



Roanoke Area Youth Substance Abuse Coalition  
Promoting a Safe & Drug Free Roanoke Valley

[www.RAYSAC.org](http://www.RAYSAC.org)



***Preventing Drug/Alcohol Abuse Among Children and Adolescents***

***Risk factors and protective factors:*** Many factors can add to a person’s risk for using alcohol and other drugs. The more risk factors present in the life of a child or youth, the more likely she or he will experience substance abuse problems in adolescence. However based on research, many children growing up in high risk families and environments emerge relatively free of problems because of the presence of protective factors. Protective factors balance and buffer the presence of risk factors and help develop resiliency, or the ability to bounce back from adversity and use healthy ways of coping with difficult situations. The following illustrates how protective factors can positively influence the three primary domains of a child’s life.

***Resiliency/Protective Factors:***

<b><i><u>Domain</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>Protective Factors</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>What Parents Can Do</u></i></b>
Peer	Association with peer who are involved in school, recreation, service, religion or other organized activity.	Help your child establish friendships with others who value school and are involved in positive, productive activities.
School	Schools that exhibit a caring, community environment, with high expectations, and clear rules for appropriate behavior.	Find out what kind of environment your child’s school projects and how you can help enhance it.
Community	Supportive, caring, with high expectations for youth. Opportunities for youth participation in community activities.	Find out how your community shows children that they are valued. Help provide more ways for children & youth to participate in meaningful activities and receive positive recognition.

Research has shown that the key risk periods for drug and alcohol abuse are during major transitions in children’s lives. The first big transition for children is when they leave the security of the family and enter school. Later, when they advance from elementary school to middle school, they often experience new academic and social situations, such as learning to get along with a wider group of peers. It is at this stage—early adolescence - that children are likely to encounter drugs for the first time. When they enter high school, adolescents face additional social, emotional, and educational challenges. At the same time, they may be exposed to greater availability of drugs, drug abusers, and social activities involving drugs. These challenges can increase the risk that they will abuse alcohol, tobacco, and other substances.

***What you can do:*** **Parents**-Talk to your teens about the dangers of drugs and alcohol. Keep communicating, and spend time doing meaningful things together. Ask questions, know where your teen is going, and with whom. Set clear and realistic expectations and limits for your teen.

***Be a positive role model. Parents, talk to your teens....they will listen!***