

Teaching Harm Reduction regarding Substance Use - Tips for Educators by Youth

Tool

Resource: Vaping Education Resources

Grade(s): 4 5 6 7 8

Division(s): Intermediate

Teach Harm Reduction

- Recognize that all substances have positive and negative effects and that individuals use substances for many reasons.–
- Recognize the Continuum of Substance Use. Some circumstances may lead to dependence, but not always.–
- Teaching harm reduction helps individuals have more control over their lives and take protective and proactive steps for their health. ¹⁻

Harm Reduction Includes Abstinence, but Abstinence Doesn't Include Harm Reduction

- Harm reduction focuses on safety and well-being as a priority with abstinence being a potential goal, but not the only acceptable option.–
- Students need to know! Teach youth how to make informed, safe choices, and strategies to reduce the harm with something that could be potentially harmful.–

- The message, “Don’t do it,” is implied, and most students don’t resonate with it. -

Connect Harm Reduction to Other Safe Practices

- Help students- understand harm reduction by connecting it to other daily practices that help reduce injury and increase safety, like seatbelts, helmets, and learning first aid.–
- Help students- be safe in situations involving substance use. Teach simple first aid like recognizing signs of overdose and strategies for staying safe when socializing with friends.—

Start Early

- Talk about harm reduction early, long before youth may need to apply it. Give them lots of information about safety and substance use.–
- If students- don’t learn the facts about substance use from educators, they are learning it from sources that may not provide them with accurate information.–

Give Us All the Information We Need

- Don’t worry that providing too much education might lead to substance use. No matter how much students- are taught about consequences, they may still do it.–
- To be safe and well informed, it’s important to be educated with all the facts about substance use. Teach students how to research and find accurate information from credible sources.–

¹-Canadian Drug Policy Coalition, *Harm Reduction*, 2022. Extracted from: <https://drugpolicy.ca/our-work/issues/harm-reduction/#:~:text=Harm%20Reduction%20is%20a%20comprehensive,live%20safer%20and%20healthier%20lives.->