it doesn't have to be a long-term burden. Voice your needs, set boundaries, be firm in your convictions, and always put your physical and mental safety first. ■

YOU CAN SUBMIT YOUR STORY AT: lincolncountyuniteforyouth@gmail.com

For many of us the kitchen table represents the typical family experience. We have laughed while having family game night. We have cried over our children's choices. We have blown out the candles on many cakes. We have argued our way out of doing the dishes. We have struggled through those "three more bites." We have learned hard lessons and celebrated many deserved successes. One thing is for sure though—if our kitchen tables could talk, there would be plenty of stories! So often it is in relating to others' stories that we realize there isn't always one answer, or even a right answer. Parenting is hard work! If you have a story of lessons learned, we invite you to share it with our readers. Sometimes, knowing we aren't the only ones struggling to find the answer is all the help we need.



BEHAVIO SHA

By LEN LANTZ, MD



ORAL SHAPING

WHAT IS BEHAVIORAL SHAPING IN PARENTING?

Behavioral shaping, or behavior-shaping, is a strategy for changing a person's behavior through rewards. Essentially, it is shaping or molding a certain behavior pattern.

Behavior-shaping was first studied and defined by B.F. Skinner, the psychologist who developed behavior analysis, who classified it as a form of operant conditioning. Operant conditioning is based on only rewarding desired behavior. Dr. Skinner was able to train animals to perform tasks by only rewarding the behavior that led to the outcomes he wanted, such as getting a rat to press a lever for food or teaching pigeons to play ping pong.

The findings in many cases of behavior-shaping were that when the reward stopped, so did the desired behavior, so it comes as no surprise that parenting experts have not invested much time and effort in behavior-shaping as a parenting strategy. However, children are not the same as Dr. Skinner's rats and pigeons. It turns out that parents can use behavioral shaping to create a new routine or baseline expectation in their homes. And that does not mean that you have to hand your child a cookie every time they use a tissue instead of the back of their hand when they have a runny nose.

The strategies covered in this article use a broader interpretation of behavioral shaping that involves gradual changes to a preferred behavior, which eventually becomes the new normal or default behavior.

THE EXPERTS ARE CRINGING RIGHT NOW...

Experts in behavioral interventions are going to cringe at this article because I'll be using terms like punishment and reward as regular folks (not behavioral scientists) use the terms. Whether something is a punishment or a reward depends on the perspective of the people involved. Consider the common example of getting kids to do their homework. If a child does not do their homework, a parent might not let them play video games. From the parent's perspective, video games are a privilege and reward for the child doing their job (homework and chores). If the child does not do their homework, they do not receive the reward.

From the child's perspective, they might see playing video games as a fundamental right. They might own their smartphone or gaming system if they received them as gifts. If they are older, they may have worked and saved money to buy their electronics, therefore they might believe they should have full control over those items. If a child is not allowed to be on their phone or gaming, they see might see it as punishment or a violation of their rights.

continued on page 9



AUG

25

2022

5TH ANNUAL
GUNS VS. HOSES SOFTBALL GAME
LEGION FIELD - 7:00 PM

BEHAVIORAL SHAPING ONLY REQUIRES ONE RULE

There is only one rule when using behavioral shaping as a parent: Grandma's Rule. Dr. Lynn Clark defines Grandma's Rule as "after you do your chore, then you get to play." That's it. Do the required task, then chill out and enjoy being a kid. The reward can be something you do intentionally, such as showing your child appreciation or giving them a treat or simply letting them spend their time however they want.

Here are some examples of how parents reinforce Grandma's Rule with their kids:

- **"Buddy, pause your game and get your homework done, please. You know the rule. Homework, then electronics. Please hand me your phone. I'll hold onto it while you get your work done so it's not a distraction."**
- **"I hear that you want to clean your room later. I'm telling you that 'later' is now. The sooner you are done, the quicker you can get back to your activity."**
- **"We've already discussed this before, John. You get one hour of electronics per day. If you want to earn another hour of gaming, I want to see you outside playing for an hour first."**
- **"Janie, you've been asleep in your room for an hour. It's time for you to get up, sweetie. We can talk about what you want to do and need to get done with what's left of the day. Also, I need to run errands. If you come with me, we'll stop by Starbucks."**
- **"I know that you plan to spend the day with your friends, Sam, but check the chore calendar. You were supposed to have the lawn mowed yesterday. Text your buddies and tell them you are going to be late. Come find me when you are done with the lawn so I can check it, then the afternoon is yours to spend however you want."**

If kids are not doing some form of work (chore or school), then they are usually playing or relaxing (experiencing a reward). That play or relaxation might be music, art, reading, video games, daydreaming, taking a nap, checking social media, hanging out with friends or playing with toys. Some teenagers have actual jobs; however, Grandma's Rule still applies: after you do your chore (taking care of your responsibilities at school and home), then you get to "play" (spending your free time at an optional job to have more spending money).

