

Many experts agree that the social influences approach has been more effective (Cuijpers, 2002). The social influence model aims to develop the social skills useful in resisting social influences which encourage drug use. It seeks to strengthen students' awareness of and resistance to the external pressures exerted by friends, family, and the media, and internal pressures such as low self-esteem, which can lead youth to drug use (Norem-Hebeisen, 1983; Pentz, 1990; Benard, 1990). Prevention curriculum based on SIM consists of objective information about drug use, examines drug use attitudes and behaviours, and gives social resistance skill training (Ellickson, 1990; Mohai, 1991).

## ●● What is the best timing for interventions?

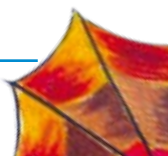
It has been shown that there are three important time periods of relevance to drug use, in a student's development. Based on an extensive literature review, McBride (2003) suggests the following timings when interventions are crucial.

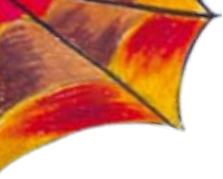
First, programmes can be delivered immediately prior to initial experimentation. This inoculation phase is where the initial knowledge and skills related to drug use have the potential to modify behaviour patterns and responses to drug-using situations.

Second, initiatives should be implemented when students are experiencing initial exposure – the early relevancy period. Here, students gain exposure to programmes when information and skills most likely have meaning and practical application.

The third or the late relevant phase is when the prevalence of use increases and the context of use changes, such as in drinking and

**Interventions are best made at three important junctures: prior to initial experimentation, at the time of initial exposure (early relevancy period) and when the prevalence of use increases (late relevancy period).**





driving. This phase is important in providing new knowledge and skills for dealing with new situations.

## ●● What is the most effective content?

### *Awareness about ways used to influence adolescents*

**Awareness of the methods of operation employed by the drug and alcohol trade has a significant effect on youth consumption.**

There is now good evidence for reducing tobacco use, especially from the “Truth” Campaign in the USA, and initiatives carried out in the South-East Asia Region, that show that increasing awareness about the methods by which the drug and alcohol trade operates has a significant effect on youth consumption.

Findings indicate that the “Truth” campaign accounted for a significant portion of the recent decline in the prevalence of youth smoking (Farrelly, 2005). This campaign was carried out in the USA. It involved making teenagers aware of the tactics employed by the tobacco industry to lure young people into smoking. And more importantly, it highlighted through the media, how such tactics should be identified and countered by the youth themselves.

This approach has been tried with success in Sri Lanka for several years. It is apparent from this experience that, young people do not like to be deliberately manipulated, for instance, into considering tobacco use as smart, sophisticated and fun. Once such strategies become clear, young people often become resistant to them. In Sri Lanka similar effects have also been observed with regard to the exposure of strategies used by alcohol vendors.

In this approach, school children are encouraged to look for strategies used by the alcohol industry, especially the beer industry