

actually changing. The way to measure such movement has to be worked out. We need indicators that will show us a shift in the right direction. These are discussed in the next section. Thus, in an ideal school, the indicators listed should all be seen to be moving in the direction that makes drug use appear less and less attractive to students.

Students too should be able to see how opinion among them is changing in the right direction. To make things change, they need to understand how a positive or negative image is built up, and then take action to change the image in the desired direction.

●● Implementing Best Practices

Who will conduct the activity in schools ?

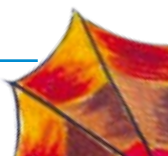
Whoever wants to reduce the likelihood of students taking to the use of drugs, has to reach the students directly or indirectly.

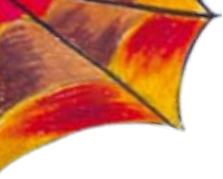
If you are an outsider, how do you change the school's conduct?

You may have influence over the school's administration or with a teacher or some teachers or with the Parents Teachers Association or Old Students' Association. Whatever route you work through, you will generally find a positive response to an offer to help in reducing the risk of students starting to use drugs – including alcohol and tobacco

Why will you be welcome?

- Most school administrations are happy to hand this responsibility to someone else – so they can say they are doing something about the problem.





Some activities that are easy to conduct and are quite popular have been shown not to have any beneficial effects.

If you do things that are likely to reduce the risk of students taking up the use of substances such as tobacco, alcohol or illicit drugs, there will definitely be resistance.

- The school's staff does not have to take any trouble.
- Parents and students all like these activities.

Some activities are easy to conduct but have been shown not to have any beneficial effects. Often these are popular.

- If you do things that are not likely to reduce the risk of drug use, your activity will generally be popular. This is because:
 - usually such programmes require only that students are given a lecture, shown a video, play or film or asked to participate in an essay or a drawing competition. All these provide entertainment and sometimes gifts for students and there is never any controversy.
 - everybody believes that is what you should do.
 - there will be no resistance from those who make profits from the sale of drugs.
 - most of these are short-lived and easy to organise.
- If you do things that are likely to reduce the risk of students taking up the use of substances such as tobacco, alcohol or illicit drugs, there will definitely be resistance. This is because:
 - those who trade in these substances will cause problems in hidden ways so as not to let you do things that will genuinely reduce use.
 - the proposed activities will require students taking the lead in action instead of you.
 - the effort has to be sustained for a fair length of time and include a variety of responses.
 - it is more trouble for everybody.

So if you really want to reduce the risk of drug use among students, you will have to anticipate resistance and try to minimise this before you start. If you only want to do some popular activity that everybody will praise and where you will not encounter any resistance, it is unlikely to produce a significant reduction in the use of drugs.

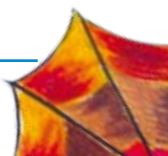
If you are already part of the school, how can you change the school's conduct?

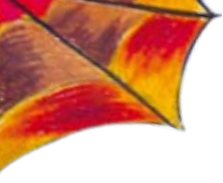
You can choose between the options listed above, which apply also to individuals outside the school. If you are already part of the school, you have another option. This is to learn what makes students less likely to get into drug use and create the necessary changes without having a public and formal programme. This means that you can try to create a correct understanding about drugs among the students, as set out below. The idea is to reverse the image that students have about various substances and the meanings attached to their use, which makes these look attractive and the 'done thing'. How this can be done is explained later.

Being part of the school you will have the opportunity to guide the more perceptive students to understand the mindset that needs to be created among their peers and how to go about it.

Learning about effective actions

To be effective, your programme should create certain changes amongst students. One of the most important factors that govern use is what the students learn from their own culture or environment.





Changes needed to be initiated in schools:

- Make tobacco, alcohol and other drugs, and the use of these, appear less and less attractive.
- Help students understand how a positive image of these is built up.
- Help them see who contributes to this image and why.
- Teach them how to reverse or counteract these.
- Help them to measure the progress achieved.