Even though the rule is simple, it can sometimes feel like a very hard rule to enforce. Parents face real challenges in enforcing some rules because most are not trained in

Kids resist change, especially when it makes them less comfortable. When using behavioral shaping, you need to be clear on what the rules and consequences are. You then need to be calm and consistent as you work to get your kids back on track if they are off-task. Over time, arguments over the changes in expectations diminish because it is the new standard by which you do things in your home.

behavioral strategies, and some children have higher needs, are more oppositional and have a more challenging temperament than others. Also, not all parents have the same amount of time, support, skills or awareness to address these problems early when they are more easily fixed. Control of your child's electronics is a big factor but not the only factor in getting them to do the activities they need to be doing.

If you find that you cannot consistently enforce Grandma's Rule by turning off the games, taking your child's phone, shutting down their computer or dislodging them from their room and bed, then you are in trouble and would likely benefit from working with a behavioral specialist.

WAYS OF REWARDING YOUR CHILD

Other than leaving it up to your child to reward themselves, you can reward behavior that you like to see in other ways. In the book *The 5 Love Languages of Children*, Drs. Ross Campbell and Gary Chapman identified different ways kids know that they are loved.

- **PHYSICAL TOUCH: hugging/snuggling**
- **WORDS OF AFFIRMATION: telling them what you appreciate about them or providing a specific compliment**
- **QUALITY TIME: time with them one-on-one, such as an outing or Special Time (see my article, "Special Time – the Most Fun You'll Have as a Parent")**

- **GIFTS: small treats or gifts with a special meaning attached**
- **ACTS OF SERVICE: doing something nice for them (this usually means going out of your way)**

Do you know what matters most to your child? Understanding your child's love language will help you to be assured that you are communicating your love for them in the way they best understand and desire it. It would be irrational to start by withholding affection from your child, but when you are seeing more of the behavior that you want to see, you can reward them by showing them love in the way they best understand it.

THE NEW ROUTINE CAN BECOME THE NEW NORM

Kids resist change, especially when it makes them less comfortable. When using behavioral shaping, you need to be clear on what the rules and consequences are. You then need to be calm and consistent as you work to get your kids back on track if they are off-task. Over time, arguments over the changes in expectations diminish because it is the new standard by which you do things in your home. You are not setting a new rule for one day, you are setting it for every day. Your ultimate goal is to help your kid to become self-directed in successfully allocating their time between work and play. They will also be rewarded by other positive outcomes that result from taking care of their obligations. They should not be interrupted in the middle of their play if they have completed other expectations. There is a benefit to getting good grades and positive feedback from teachers. They may earn an allowance for their chores and will find that they have less conflict and more positive time with their parents. Kids are universally happier when they have less conflict with their parents.

HELPING YOUR CHILD THRIVE IN THE LONG RUN

Parenting can be an incredibly challenging task. Parents are not trained as behavioral strategists and even if they were, there can be many aspects to parenting that feel outside of your control. However, if you are struggling with your child, there are steps you can take to help them do the things they need to be doing. One of your duties is to help your child thrive in the long run, which sometimes involves causing them discomfort now. Having basic rules can help you ensure that your kids are prioritizing their time. In doing so, the expectations and rules are clear and this will eventually become the new norm and routine. It will also improve your relationship with your kids over time. You will be having fewer conflicts as they are getting their top priorities done first. ■

Check out who's standing out in our community.

IS THERE SOMEONE YOU'D LIKE TO NOMINATE?

Please email lincolncountyuniteforyouth@gmail.com and tell us why this individual has stood out in your crowd.

DIFFERENCE MAKERS

Sharee Miller LINCOLN COUNTY LIBRARIES - TROY

As the Troy librarian and a founding member of the Troy Library and Opportunity Center, Sharee Miller works collaboratively to connect youth and families to resources that support and expand opportunities to learn and grow together. Her heart for kids of all ages is apparent as she plays with little ones at the library and as she engages teens in the process of envisioning a safer and healthier community. Sharee reaches beyond the boundaries of the library to work alongside partners such as the Troy Chamber, Libby Job Service, Friends of the Library, Zero to Five, Unite for Youth, Spring Up Troy, and MEDA to serve and strengthen families and set the stage for positive and thriving futures – today, and for generations to come.



Aspire to Inspire Youth Leadership Team LIBBY MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL

Aspire to Inspire (ATI) is a youth-led group of Libby Middle/High School students that have a passion for promoting what it means to live a healthy and substance-free life. They are leaders among their peers and work to educate youth and their families in the community about substance use, depression and anxiety, and suicide. They work together to develop and implement community events and activities that provide positive prosocial opportunities for youth engagement. The group is led by the Youth Engagement Coordinator (YEC), Amy Fantozzi, who is committed to help elevate the health and well-being of young people in the community.



Troy's Youth Leadership Team

The Troy Youth Leadership Team is a budding group of talented, open-minded community-oriented teens. Their shared values are: creativity, teamwork, respect, and motivation! This group formed after the SEEDS Leadership Training Day in March 2022. The team currently meets at the Troy Library on Friday afternoons where the group has lively discussions about what it's really like to be a teen during this unique time in human history. They aspire to infuse fun youth opportunities into Troy by coming together with fresh ideas, and to build a sense of hope and unity for kids in our community. If you are in grades 7-12 and live in Troy, we would love to hear from you! Please contact lincolncountyuniteforyouth@gmail.com for more information on how to get involved!



