YOUTH:
PROTECTIVE FACTORS

If you are reading this message, chances are you're at the time in your life when you're coming into young adulthood--being a kid is a distant memory.



YOU'VE PROBABLY EXPERIENCED THE NORMAL RANGE OF TEENAGE TEMPTATIONS:



driving a bit faster than recommended, staying up all night with friends, and even experimenting with harmful substances. Vaping, smoking, and using drugs or alcohol may seem cool, enjoyable, or even harmless, but they can have devastating effects on you as you mature. Although these temptations are very common, "saying no" is one of the best decisions you will ever make because it will maximize your chances of having a great life.

HERE ARE SOME TIPS ON HOW YOU CAN PROTECT YOURSELF FROM MAKING POOR LIFE CHOICES OR BEING PUT IN UNCOMFORTABLE, RISKY SITUATIONS:



- Educate yourself. Know the harms that vaping, smoking, drugs and alcohol can have on your physical and mental health.
- Up to 90% of people with a substance use disorder began to use drugs, alcohol, or tobacco before the age of 18.
- Avoid people who vape, smoke or use drugs and alcohol. People who do these things will try to influence you to do them too!

- Talk with your parents and other adults. Positive role models will be there to listen and help you through both the good times and the bad.
- Participate in activities. Get involved at school, in your community, church, or at home. Physical activities and social interactions will keep you happy and healthy!
- Manage your stress. Take a break and do something you like to do: go for a walk, exercise, listen to music, meditate, or speak with someone about what is going on.
- Take care of yourself by eating healthy foods and getting enough sleep every night.



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• Build positive self-esteem and develop self-control, which will help you make good decisions and be successful in your relationships and life in general.

• Avoid negative behaviors such as aggression, bullying, and distancing yourself from others.

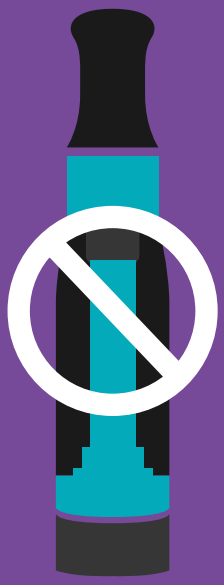


SOME PEOPLE USE DRUGS TO FIT IN WITH PEERS OR TO NUMB ANY NEGATIVE FEELINGS THEY HAVE LIKE SADNESS OR ANXIETY



Drug use isolates you from loved ones and always intensifies negative feelings over the long-run. Instead of making decisions based on what others are doing, make decisions based on what is best for you and hang around with true friends that accept you for who you are and only want what is best for you.

Learn to say no when someone asks you if you want to vape, smoke, or use alcohol or drugs. Sometimes, saying no is enough and you will not be asked again.



WHEN "NO" IS NOT ENOUGH:

• Offer to be the designated driver to make sure everyone gets home safely.

• Say you have an important activity the next day (like a sports practice or game, recital, or test) and you don't want to feel lousy or have a hangover. Have a soda or other nonalcoholic drink with you and say you have a drink already.

• Look busy like you are dancing or talking on the phone.

• Say you're not feeling well.

• Say you have strict parents that will check up on you or drug test you when you get home.

• Have a plan with your parents. Text a certain word that will signal "Come pick me up" when you find yourself in an uncomfortable situation.

If you are still being pressured, just leave. This may include leaving friends behind if they choose to stay. It's always best to avoid situations where you know drugs and alcohol will be present. However, these situations may sometimes come unexpectedly, so always have an exit plan in place. Remember, you can be a positive influence on others and help protect them from making poor life choices by following the advice presented here and inspiring those around you to do the same.

For more information, please visit **www.dfaf.org.**

Produced by DFAF with assistance from Blake S., 11th grade, Lutz, Florida

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