

# Adolescent Substance Use Prevention: Targeting Implicit Cognitions in the Classroom

Chantelle Wood, B.A. Candidate, Marvin Krank, Ph.D.

Cognitions and Substance Use Laboratory
University of British Columbia Okanagan Campus, Kelowna, British Columbia

### Introduction

A two part directed study focused on preventative measures in the initiation of substance use in adolescent.

- 1. A literature review of research examining implicit adolescent substance use cognitions.
- 2. A pilot project of two lessons from the HABIT prevention program, designed by Dr. Marvin Krank.

### **Literature Review**

A survey of studies primarily focusing on adolescents between the ages of 12 - 18 years.

Key Predictors of Substance Use:

- Expectancy outcome liking<sup>1</sup>
- Measurements of implicit attitudes<sup>2</sup>
- Personality traits<sup>3</sup>
- Perceived peer & societal norms<sup>4</sup>
- Stage of Development<sup>5</sup>

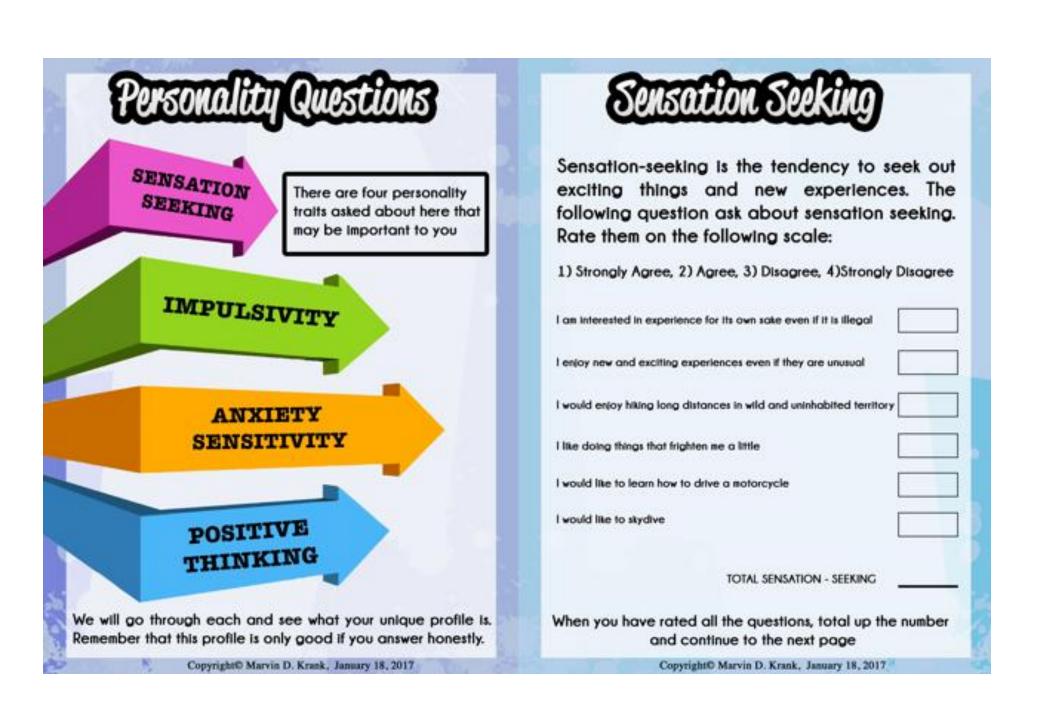
Keys to Delaying or Negating Initiation:

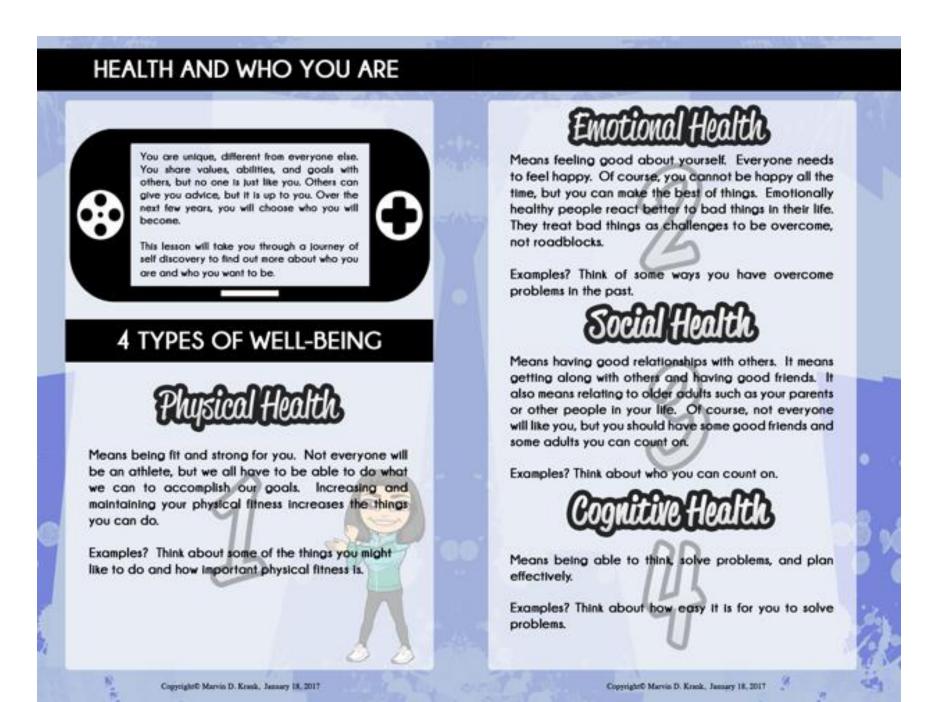
- Exploiting Cognitive Dissonance <sup>6</sup>
- Evaluative Conditioning<sup>7</sup>
- Challenging Outcome Expectancies<sup>8</sup>
- Correcting Misinformation<sup>9</sup>

# Lets begin by reviewing what we learned in Lesson 1 Reflecting on your homework assignment, what makes a good role model? Over the next few years you will make lots of choices. What you choose will affect your life, your health, and your happiness. The activities and information provided here are designed to help you make the choices that are best for you. This lesson will not tell you what to do; it's up to you to make your own choices. Making good choices is not always easy. What you learn advise you on how to make good choices. The activities you will do here depends on what you discover about yourself. The things you learn are intended for you alone. Others may be similar to you in some ways, but everyone has their own uniqueness. Everyone also has a different path they will travel. The question is: How do you decide which choices and which paths you will take?

### What is HABIT?

- "HABIT" stands for "Healthy Automatic Behaviours, Intentions, and Thoughts"
- Habit is a substance use preventative program designed for early adolescents in grades six and seven.
- Backed by research, the program targets the cognitive factors related to early drug use through implicit cognitive training and explicit exercises that promote healthy choices and behaviours.
- The goal is to build up student's resilience to early initiation of substance use.





### **HABIT Pilot**

- Participants: 29 students in grades 6 and 7 at Coldstream Elementary School.
- Elementary classroom teacher Heather
   Fester presented material.
- 2 lessons were presented over 3 weeks in for a total of 3 sessions.
- Program instruction was accompanied by HABIT worksheets.
- Teacher presented all materials orally and invited student participation in discussion.

# Topics Included:

- 1. Types of Health and Personal Values
- Personality Types and Making Healthy Choices

### Pilot Feedback

### Students Enjoyed:

- Looking towards their future
- The benefit of creating habits for life while they are young
- How different types of health work together
- Brainstorming and thinking more indepth about topics

# Students Requested:

- No homework
- More examples to clarify concepts

### **Observations**

- The importance of teaching style
- Teacher enthusiasm and variety in teaching approach was key to keeping children engaged.
- The importance of strong relationships with schools during program development.
- Recognizing age appropriate content (Ex: Using relevant illustrations to explain concepts).
- The importance of examples to help clarify more complex concepts.

### **Further Development:**

HABIT has undergone revision and expansion to include five lessons:

- 1. Types of Health
- 2. Inoculation Lesson: Cannabis and Alcohol Myth
- 3. Personality
- 4. What are Drugs
- 5. Drugs and the Brain
- An online exercise has been added to deliver the inoculation lesson and test its effectiveness.
- Habit is currently being presented in one elementary school with plans to expand to several others before the end of the school year.

### References

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