Troy Bike Project

The bike project builds upon existing resources (local bike trails, pump track, flow track, 78-member bike club, and incredibly supportive community known for pulling together and getting things done when they put their mind to it) to create a program that expands opportunities for youth ages 8-18 to participate with friends, family, and community members who share their passion for biking. Young people learn the skills needed to not only care for a bike, but also to develop ownership and pride in their community as they work to maintain and enhance the local trail system and explore additional opportunities for sustaining the project for the long term.



Join the Pride EUREKA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Join the Pride is a leadership group at Lincoln County High School in Eureka. Their mission is to reduce youth substance use by working collaboratively with school and community partners to: Provide youth and the community awareness and education opportunities aimed at promoting healthy lifestyles and elevating the health and well-being of young people; Expand safe and healthy school and community activities for kids in grades K-12; Facilitate role-modeling and mentoring opportunities with younger students; Advocate for school and community-level policies that support safe and healthy lifestyle choices by youth and adults.





Libby Middle High School

BEFORE PRIDE. BEFORE RECOGNITION. THERE IS A FIRST.
THE FIRST THOUGHT. THE FIRST STEP. THE FIRST BREAKTHROUGH.
AT LIBBY MIDDLE HIGH SCHOOL, WE ARE
DETERMINED TO GO FIRST.
IT'S IN OUR BLOOD
IT'S IN OUR SWEAT. AND IT'S IN OUR NATURE.
HERE, GOING FIRST MEANS WE'RE BOLD ENOUGH TO
DREAM BIG
TO TAKE RISKS. IT'S WHY WE GO TO THE EDGE
AND INSTEAD OF GOING BACK - WE BUILD A BRIDGE AND WE
KEEP GOING
SO WE WILL GO ABOVE. WE WILL GO BEYOND.
AND WHEN EVERYONE ELSE GOES BACK
LOGGERS
GO FIRST.



40 DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS

40 Developmental Assets are essential qualities of life that help young people thrive, do well in school, and avoid risky behavior.

Youth Connections utilizes the 40 Developmental Assets Framework to guide the work we do in promoting positive youth development. The 40 Assets model was developed by the Minneapolis-based Search Institute based on extensive research. Just as we are coached to diversify our financial assets so that all our eggs are not in one basket, the strength that the 40 Assets model can build in our youth comes through diversity. In a nutshell, the more of the 40 Assets youth possess, the more likely they are to exhibit positive behaviors and attitudes (such as good health and school success) and the less likely they are to exhibit risky behaviors (such as drug use and promiscuity). It's that simple: if we want to empower and protect our children, building the 40 Assets in our youth is a great way to start.

Look over the list of Assets on the following page and think about what Assets may be lacking in our community and what Assets you can help build in our young people. Do what you can do with the knowledge that even through helping build one asset in one child, you are increasing the chances that child will grow up safe and successful. Through our combined efforts, we will continue to be a place where Great Kids Make Great Communities.

Turn the page to learn more!



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Honoring youth voice at Troy Library and Opportunity Center visioning session

8

EXTERNAL ASSETS

SUPPORT

1. **Family support:** Family life provides high levels of love and support.
2. **Positive family communication:** Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parent(s).
3. **Other adult relationships:** Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.
4. **Caring neighborhood:** Young person experiences caring neighbors.
5. **Caring school climate:** School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
6. **Parent involvement in school:** Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.

EMPOWERMENT

7. **Community values youth:** Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
8. **Youth as resources:** Young people are given useful roles in the community.
9. **Service to others:** Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.
10. **Safety:** Young person feels safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood.

BOUNDARIES & EXPECTATIONS

11. **Family boundaries:** Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.
12. **School boundaries:** School provides clear rules and consequences.
13. **Neighborhood boundaries:** Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.
14. **Adult role models:** Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
15. **Positive peer influence:** Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.
16. **High expectations:** Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.

CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF TIME

17. **Creative activities:** Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
18. **Youth programs:** Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community.
19. **Religious community:** Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.
20. **Time at home:** Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.



Lincoln County littles enjoy many opportunities for structured community programs for kids

18



Community members support opportunities for safe and healthy activities for youth

7



Libby's Community Theater opens the door to creative connections

17

INTERNAL ASSETS

COMMITMENT TO LEARNING

- 21. **Achievement motivation:** Young person is motivated to do well in school.
- 22. **School engagement:** Young person is actively engaged in learning.
- 23. **Homework:** Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
- 24. **Bonding to school:** Young person cares about her or his school.
- 25. **Reading for pleasure:** Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.

POSITIVE VALUES

- 26. **Caring:** Young person places high value on helping other people.
- 27. **Equality and social justice:** Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
- 28. **Integrity:** Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.
- 29. **Honesty:** Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy."
- 30. **Responsibility:** Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.
- 31. **Restraint:** Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.