For a programme to be effective it should be based on understanding which things in the school milieu itself makes students prone to use drugs – and then reverse these influences. The way students talk about drugs, the local words used for different substances of abuse and the overall attitude towards intoxication are just a few examples.

It must also look at influences outside of school and see how these may be reversed or their effect neutralized. An example of this is a known local shop that surreptitiously sells such substances of abuse to students.

You will need to create some changes inside the school. These are changes to be achieved among students, in the student milieu or culture.

Each of these items needs proper action for its implementation. We go into details in the next section “Action”.

Action

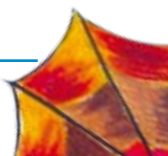
Action needs to be taken to help students understand how a positive image of drugs is built up, and then to see what contributes to this image and how to reverse it.

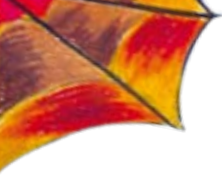
How is a positive image of drugs built up?

The image is built mostly through the belief that people already have in their minds. You already have a particular idea of your own about the effect of different drugs. Some of these you have never tried but you still believe that they produce exhilarating effects and ecstatic states. How did you acquire these impressions? You too speak as if these impressions are true.

There may be substances that you are familiar with. Let us take the example of alcohol, as many of us are familiar with it. Many adults have used, and continue to use alcohol. Most of them, perhaps including you, take pleasure in alcohol use because we enjoy it, or because we see ourselves drinking it, and assume that it must be pleasurable because we like it and drink alcohol voluntarily. Some people have used alcohol for many years and have learnt to associate it with pleasure, and to feel good when they drink. This does not mean that most users enjoy it. You can question yourself whether you enjoy the effect of alcohol the next time you experience intoxication. You will be able to re-examine the effect and check whether you do actually enjoy the effect. And if you find that it is not as pleasant as you had believed, you can change your opinion about alcohol. But someone, who has never consumed alcohol and believes that it is a highly pleasant experience, will not be easily convinced that only some people, perhaps a minority, enjoy alcohol

The positive image of drugs is built up mainly from the beliefs and perceptions that people already have in their minds – but this opinion can be changed.





use per se. Most people enjoy the ambience connected with drinking; they like the mood associated with alcohol more than the effect of intoxication. This is why the best fun in drinking alcohol is early in the situation when the alcohol has not been absorbed in adequate amounts to produce an effect on the brain.

You should learn from these experiences, and extrapolate them to illicit drugs. Those who have never used a drug still argue strongly that they produce wonderful effects. Students in school acquire these impressions unknowingly.

It is very difficult to get people to question the common assumption that illicit drugs are highly pleasurable and produce magical and wonderful feelings. Because many people have not experienced these drugs, they simply assume from the behaviour of those who use these regularly, that it must be great. The example of alcohol helps people understand things more easily.

So one task is to see how we ourselves can stop adding the elements of glamour, pleasure and magic to the use of drugs. Only then, can we also teach students to stop creating a false and misleadingly positive image about the effect of these drugs.

The more perceptive students will understand the influences at work that build up the desirable image of drugs. They should try to explain this concept to others.

Changing the image

If we get our students to examine the words used in their community or social circles, to describe drug use and its effects, they will realize how much these words create a positive image.

You too can do your bit in this direction. Consider the words that are used in your own circle, in society and in the media to refer to intoxication, for example. Then examine the mood that such words evoke.

Students too are quite aware that these words create a particular aura. Get some students to repeat the various words generally used among them, to refer to commonly used drugs. You will be able to point out how even uttering these names can create a mood of 'something special'. Then ask them how to devalue this tendency.

Now, see what happens if you use words that convey the opposite mood. **The more perceptive students will understand how this influences the image that has been built up. They should try to explain this concept to others.**

Take another example. Just ask someone whether he or she would like to join you in having a drink of alcohol. Even asking someone to join you to take a drink of alcohol evokes a casual mood of fun and mirth. Why do we all smile whenever a particular substance is even mentioned? And this is not just the reaction of regular users, but also of those who have never used the substance, and even of those who are opposed to its use!

