

HOW TO STAY AWAY *from* DRUGS

Teens offer tried and true strategies in a nationwide curriculum

THIRTEEN-YEAR-OLD DYLAN recounts his refusal of drugs: “I was at this boy’s house seeing a friend ... and this guy pulled out some dope. He asked all of us if we wanted to, and we said no.” Maya, age 12, is able to resist marijuana with an explanation to the boy that offered it to her: “One of my past friends used to sell it himself. He got arrested and ... we had to take care of his child.” Jaqueline prefers to avoid situations altogether where there are drugs, finding other things to do. And Raul simply leaves the setting.

These are examples of narratives from a drug resistance skills training curriculum called “keepin’ it REAL” (refuse, explain, avoid, leave), created by a team of Penn State and Arizona State researchers led by Distinguished Professor Dr. Michael Hecht and Dr. Michelle Miller-Day, associate professor, both of communication arts and sciences at Penn State.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Listed on the federal government’s National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices, “keepin’ it REAL” teaches youth about risks and consequences, effective decision making and communication skills, including the REAL strategies. First introduced in 1998 to Phoenix, Ariz., seventh-graders, it is being implemented by various school districts nationwide; now D.A.R.E. America (the national police officer-led drug abuse resistance education program) just licensed it to be its new seventh-grade curriculum. Starting this fall, D.A.R.E. officers will teach it to more than 125,000 students per year across the United States and then around the world.

“When that many young people are using our materials, it’s a heavy responsibility,” remarked Hecht.

Personal Narratives Can Help Others

To develop the program, the team collected stories from thousands of youth and transformed the narratives into the multimedia, multicultural prevention program—with the tag line “from kids, to kids, through kids.”

According to teachers using the program, this approach is effective. “It allows [students] to pull from their own experiences and individual strengths,” said Stephanie Clayton of the Amarillo, Texas, Independent School District.



The approach: refuse, explain, avoid, leave

While the curriculum was originally written for Phoenix youth, it can be adapted for other students. The team is currently studying more about what teachers do when they adapt it to their classes; they are also developing a rural version of “keepin’ it REAL” that will be introduced this fall in Pennsylvania and Ohio schools.

*A new curriculum
for grades 6–12
demonstrates how
a simple question
advanced a cause*

The Original

GIRL POWER



IN A 1969 PRESIDENTIAL news conference, Washington correspondent Vera Glaser asked a newly elected President Richard Nixon why he had made so few appointments of women to top-level positions, adding: “Can we expect some more equitable recognition of women’s abilities, or are we going to remain the lost sex?”

Nixon was taken aback, but he responded that he would change this. He went ahead and appointed a Task Force on Women’s Rights and Responsibilities (composed of a progressive group of women, including Glaser), which came to the conclusion that yes, there should be more women in these jobs, and the president had the power to appoint them. The president then created a White House staff position to recruit talented women for high-level jobs.

The Penn State project “A Few Good Women: Advancing the Cause for Women in the U.S. Government” documents this time in history with a collection of audio segments, biographies and

images that is available to view online and in an exhibit at University Park’s Pattee Library until April 17. And in the fall, the Education and Behavioral Sciences Library in Paterno Library and the Pennsylvania Center for the Book (housed at Penn State) are launching a new online curriculum for grades 6–12 based on the collection—so students nationwide can understand for themselves how Glaser and others have cleared the career path for them.

“Young women have no real idea about some of the obstacles we faced in the ’60s and ’70s and what we did to overcome those obstacles,” said Barbara Hackman Franklin, a Penn State alumna (’62) and the White House staffer responsible for recruiting women to

Pathbreakers: These women overcame career obstacles in the ’60s and ’70s.

work in government positions.

Franklin worked with the Special Collections Library and the Education and Behavioral Sciences Library on the women’s oral history project and the curriculum. Franklin added, “Back then there was a different set of societal expectations. Women who overcame that opened a lot of doors. I hope that our teaching aids will make that time in history come alive.”

The flexible curriculum—which will provide teachers with lessons and activities, from Web quests to Readers Theatre—can be used in bits and pieces or as a whole. “For students to interact with these profiles from the past is amazing,” said Karla Schmit, Education and Behavioral Sciences librarian and assistant director of the Pennsylvania Center for the Book.

ON THE WEB

Hear stories from the women pictured above, plus others, at: <http://afgw.libraries.psu.edu/background.html>.