SOCIAL COMPETENCIES

- 32. **Planning and decision making:** Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
- 33. **Interpersonal competence:** Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
- 34. **Cultural competence:** Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
- 35. **Resistance skills:** Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
- 36. **Peaceful conflict resolution:** Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.

POSITIVE IDENTITY

- 37. **Personal power:** Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."
- 38. **Self-esteem:** Young person reports having a high self-esteem.
- 39. **Sense of purpose:** Young person reports that "my life has a purpose."
- 40. **Positive view of personal future:** Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.



Eureka's Victoria Meester wins State of Montana duck stamp competition



Robotics students compete successfully at Nationals in Houston



Reading aloud with Ms. Moe at Eureka's Family Strong gathering



Libby's Logger Nation strives to build strong citizens of the world



three ways to help steer kids to POSITIVE INFLUENCES

By NATURAL HIGH STAFF

This article is a continuation of our risk/protective factor series. Risk factors increase the likelihood a child will get involved in risky behaviors, while protective factors wrap them in protection. Positive peer influences are a protective factor.

WHY IS POSITIVE PEER INFLUENCE SO CRUCIAL FOR YOUR KID?

The people you spend the most time with will inevitably shape your values and priorities. It's just a matter of fact, and it happens to everyone. In the uniquely formative years of adolescence, one of the most difficult challenges a parent faces is monitoring and even understanding the social lives of their kids. Teenagers naturally pull away from their parents and are exposed to different peer influences, and often they are drawn to peers who you might not like or respect.

It's not just fashion, taste in music, or language that kids copy from their peers. It goes much deeper than that. Kids will absorb the values, priorities, and beliefs of their surrounding peers — much more than they will from their parents, teachers, or coaches. They have a hard-wired, inherent desire for peer acceptance, and in that pursuit, they construct their identity and worldview.

During their social interactions, students will likely be faced with invitations to violate their own value system and engage in risky behaviors like experimenting with harmful substances. Research has shown that it's rare for adolescents to drink or do drugs on their own — it's by and large a social activity. It's the classic, "here, try this" moments that have been happening throughout time.

So, understanding that dynamic, what can adults do to help steer kids to building and investing in positive influences in their lives?

1 ENCOURAGE POSITIVE INFLUENCES

It can be difficult for a parent or teacher to discern which kids are making good choices and demonstrating good character. We all can point to kids we knew growing up who looked like they had it all put together, but behind closed doors and away from adults, they were wild and engaged in risky behaviors. However, far more often than not, we can trust our instincts and encourage our kids to spend time with kids who seem responsible, mature, and come from families who have shared values.

That can specifically look like being deliberate to encourage your kid to spend time with someone you think would be a good influence. Offer to take them somewhere, like a movie or a skate park (or whatever they might be interested in). Let your kid know you'd be happy if they invited

them over to play video games together or watch a movie.

For educators, you might intentionally sit certain kids together, place them in small groups or working groups together, thereby giving them an opportunity to build a relationship.

2 ENCOURAGE REFLECTION

Often kids develop friendships without realizing what they're doing or why it's happening. A kid invites them to do something with them, and they say yes. They don't take a moment to step back and think to themselves, "Is this a friendship I want to invest in? Will I become a better person from spending time with this person?" Rather, they jump in and start spending time with them.

3 MODEL HEALTHY FRIENDSHIPS

Although teenagers want to figure out life for themselves, they certainly still need and benefit from the examples they see from their parents, teachers, and other adults. If they can see what healthy, interdependent friendships look like up close, they will subconsciously absorb those examples and try to emulate them on their own. It's challenging, though, for parents who are busy managing their lives, work, and the household. Many parents struggle to find the time to invest in quality friendships. That being said, it's a valuable investment if it can be prioritized. The added bonus would be your kids having the opportunity to interact with other adults who can engage them in relationships and serve as either informal or formal mentors.

Finally, if you have concerns about the character or choices of your kid's friends, share them. It would be better for you to have a disagreement with your kid than to find out years later they needed your support in navigating their way through an unhealthy friendship or influence.

Sharing your concerns in the context of your love, support, and overall intention to care for them will always help but may not soften their defensiveness. Your voice of wisdom and concern can be an asset to them that pays dividends for a lifetime, almost like a wise narrator to the unfolding story of their lives. ■

This article and The Benefits of Guardrails were reprinted with permission. Natural High is a youth drug prevention and life skills program that provides easy, effective, and fun resources for educators, mentors, and parents to deliver protective measures in a relevant way through storytelling. The Storyteller library contains a roster of 40+ Natural High Storytellers — athletes, artists, musicians, designers — people who kids admire and trust. Their flexible curriculum offers videos, discussion questions, and activities. It can be used to meet a variety of needs, from brief 10-15-minute discussions to project-based work that takes place across multiple days or class periods.

the benefits of GUARDRAILS

By NATURAL HIGH STAFF

Do you remember as a teenager how much energy you spent trying to work your way around the restrictions your parents set for you? My mom is still finding out about the different times I snuck out and was up to something she had no clue about. And she still gets mad!

On one hand, teenagers can't stand boundaries and restrictions. Developmentally, they're in an important phase where they're trying to figure out life on their own and prepare for a time when they will be responsible for themselves. They need to discover where the boundaries are and carve out a path that's most suitable for them.

