Making Our Students Think (Most) Using the Social Norms Approach in a High School Setting

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Training Overview

- Social norms theoretical background
- Basic elements of social norms campaign development
- Casa Grande approach
- Results

Traditional Alcohol Prevention

Goals of program

Correct youth misperceptions about:
- Peer alcohol use rates
- Peer drug use rates
- Peer acceptability of substance use
- Increase pro-social peer affiliations
Social Norms Theory

- Based on the theoretical work of Perkins and Berkowitz (1986)
- “If students perceive something to be the norm, they tend to alter their behavior to fit that norm, even if it isn’t reality. If, however, they are presented with the actual norm, they will conform to it.”
  -- Michael Haines
  Northern Illinois University

What are social norms?

H. Wesley Perkins, Ph.D., Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Hobart and William Smith Colleges

“Social norms are fundamental in understanding human behavior. Put simply, norms are what the majority of people in a group do or how they behave (behavioral norms), and what the majority believe about how they and others should act (attitudinal norms).”

Peer pressure?

Dr. Perkins:
“Research has consistently shown peers to be one of the strongest influences on behavior, especially among youth. Research has also documented a consistent and dramatic pattern of misperceptions about peer norms.”

“What peers think and do does influence behavior. But what we believe to be the attitudes and behaviors of our peers is even more important. Indeed, the strongest effect of peers often occurs through the significantly distorted impressions youth develop of peer norms.”

Cause of the misperception

Dr. Perkins:
“People myopically construct their impressions of peers based on limited information. They do not know each other’s habits as well as they think, and are forced to rely on impressions of peers gleaned from behavior that gains the most attention—behavior that is generally negative. Problem behaviors get a disproportionate amount of attention in peer conversation as well as in mass media news and popular entertainment images. This then distorts one’s sense of what is normal or typical among peers.”
Attribution Theory: Students attribute behavior they see to be typical unless they have other knowledge of the person.

Social Conversation Mechanisms:
- Students notice and remember the flamboyant behavior of someone who is intoxicated
- Students follow “imaginary peers” and create a self-fulfilling prophecy

Revealing Accurate Norms Will
- Prevent/reduce the chance of starting to drink or use
- Reduce heavy drinking and problem behavior
- Enhance protective behaviors
- Support the non-use norm

Effectiveness of this approach
- Challenging College Alcohol Abuse has been an evidence-based practice on NREPP since 2007
- University of Arizona has been using this model since 1995.

CCAA Resources:
http://campushealthmedia.arizona.edu/
http://www.socialnorms.campushealth.net/
Evaluation

- Process
  - Where was media displayed
  - How often
  - How long
  - Viewership (vary by location, demographics, etc.)

- Outcomes - Changes in:
  - Perceptions
  - Behaviors
  - Attitudes

M.☺.S.T Campaign
(Making ☺our Students Think)

Breeanna Boland
Program Director
Casa Grande Alliance

What we do

- Social Norms Campaign - evidence based approach

- Pro-social group to do the work
  - SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions)
    - Peer lead & adult supervised.

- Campaign started in 2012-2013.
  - Year 1: 3 high school campuses
  - Year 2: 2 high school & 1 middle school campus

Our Goal

Correct misperceptions to:

- Prevent/delay the start of substance use.
- Decrease risk factors.
  - Attitudes favorable to substance use
  - Friend’s use of drugs
  - Perception of peer acceptability
- Increase protective factors.
  - Involvement with pro-social peers
  - Develop & increase accurate perceptions.
- Celebrate the positive!
“The strategy of the social norms approach, put simply, is to communicate the truth about peer norms in terms of **what the majority of students actually think and do**, all on the basis of **credible data** drawn from the student **population that is the target**.”

- Perkins, 2003

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This generation relates to social media.

- Seeing, hearing, talking about actual norms must happen A LOT to compete with other media.
  - Examples?

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**Getting started**

- **Training - Social Norms Theory & Positive Community Norms Training**
  - Dr. Peggy Glider, Coordinator of Evaluation and Research at the University of Phoenix, Campus Health Services
  - Train students at the beginning of each campaign year.