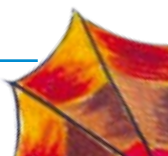
Students can begin to reverse these automatic associations more easily than adults. In fact they can make fun of the adult images and impressions.

Students can be taught to examine the ways that books, music and the media in general reinforce the positive social image of drugs and drug-users.

Changing the positive image:

Questioning our own, and our community's assumptions and changing them by, for instance:

- ◆ challenging or changing the words that are used to describe drug use and intoxication.
- ◆ challenging or changing the automatic assumption of a good mood even at the mention of a given substance.





Students can be taught to examine the ways that books, music and the media in general reinforce the positive social image.

For example, how alcohol and tobacco are consumed by the rich, how it is portrayed as being pleasurable, etc. They can then substitute less appealing words, images and reactions in their own circles.

They will not have the power to change these references and images in the media. So they will need to learn how to prevent their less perceptive friends from being swayed by these images.

Changing the positive image:

Immunizing others, to the extent possible, from being influenced by the depictions of drug use and its effects in the media.

Role of dealers

Another important aspect is to see how dealers in these various substances deliberately create an image that is very attractive.

Some of this is achieved through advertising. In other cases, it is achieved through informal placements in stories, journals, films and TV productions. Students have to be made sensitive to the ways that the positive image is deliberately built up.

Some people take a lot of trouble to create a positive image about the use of different substances even though they do not earn money by selling them. These are people who are hooked onto these substances. Because they need the substance to feel good or to feel normal, they want others also to join them in taking the

drugs. Otherwise they look odd. So they keep pressing others to use the substance and always promote it through their statements, jokes and other similar methods.

Students will need to recognise these people. Sometimes they happen to be members of the school's own staff. Students have to learn to question their ideas or reject them in the student milieu.

Changing the positive image:

Help to expose the actions of those who deliberately create a positive image because they are hooked onto the substance or profit from selling it.

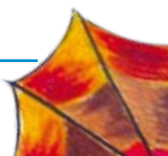
Students have to learn to reverse the influences in their own private world that is segregated from the staff and other adults. They have to learn how to influence and wean away their friends who are usually easily tricked from making a habit of drug use. This is not easy because the students who readily take up drug use are not very clever, so it is not easy to get them to question the image that is built up.

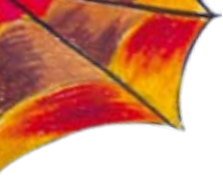
Thus, the first step is to see how many students realize the ways in which a very attractive image of drug use is built up.

They can then note their own progress as more students become aware.

But they will have to help the less perceptive students, who are easier to seduce into substance use, to see this too. **In nearly all settings, the less 'intelligent' or less perceptive individuals are more easily taken in by the image that is built**

Students will need to recognize the people who deliberately create a positive image of these substances because they are hooked onto them.





up around these substances. So the brighter students should be taught that drug taking is not just a 'bad' habit but also a habit into which their less intelligent friends are easily duped.

They should try to show the less perceptive students how a rather silly activity, that anybody can do, is being promoted as something very special and tough. Often, people who have no other way to show that they too are achievers, take to smoking or drinking alcohol to prove themselves. And if this is not enough, they get addicted to illicit drugs to show that they are tough and that they are not intimidated by rules.

The idea is that they should bring about an understanding that many students who like to show that they are taking drugs are doing so only because they cannot achieve things, or feel important in any other way.

Changing the positive image:

Constantly addressing their less perceptive and less intelligent peers as to how they are being duped.

Thus, the first step is to see how many students realize the ways in which a very attractive image of drug use is built up.

The steps outlined above are intended to make a change in one aspect of drug initiation, and that is, to reverse the things that nudge young people towards drug use. Similar steps are also needed for other changes that have to be achieved. The process for each of these is the same as for this one.