They want to stay up late, watch what they want, unlimited access to technology, and the freedom to go wherever they want when they want. They want to discover how life will work best for them.

We know that we have to give more freedom and responsibility to our teenage children. In fact, we want to. We want to see them become more mature, wise, and thoughtful about how they steward their lives.

We know how the teenage years are an intense time of training for life. It's a stressful time for them, not to mention for us. They're under constant pressure to perform well academically, to fit in with their peers, and to make choices about their future as much as choices for their wardrobe. With so much stress and pressure, it's no wonder they make some careless mistakes.

We also want them to be safe and make smart choices. We know how their developing brains have yet to grasp the wisdom they need to manage their own lives effectively. They still need us, although it looks different from when they were younger. They need us to start to serve as their coach and guide and steer them away from harm and towards experiences and choices that will assist them in growing up well.

SETTING BOUNDARIES WITH TEENS

As much as teens grate against the rules, restrictions, and boundaries adults set for them — they still need them. They aren't wise enough (yet) to make the best choices for themselves. They lack the context, life

Well-intentioned parents will often recall their own early experiences with substance use with a touch of nostalgia while failing to remember the actual details or reality of harm those experiences had on their life.

experience, and ability to see how their current choices will affect them in the future. They need help in the form of guidance and especially through boundaries and guardrails we set for them. That's our responsibility. We need to continue operating as their brake as they push down the gas pedal.

In fact, even though they roll their eyes and argue at every turn, they know deep down that the restrictions we set for them express our love and concern for them. Kids who have adults in their lives who give them too much freedom too early often develop a deep-seated belief that they aren't valuable or worthy, and they carry that fundamental belief with them into adulthood.

The problem is teens will never match their freedom with responsibility. Their wise decision-making brain functioning hasn't fully developed yet. Making mistakes is a key part of growing up, and kids learn to make better decisions by experiencing the natural consequences of their actions.

With substance use, though, the potential negative consequences for their health and future are too much to gamble with. Well-intentioned parents will often recall their own early experiences with substance use with a touch of nostalgia while failing to remember the actual details or reality of harm those experiences had on their life.

WHAT WE KNOW:

- Kids who delay their first drink of alcohol until past their 18th birthday will have an infinitely higher likelihood of avoiding a lifelong struggle with alcohol.
- Most addiction problems start during the teenage years.
- The teenage brain will get permanently altered to crave more and more risky behaviors if they indulge in substance use and the subsequent dopamine rush their brains enjoy.
- Teens are hypersensitive to their perception of their friend's behaviors, and they grossly overestimate how many of their peers use drugs and alcohol.
- Teens underestimate how harmful substances like marijuana or prescription painkillers are.
- Substance use can lead to death—through a dangerous combination of substances, overdose, or automobile crashes.

Your kids don't know these facts and probably won't believe them. They don't need to believe them for you to keep them safe. You can create safety by establishing expectations, boundaries, and guardrails.

In a 2017 study of the radical transformation Iceland saw in their rampant substance use problems amongst teens, one of the key pillars was establishing a curfew. They knew that teens who were out late together were more likely to make poor choices. So, they removed that opportunity for them. They didn't restrict them from spending time together; they invested in community centers with fun activities and adult chaperones to guide their behavior. That's one small but significant example of what an effective guardrail could look like in your family.

Whether it's a curfew, a promise to say no to any offer of alcohol or drugs, a GPS-linked app to make sure you know their location, or a restriction to attend parties or late-night activities, it's important for every family to clearly communicate and enforce guardrails. Your teens won't like it or understand it, but they don't need to. Later on, they will be able to understand that your strictness was an expression of your love for them. ■



Q&A

My child has been invited to go on vacation with another family. What can I do to help keep her safe?

How exciting! Travel is such a wonderful opportunity and an amazing learning experience. However, it is important to make sure that this trip will be a safe and positive experience before you consent to her going.

First, touch base with your daughter and find out her true feelings about the trip. If she is uncomfortable for any reason, then go with a "no."

If your daughter is feeling comfortable, confident, and excited about the trip, then you have some research to do. Contact the parents (or adult hosts) directly to get all the info about who is going, how present the adults will be, and the safety of the environment.

Start the conversation by saying something like, "I know safety is a huge priority for both our families. Let's work together to make sure we are on the same page for keeping Sally safe." You might be feeling awkward asking tough questions, but if these kinds of questions are not the norm, they need to be.

The questions you choose will depend on the age of your daughter, the location of the trip, and what you already know about the caregivers. Some go-to questions are:

- What does my child need to bring?
- Are any other friends/boyfriends/girlfriends invited?
- What activities are planned?
- What safety measures will be in place for outdoor activities? (lifeguards, life jackets, helmets, sunscreen)
- Who will be driving?
- Where will the kids be sleeping?
- Who will be in charge and/or watching the kids?
- Are there firearms in the residence/location, and if so, are they properly secured and stored?
- Is there alcohol (or other substances) available at the location and will anyone be drinking?

