

THE PREVENTATIVE PARENT

HELPING PARENTS BE PROTECTIVE FACTORS IN THE
LIVES OF THEIR TEENS

In this Newsletter:

- Protective Factors
- Families Fighting Addiction
- Community Resources
- FREE Movie Night @ Galaxy Theaters May 22nd



Protective Factors

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When it comes to parenting, sometimes it's hard to tell if we are succeeding or falling short. What I can tell you is this: you're not alone in wanting the best for your student. There are so many other factors that contribute to their success that have little to do with your parenting style. Let's explore some of these together. Protective factors are the built-in or buildable ways we can improve teen outcomes, prevent addiction, and decrease mental health concerns. These can be physical, emotional, social, and biological factors that impact a teen in more ways than we might realize.

Biological Protective Factors. Genetics is probably the biggest protective or risk factor that is traceable. If mental health disorders or substance use disorders run in your family, there is a higher likelihood that you or your child might experience these disorders. Same thing goes for protective factors. If these disorders are not present in your genetics, your child is less likely to experience these challenges. Physical health plays a

part in our biological protection. Making sure we are eating well, moving our bodies, taking care of our health, drinking water, and getting enough sleep will help protect teens from mental health and addiction.

Psychological Protective Factors. We can fight against addiction by helping teens feel a sense of self-worth, self-efficacy, and confidence. Helping teens set goals, find purpose and meaning in their lives and develop resilience when challenges arise can also protect teens and improve outcomes. As a parent, teaching stress management and healthy coping skills is one way we can build psychological protective factors.

Social and Environmental Protective Factors. This is basically who your teen has present in their life. Do you have strong family relationships? Does your student feel supported by teachers or coaches at school? Do they feel connected with friends? Do they feel a sense of social, physical, and emotional safety in the environments they exist in (i.e. school, home, activities). Studies show that students who have at least two healthy adult relationships in their life have much more positive mental health outcomes. Developing skills to manage relationship conflict is also vital to social protective factors in teens. Where do you see areas in which you could build upon your teen's protective factors?

Families Fighting Addiction

30% of families in America struggle with addiction. This means at least one family member has a substance use disorder. This dynamic can be tricky to navigate and add stress to an already challenging time in a teen's life.

Oftentimes in families fighting addiction we find each family member stepping into a specific role. These roles are a family member's way of coping with a difficult environment.

Substance Abuser: The individual who is abusing substances. This person might seem charming, but can create a hostile and rigid environment for family members.

Enabler: the individual who tries to care-take and hold the family together. They realize the issue, but are unable to stand up against it.

Mascot: This is the individual who uses humor to mask insecurity, fear, and other difficult emotions. They might play things off as jokes and act in less mature ways.

Scapegoat: This is the person we point fingers at. They might become defiant because of constantly being blamed.

Hero or Golden Child: These are the need-to-please, perfectionistic, anxiety-ridden individuals. They are under constant pressure to keep the outward appearance of the family positive.

Lost Child: The quiet child, very independent, watches from afar. They learn from older family members to keep their distance and often create an inner world for themselves to escape the hardship of family dynamics.

Each of these roles contributes to the maladaptive way the family exists. We often see common rules arise in families impacted by substance use:

- 1) Don't talk.** We don't talk about the issue, it could make things worse. Historically talking leads to arguments.
- 2) Don't Trust.** Too many broken promises have been made. The abuser said they would stop, but to no avail.
- 3) Don't feel.** Shutting out and avoiding emotional experiences means that we don't have to deal with the issue.

As you can imagine, this environment is a challenge. But there are ways to cope. Journal, exercise, find a hobby, draw or paint, get out in nature. You can also make sure that you are taking care of yourself. Take care of your physical health, hygiene, nutrition, and emotional health. Journal to reflect your feelings so you don't have to keep them inside. Make healthy choices for you so you can focus on what is in your control. Lastly, find ways to communicate your feelings. Sometimes talking about dynamics inside a family can be hard, so finding an outside support such as a therapist or support group (Ala-non, Ala-teen) can give you space to express your emotions.

For more information, check out [Ala-non](#) or [Ala-teen](#)



Community Resources

SEE WHAT RESOURCES ARE IN THE COMMUNITY

After School Programs for Children & Youth:

Take the Next Steps Kidz Club:

<https://www.tns.org/kidz-club-after-school-program>

Monroe Boys & Girls Club:

<https://bgcsc.org/clubs/monroe-club/>

Sky Valley YMCA After School Care: <https://ymca-snoco.org/programs/child-care/school-age-care/>

Mental Health Services

CH Counseling Services

<https://www.chcounselingservices.org/counselors>

Stories of Hope

<https://www.rosydeprado-storiesofhope.com/>

SeaMar Behavioral Health

<https://www.seamar.org/snohomish-bh-monroe.html>

Community Support Groups for Teens

Queer and Trans Youth Community Group:

<https://www.rosydeprado-storiesofhope.com/groups>

Upcoming Events

Join the Monroe Community Coalition for a FREE Night at the Movies!

May 22nd 6pm @ Galaxy Theaters

[The Upstanders Movie Trailer](#)

[REGISTER HERE](#)