

Protective Factors: Adolescence through Young Adulthood

Prevention is not just about eliminating a negative behavior; it is also about striving to optimize well-being and supporting factors that protect against misuse. These protective factors can reduce the negative impact of risk factors. The following tables, compiled by the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine and the United States Surgeon General, show select protective factors that are associated with healthy development at the individual, family, and school/community levels during specific stages of development from adolescence through young adulthood.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS: ADOLESCENCE

Individual	Family	Community (School)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive physical development (good health habits, good health risk management skills) • Positive intellectual development (life, school, vocational skills; critical and rational thinking; cultural knowledge and competence) • Positive psychological and emotional development (self-esteem and self-regulation; coping, responsibility, problem-solving; motivation and achievement; morality and values) • Positive social development (connectedness to peers, family, community; attachment to institutions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical and psychological safety • Appropriate structure (limits, rules, monitoring, predictability) • Supportive relationships with family members • Opportunities to belong (sociocultural identity formation, inclusion) • Positive social norms (expectations, values) • Support for efficacy and mattering, or the feeling that one is making a difference • Opportunities for skill building • Integration of family, school, and community efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical and psychological safety • Appropriate structure (limits, rules, monitoring, predictability) • Supportive relationships • Opportunities to belong (sociocultural identity formation, inclusion) • Positive social norms (expectations, values) • Support for efficacy and mattering • Opportunities for skill building • Integration of family, school, and community efforts

PROTECTIVE FACTORS: YOUNG ADULTHOOD

Individual	Family	Community (School/Work)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identity exploration in love, work, and worldview • Subjective sense of adult status in self-sufficiency, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent • Future orientation • Achievement motivation • Belief in a higher being, or involvement in spiritual practices or religious activities • An individual's belief that they can modify, control, or abstain from substance use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance of autonomy and relatedness to family • Behavioral and emotional autonomy • Married or living with a partner in a committed relationship who does not misuse alcohol or drugs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for exploration in work and school • Connectedness to adults outside of family

References

National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. (2009). *Preventing mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders among young people: Progress and possibilities* (O'Connell, M. E., Boat, T., & Warner, K. E., Eds.) (pp 78–80, Appendix E). Washington, DC: National Academies Press.

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