Both their answers and their attitude towards your questions will tell you a lot about whether you are on the same page and if it will be a safe environment/experience for your daughter. The bottom line is that safety comes first. If it just doesn't feel right or you can't resolve your concerns, you have the right and the responsibility to say "no." Yes, your daughter might be mad for a while, but will most likely reflect and be grateful you had her back.

HAVE A QUESTION?

lincolncountyuniteforyouth@gmail.com

We cannot guarantee all questions will be published; however, we will do our best to respond to all questions submitted.

BY THE NUMBERS



107

The height in inches of the tallest man ever recorded (8'11").

30

The weight in pounds of an elephant's heart.



30,000

The number of people seriously injured by exercise equipment each year.

1 TRILLION

The number of different odors the human nose can distinguish.



7

The number of seconds it takes for food to get from your mouth to your stomach.

78

The number of bathrooms in Buckingham Palace.



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY





must-know BRAIN SCIENCE OF BOREDOM

By DELANEY RUSTON, M.D. (Reprinted with permission.)

When I give workshops to students, whether they are 10 or 18, they get wide-eyed when I tell them, “Our brains are designed for challenge,” and then go on to explain how this relates to boredom, video games, and social media.

Boredom is not a mild ho-hum type feeling — it is a very unpleasant sensation, particularly if you are a young person. Kids feel very validated when I tell them this.

It is the brain’s way of saying that it wants something to ponder, something to sort out or to create, and so on. This is why when feeling bored, eventually, we humans will move into thinking about something that has a tiny challenge embedded. For example, consider a tween sitting at home feeling bored. Her brain might start to contemplate a social conflict she is experiencing. For instance, “Why has Sarah not opened my Snap? She was acting weird to me on Friday. I wonder if she didn’t like what I said about her shoes? No wait, maybe she is upset that I ate lunch with Julie.”

And the brain will go on trying to make sense of the relationship and think of the next steps.

LET’S LOOK AT SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media companies have latched onto the fact that our brains get pulled towards challenges. Four years after its launch, Snapchat added Snapstreaks. People say this added a boom to Snapchat’s business. Streaks offered users the challenge of getting the most Snapstreaks possible with other people. Ultimately they are trying to gamify friendships. Hmmm...

As of February 2022, according to Google, the longest Snapstreak was 2,478+. Facebook did the same thing in 2009 when it added the “Like” feature. The “Like” tool gave people the challenge of getting more Likes. When Instagram started, they had seen the power of Likes and immediately utilized the feature in their app.

In workshops, I ask kids if they play a sport or an instrument. Let’s say a student says they run.

Then I ask, “Have you ever run with

Boredom is not a mild ho-hum type feeling — it is a very unpleasant sensation, particularly if you are a young person. Kids feel very validated when I tell them this.

someone much faster than you?

When the student says, “Yes,” I ask how it went, was it a bit frustrating?”

The student will often smile and reply, “Yes.”

Then, I’ll say, “Okay, have you ever run with someone who is much slower than you?”

The student will generally say, “Yes.”

I’ll say, “How was that? Was that a little frustrating?”

Again, the answer tends to be yes.

I get the group talking about how we all tend to like doing things like sports, playing instruments, and such with someone on our level and someone a bit more advanced sometimes. Playing with someone at a higher level can create that little bit of challenge we crave.

LET’S LOOK AT VIDEO GAMES

I explain to kids the genius of video game companies is that they design their games to adjust in real-time to the right challenge level for each player. This adjustment creates a flow state of optimum challenge, which is one of the many reasons playing video games can be so enticing.

Think about Candy Crush. Anyone can pick up a phone and learn to play it in a few minutes. Then the game makes it incrementally more challenging the better someone gets.

This conversation allows kids to think differently about video games and social media. I teach them the idea of an attention economy. Companies need our eyes on screens to take in

revenue and add challenges to their products, thus capitalizing on our brains’ desire for challenges. When we talk about things from the perspective of these companies, without putting down the companies, kids engage. I can tell they appreciate that a grown-up is not telling them things besides “screen time is ruining a generation.”

Ultimately the whole reason I talk with kids about our brain’s need for challenges is that I want them to know we have these wonderful brains, but how do we ensure that we have plenty of time to let our brains work on our own challenges, not just challenges fed to us from tech companies. Students come up with all sorts of challenging things they enjoy doing, and we talk about ways to safeguard time for those things.

Finally, I don’t say things like, “Boredom is good for you.” To a young person, that phrase can sound like, “Eat nails for lunch because it will make you stronger.”

Instead, I stress that we all have the power to recognize the feeling of boredom and to remember this is our brain telling us it wants a little challenge. For example, creating is a challenge – so what about thinking up characters for a story or composing lyrics for a song?

