Unplugged program

Evidence ratings: This resource is supported by multiple published studies. 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)
Origin: International
Cost: Free

Developers
European Drug Addiction Prevention (EU-Dap) Centre.

Available

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

Training:
Training for teachers is a recommended before programme 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.

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.


A recent systematic review of school-based prevention programs found the Unplugged program to have demonstrated the best evidence of effectiveness across European evaluations:
The Unplugged program has also received a two-star rating from the National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA) following their comprehensive systematic review of alcohol education programs.