Some other changes that a school has to work towards are:

- Helping students appreciate the real harm from drug use, in a way that is relevant to young people.

- Strengthening students to counteract the activities of drug promoters.
- Generating interest among students to make drugs less easily and freely available to their peers.

In each of these situations, the steps described earlier in this chapter, for reducing the attractiveness of drugs, have to be followed.

Measuring progress

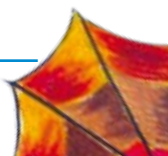
To ensure real progress, students must learn to assess whether the attractiveness of substance use in their culture is diminishing. They will have to develop ways to measure this change. The things to measure were described in the previous section as “required changes”. **The students in your school should work out which of these they think they can use as indicators for each item. The indicators that each school uses can differ.**

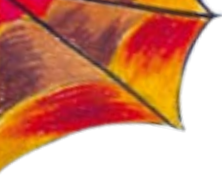
The student body in general will have to pay special attention to the impressions and images that the less perceptive individuals among them carry. These are the students who, with very rare exceptions are the first to use drugs. So others should reach out to them and rectify their views from time to time.

Let us take an example: We have taken action intended to reduce the glamour and attractiveness of drug use among our student population. Now the task is to check whether this is indeed happening. Reducing attractiveness is only one step. There were other changes too that were listed for which the same process has to be applied.

The step to be taken now is to see how students and staff can know whether the image of drug use among students is becoming less

The students in your school should work out their own list of indicators for each item. The indicators that each school uses can differ.





attractive. An example of an indicator is the reaction of students when heroin use is spoken about. We need to check whether students' reactions to it are changing. One simple way to do this is to ask selected students about their opinion at the beginning and later on during the intervention. Suggested questions include:

- What do you think a person who inhales heroin feels?
- Is the use of heroin a sign of great adventurousness or of stupidity?
- Do you think using drugs is a normal part of youth behaviour?

One school may choose to check this by informally observing the students' responses. Another may choose to verify by asking the students in a classroom and noting the number of students who give different types of answers. A third school may ask some students to give anonymous answers in writing. Yet another may ask a group of students their opinions from time to time, in a group discussion. This is what we meant when we said that each school will use different indicators, but they are all measuring changes about the same issue.

Changing the positive image:

Continually assessing whether the picture that students have of drug use and its effects is becoming less attractive.

If we have the opportunities to influence the school's chosen method we can discuss with them the advantages and problems of each indicator.

If a few members of staff are interested in minimizing the extent of drug use, licit and illicit, they have to take effective measures. It is necessary to take some interest to work out what should be done. We cannot just do the things that are easy to do and hope that it works.

Handling obstacles and maintaining progress

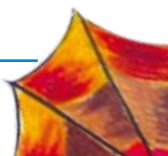
When prevailing attitudes are questioned and students take the lead in reversing the unduly positive image of drug use, there will be a substantial amount of resistance and objections.

The commonest objections come from staff members who want to teach students right and wrong and do not particularly want students to take the lead in this activity.

Another source of problems are members of the staff who are attached to using addictive substances – usually tobacco or alcohol. They do not like students questioning the attractive and fun image that is created around their own habit. And they are not happy when students see their drug use as silly or as a sign of weakness or lack of intelligence! Parents whose drug use gets questioned by the students also object.

Sometimes people involved in the trade in these drugs create obstacles. The trade does not mind programmes that teach children about the dangers of drugs. But they are opposed to allowing students to counter the positive image that is created through direct and indirect advertising and promotions. When the trade objects, they usually work through higher officials. So protests are made to the education office of the district, for example, and the school's staff and principal are pulled up on some pretext.

Those who really want to reduce drug use among students must anticipate the tactics of interested parties and inform the authorities beforehand to prepare them for their spurious objections.





To prevent this happening, those who really want to reduce drug use among students must anticipate these tactics. They can then tell the authorities beforehand and prepare them for spurious objections from interested parties.



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