QUESTIONS TO GET THE CONVERSATIONS STARTED

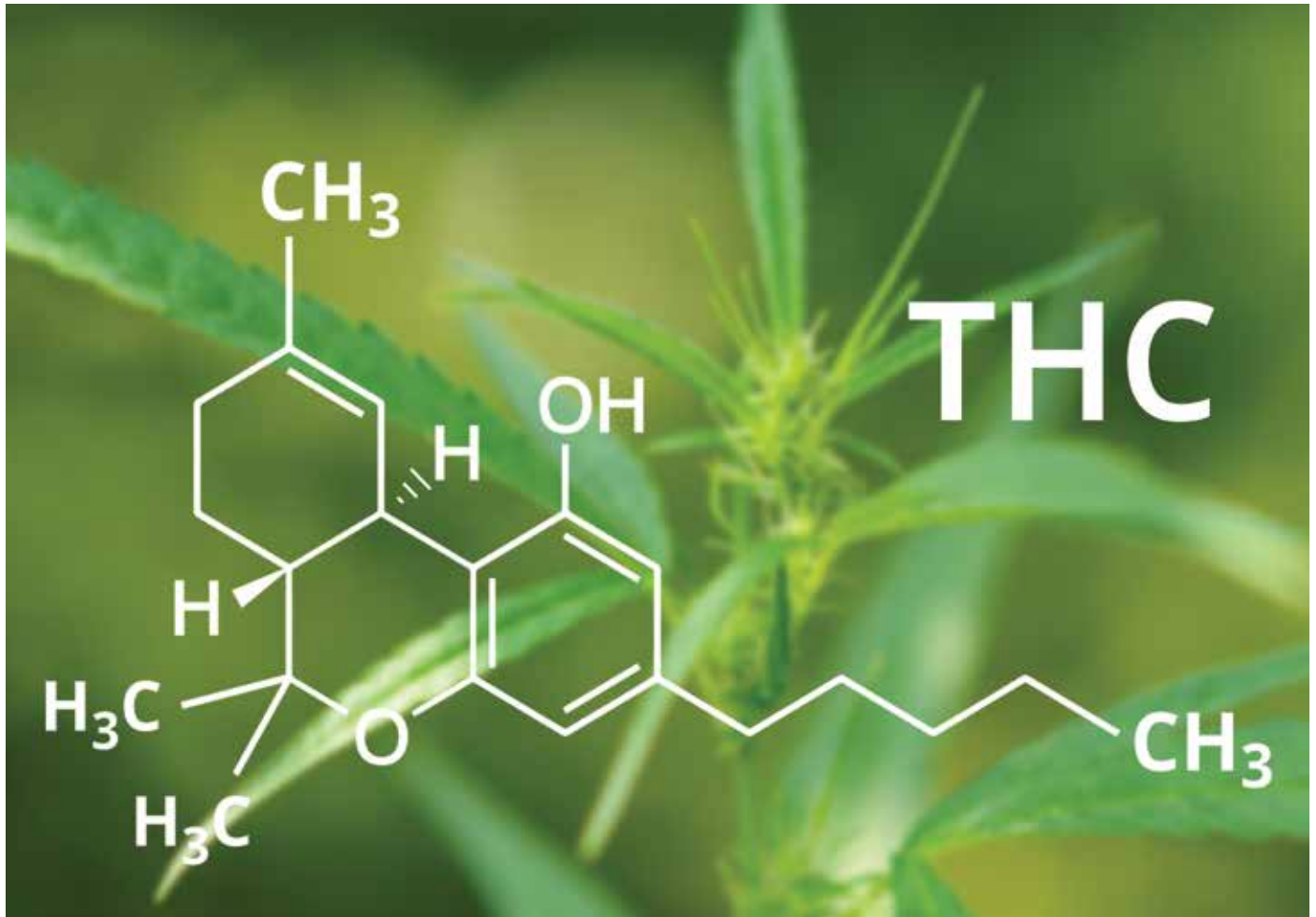
1. As a parent, can you discuss when you played a sport or other activity with another person and how you got mismatched on levels, and the frustration it posed? (For me, I would feel this big time when I used to play tennis.)
2. What things do we shift our brain to think about when we feel bored? How often is it about working through a challenge, such as relationships? Issues at work? Creative challenges?
3. Do you have any Streaks on Snapchat? What about your friends?
4. Have you ever played a video game that was too easy and never played it again?

For additional information on screen time, visit screenagersmovie.com/blog. ■



dangers of DABS

By STAFF



Concentrates' is a broad term referring to all products that have been extracted from the marijuana plant. According to the National Institutes of Health, "Extracts and concentrates are often used interchangeably. Some people define extracts as products manufactured using solvents, but not those pulled from the plant with non-solvent methods. Dabs may refer to products made exclusively from butane hash oil."

Marijuana concentrates have very high levels of THC, the psychotropic ingredient in marijuana. In the 1970s and '80s, the natural plant had a THC level of 2-3%. The extracts taken from the genetically modified marijuana produced today have THC levels of upwards of 80% in solvent based extractions. The problem with these dabs is the user inhales the entire amount all at once in a single breath. Consequently, it delivers extremely large amounts of THC to the body quickly, which increases the risk of physical dependence and addiction. In addition, higher doses of THC are more likely to produce anxiety, agitation, paranoia, and psychosis.

Another concern is contaminants. One study found that 80% of the tested concentrate samples were contaminated in some form,

not only with pesticides, but with lingering solvents that were not completely eliminated in the manufacturing process.