**Discussion topics**

- Where do students get information?
- Who/what is a trustworthy source for information?
- How could you get the word/message out?
- Who has to give their O.K. in the school?
- How will you know if your messages or activities worked?

**Skills learned**

- Analyzing data
- Messaging
- Media design
- Imaging
- Marketing strategies
- Market testing
- Communication
- Leadership
The Beginning 2012–2013

Implemented on 3 high school campuses.

Called the Campaign ‘Most of Us’

- Each SADD chapter picked a topic
  1. Visual – Posters & Social Media
- Together they created
  1. Audio – Announcements
  2. Activities – Tabling & special events.

Developed Media & Posters

Use the P.I.E. Model!

- Positive – beneficial, constructive, affirmative, hopeful, optimistic
- Inclusive – incorporating, embracing, involving, comprehensive
- Empowering – potent, control, energy, authority, strength

Media - Steps to Follow

- Review the data
- Develop messages – what do you want people to know?
- Market test – ask others what they think
- Develop media – make posters, flyers, videos, ...
- Market test – ask others what they think

Branding

Most of Us
Give Aways

- Think about the target population
  - Bracelets: Most of Us

- Make it memorable
  - Candy messages
    - Hershey Kisses
    - KISS = Keep It Sober Students
    - SMARTIES
      - “Be a SMARTIE not a statistic”

Campaign Development

- Pre survey
  - Test the target population’s knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions prior to campaign.

- Come up with a plan to get the information out.

- Get the message out - BE POSITIVE!
  - Use multiple strategies
    - See, Hear, & Do

- Post survey
  - See if campaign worked
  - Made a difference
  - Change perceptions

Moving on to 2013-2014

3 Major Changes

1. Name change: M.O.S.T. (Making Our Students Think)

2. 2 functioning SADD chapters

3. SADD voted on 5 campaign topics
   - 2 new topics: tobacco & peer-disapproval
   - 3 extra weeks of campaign
73% of ‘campus students’ reported they saw the posters around campus.

Think about the target population
- Bracelets: MOST
- Tattoos: 81%

Make it memorable
- T-Shirts
  - MOST - campaign messaging
  - Above the Influence

66% of us hang with friends who choose not to use alcohol or drugs.

Branding
Make a Positive Impression!

Give Aways

Results
Results

- In 2014, 70% of students provided a majority response to the alcohol question. 3% higher than 2013.
  - What percent of Casa Grande teens stand tall and don’t drink alcohol?

- In 2014, 65% of students provided a majority response to the marijuana question. 1% higher than 2013.
  - What percent of Casa Grande teens don’t use weed?

- In 2014, 61% of students knew a majority of kids hang with kids who choose not to use substances. 1% lower than 2013.

- 55% of kids answered that a majority of kids don’t think it’s cool to do drugs or drink alcohol. New data

Because of the campaign...

- 64% of youth reported the information from the campaign changed their perception on how many teens really use alcohol.

- 55% of youth reported the information from the campaign changed their perception on how many teens really use drugs.

- The pre/post test showed a 26% increase in knowledge around accurate perception of teen substance use.
  - 47.7% increase in 2013

Success!!!

Therefore, a majority of students report there is either no chance or very little chance they would be seen as cool if they drank alcohol or used marijuana.

What’s New

- Implement the message early

- Casa Grande Middle School SADD chapter!!!
  - High school SADD chapter mentors
  - Learn about SADD
  - M.O.S.T. Campaign

- Low cost opportunity to repeat the message!
Lessons Learned

- Be ready for push back!
  - Especially if the new information challenges current perceptions.
  - Know the information & where it comes from.

- Inform & educate those impacted by the messages.
  - Example: School staff

- Design should link campaign materials
  - Be innovative & consistent at the same time.

- Information dissemination can change over time
  - Keep what is working!
    - Tracking the penetration rate is critical!
    - Examples: Posters, bracelets, DUI taskforce event

- Look for low cost opportunities to repeat the message.
  - Example: Social media, other programs within the organization, & community partners

Questions?

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