Positive Choices
Drug and Alcohol Information
Get informed, stay smart, stay safe

Recommended program

Unplugged program



Evidence ratings:

This resource is supported by a systematic review. See our Help/Q&A section for more details.

Year: Year 7–8

Targeted Drugs: Alcohol, Cannabis, Drugs (General), Tobacco

Tags:

Time Allocated: 7 lessons or more

Links to National Curriculum:
ACPPS072 (Yr 7–8), ACPPS073 (Yr 7–8), ACPPS074 (Yr 7–8), ACPPS075 (Yr 7–8), ACPPS077 (Yr 7–8), AC9HP8P08 (Yr 7-8), AC9HP8P04 (Yr 7-8), AC9HP8P06 (Yr 7-8), AC9HP8P10 (Yr 7-8)

Origin: International

Cost:
Free

Available

The Unplugged program is managed by the European Drug Prevention Centre.
Click below to be directed to the Unplugged website for information on accessing the program.

Access the Unplugged program

Developers

European Drug Addiction Prevention (EU-Dap) Centre.

Format

This workbook-based program is designed to be administered by teachers. The program involves:

- 12 × 1-hour lessons delivered weekly
- Teacher and student handbooks are provided
- Guidelines for facilitating a 3-session parent workshop are also provided.

The program has been adapted for cross-cultural use and is available in several languages, including: Arabic, Czech, German, Greek, Croatian, French, Italian, Polish, Spanish, and Swedish.

Training:

Training for teachers is recommended before the program is implemented. Three-day training workshops are available in Europe. The effectiveness of implementing the program without specialist training is not yet known.

Summary

The Unplugged program is designed to prevent or delay initiation to experimental alcohol, tobacco and cannabis use, and to prevent progression from casual use to dependence. The program is used across Europe and has been translated into a number of languages, making it suitable for a wide audience. The program aims to provide young people with information on drugs, and challenge their beliefs and perceived norms surrounding substance use. Students will also develop coping mechanisms and learn of the short- and long-term biopsychosocial consequences of different decisions related to substance use.

Expected Benefits

Studies that have tested this resource (see sources below) have found evidence for the following benefits:

- Reduces alcohol consumption
- Increases abstinence from alcohol
- Reduces daily tobacco use
- Reduces recent cannabis use
- Less positive attitudes towards drugs
- Reduced positive expectations about use of alcohol, tobacco and cannabis.

Evidence Base

The Unplugged program has been trialled in over 8 European countries, including Austria, Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain, Sweden and the Czech Republic. Some publications have found differential effects of the program according to gender, socioeconomic status and risk level. See below for a list of sources and an endorsement of the program from an external organisation.

Sources

Miovsky, M., Vonkova, H., Cablova, L., Gabrhelik, R. (2015). Cannabis use in children with individualized risk profiles: Predicting the effect of universal prevention intervention. *Addictive Behaviours, 50,* 110-116.

Vigna-Taglianti, F. D., Galanti, M. R., Burkhart, G., Caria, M. P., Vadrucci, S., Faggiano, F., & Group, E. U.-D. S. (2014). "Unplugged," a European school-based program for substance use prevention among adolescents: overview of results from the EU-Dap trial. *New Directions in Youth Development, 141,* 67-82.

Caria, M. P., Faggiano, F., Bellocco, R., & Galanti, M. R. (2011). Effects of a School-Based Prevention Program on European Adolescents' Patterns of Alcohol Use.*Journal of Adolescent Health, 48*, 182-188.

Caria, M. P., Faggiano, F., Bellocco, R., & Galanti, M. R. (2011). The influence of socioeconomic environment on the effectiveness of alcohol prevention among European students: a cluster randomized controlled trial. *BMC Public Health, 11*, 312.

A recent systematic review of school-based prevention programs found the Unplugged program to have demonstrated the best evidence of effectiveness across European evaluations:

Agabio, R., Trincas, G., Floris, F., Mura, G., Sancassiani, F., & Angermeyer, M. C. (2015). A systematic review of school-based alcohol and other drug prevention programs.*Clinical practice and epidemiology in mental health, 11*, 102-112.

The Unplugged program has also received a two-star rating from the National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA) following their comprehensivesystematic review of alcohol education programs.

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