Concentrates can be inhaled using a vape pen or by dabbing. Dabs are also referred to as wax, shatter, amber, honeycomb, or budder. Because of the high THC levels, dabbing can lead to higher tolerance and worse withdrawal symptoms than traditional marijuana use alone. If teens dab, their brains are still forming and marijuana has proven to cause psychosis, mental illness, and increased thoughts of suicide. Research has shown there is a direct correlation between adolescent marijuana use and suicide rates.

According to Dr. Nora Volkow, "In one prospective study, persistent, heavy use of marijuana starting in adolescence was associated with a loss of up to eight points in IQ, which were not recovered even after a person quit...marijuana is in a unique position to severely alter brain development trajectories when it is used regularly before the brain finishes maturing in a person's mid-20s."

It's important to get educated on the dangers of this potent drug and have conversations with youth about not using. ■

SUMMER | 2022

PREVENTION MATTERS



Together... elevating the health and well-being of youth and families in Lincoln County!



COMMUNITIES THAT CARE

Lincoln County Unite for Youth

Unite for Youth – Communities That Care (UFY-CTC) is a collaborative, community-based organization made up of individuals, agencies, and organizations committed to reducing and preventing behaviors of concern among youth. Together, we aspire to inspire healthy lifestyle choices across the lifespan.

Members work alongside parents, educators, law enforcement officials, the faith community and more to align programs and policies with a shared vision for a strong, safe, and healthy community – one in which youth and families are supported and empowered to reach their highest potential.

UFY-CTC connects local, state, and national resources to promote and expand meaningful opportunities to build skills, strengthen relationships, and co-create healthy standards for behavior that elevate the health and well-being of youth and challenge all of us to do and be our best!

A proven process that harnesses the power of community to...

- Identify risk factors that are leading to or sustaining youth problem behaviors including substance use, delinquency, violence, and mental health concerns.
- Connect, support and expand resources available to reduce risk, increase protection, and elevate the health and well-being of young people.
- Implement tested and effective programs and policies shown to positively impact the ability of youth and families to reach their highest potential.

Why it Matters

Risk and Protection

As a community, we want our kids to do and be their best. But for too many, problem behaviors such as substance use, mental health concerns and lack of opportunities for prosocial involvement are detouring plans, delaying accomplishments, and making it difficult for young people to make their way.

Healthy youth development can be derailed by a variety of factors that exist at home, among friends, at school, and in the community.

Risk factors make it more likely for young people to engage in problem behaviors and more likely for them to experience depression, anxiety and disconnection.

Protective factors work in the opposite direction and serve as buffers against harm. Protective factors promote health and well-being and make problem behaviors less likely.

Unfortunately, Lincoln County youth in grades 8-12 report higher than average levels of risk and lower



than average levels of protection than their peers across the state and nation. These conditions make it more difficult for young people to steer clear of problem behaviors and more likely for them to experience physical, emotional, and academic difficulties as a result (2018 Montana Prevention Needs Assessment).

Ready to make a difference for kids? Contact us! lincolncountyuniteforyouth@gmail.com



Together... Making a Difference

Positive Health Outcomes for Kids!

Collaborative community prevention efforts are helping kids make better decisions than ever! The average age of onset for alcohol use has increased, lifetime use of tobacco and alcohol has decreased, and more kids in grades 8-12 report having clear family rules about the use of alcohol and other drugs (MPNA, 2018).

Whether you are a policymaker, educator, parent, or community leader, YOU have the ability to put youth success first.

Your investment in prevention today will result in a brighter future for kids, and in a stronger, safer, healthier community for all of us!

lincolncountyuniteforyouth.org



YC Magazine is Guaranteed to Reach Families !

Lincoln County Unite for Youth (UFY) is proud to introduce **Youth Connections Magazine (YC)**! UFY's YC Magazine is a quarterly publication created to promote a culture of health and safety among youth and families in Lincoln County. The magazine will be distributed **four times annually to every parent of every student** in Troy, Libby & Eureka. YC is filled with helpful tips and inspirational stories, as well as timely information and resources regarding more difficult topics such as mental health issues and youth substance use.

Please join us in celebrating the many positive things happening in our community as together, we grow awareness of the invaluable resources available to youth and families.

Take advantage of being part of this amazing publication! Advertising is a cost-effective way to market your business, service, agency or organization and allows you to align yourself with others who promote the health and safety of kids in our community. When you place an ad in UFY's YC Magazine, you will **connect with more than 2000 families every quarter** and as a result will help us support youth by strengthening parents.



Ad placement and pricing options include ...

Quarter page.....	\$175
Half page.....	\$300
Full page.....	\$500
Full page-Inside Front.....	\$600
Full page-Inside Back.....	\$600
Full page-Back Cover.....	\$650

Check out a sample of YC magazine at
www.youthconnectionscoalition.org

**For additional information about YC
magazine or advertising opportunities,
please contact:**

Lincoln County Unite for Youth Coalition
lincolncountyuniteforyouth@gmail.com

