Section 2
Factors Affecting Drug Abuse

Objectives
Before class begins, write the objectives on the board. Have students copy the objectives into their notebooks at the start of class.

1. Focus

Warm-Up Quick Quiz
Use the clickers to survey student responses. Discuss with students why yes answers to the questions can help protect them from drug abuse. Call on several volunteers to share other factors that help protect them from using drugs. (Sample answer: friends who do not use drugs and parents who discourage drug use) Tell students they will learn more in this section about factors that affect drug abuse.

Teaching Transparency W58

Risk Factors
Why do some people abuse drugs? Some people turn to drugs as a way of coping with life’s problems and stresses. Others use drugs because their friends do. Still others use drugs because they say they like the feeling of being “high.” But, no matter the reason, the risks related to drug abuse are serious.

A number of factors make it either more or less likely that a teen will abuse drugs. They include family factors, social factors, and personal factors. Often, it is a combination of factors that influences drug use.

Family Factors
Consider the following situation.
Since her mom died last year, Julie’s dad has withdrawn into his own world. He rarely asks Julie or her brother about their weekend plans. One night, Julie was invited to a “rave” party where everyone seemed to be using drugs. Julie figured her dad would never find out, so she joined in.

Risk Factors for Drug Abuse
The risk of drug abuse is greater if you
• inherit certain genes. Risk of drug abuse has a genetic component, which helps explain why having a family member who is a drug abuser increases the risk.
• have certain mental health disorders, especially undiagnosed disorders. For example, people with schizophrenia or bipolar disorder may take drugs to alleviate symptoms, or self-medicate.
• are socially isolated. People who are socially isolated may be shy, have poor social skills, and feel as though they do not fit in. They may use drugs to try to feel better about themselves and overcome shyness.
One risk factor for teen drug abuse is poor family relationships. When family relationships are not close and supportive, teenagers may not get needed guidance. The teen may feel alienated from the family. This alienation may make teens more vulnerable to the influence of peers who abuse drugs. In addition, if family members abuse drugs, a teen is at higher risk of using drugs, too.

**Social Factors**  
Do you know someone like Mike?

Mike has smoked marijuana almost every day for two years. Some of Mike’s friends were using the drug and they offered it to him. Now, whenever Mike and his friends hang out, they smoke. Mike says that he can stop using marijuana at any time, although he has yet to try.

In addition to family factors, there are a number of social factors that influence teens to use drugs.

- **Peer Group**  
  Many teens, like Mike, were first introduced to drugs by friends or by peers whose acceptance they wanted. They may have initially tried drugs because they were curious or felt pressured. Some continue to abuse drugs because they want to be “part of the crowd.”

- **Role Models**  
  Teens may see their role models—such as favorite actors—using drugs in movie roles or in real life, without seeing the negative effects. Such “glamorization” of drugs may influence their decision to try drugs.

- **Competitive Pressure**  
  For some teens, a strong desire to excel at athletics may be a risk factor for drug use. For example, some teen athletes believe the myths that painkillers will allow them to play through an injury. Others mistakenly think that steroids will allow them to bulk up safely.

  In fact, athletes who use painkillers during competition are more likely to sustain serious injuries that could end their athletic careers. Steroid abuse, especially in the teen years, can lead to lifelong or life-threatening disorders.

**How would you react to news that your favorite professional athlete was abusing drugs?**
Active Learning

Help students recall from Chapter 3 some healthy ways to reduce stress, such as physical activity and deep breathing. (You may wish to demonstrate some deep breathing techniques for the class to practice together or at home.) Then have students rewrite the paragraph about Keith so that he uses a healthy way to reduce stress instead of turning to drugs. Ask a few volunteers to share their paragraphs with the class. Discuss how Keith might feel if he reduced stress in healthful ways such as these, rather than by taking pills.

Protective Factors

Building Health Skills

Practicing Healthful Behaviors Discuss how negative, drug-using role models may increase risk of drug use by teens. Then, have groups of students brainstorm examples of positive, drug-free role models. (Examples might include sports or movie stars, parents, coaches, or other drug-free adults whom students admire.) Ask groups to make collages of their examples. Display the collages in the classroom, and use them to start a discussion of how positive role models can help teens avoid drugs.

Journal Writing

Have students read about protective factors for drug abuse and identify protective factors over which they have some control (for example, committing to success in academics and extracurricular activities). Ask students to write a private journal entry in which they list ways they could strengthen one or more of the protective factors they identified.

Personal Factors

From time to time, all teens experience stress. But not all of them handle it like Keith.

Talia broke up with Keith after they had been going out for two years. Keith kept to himself and pretended the breakup did not bother him. Eventually, Keith began to feel depressed. He had heard that “uppers” improve mood. Soon, he was dependent on uppers and needed them just to get through the day.

There are many causes for stress in a teen's life—for example, a breakup like Keith's, an academic or social problem, or an illness or death in the family. Some teens might turn to drugs in an attempt to temporarily escape the negative feelings associated with stress. But, abusing drugs does nothing to address the underlying causes of stress. In fact, drug abuse ultimately makes life more stressful.

Another personal factor that may influence drug use is low self-esteem. When teens don't feel good about themselves, they are more likely to ignore the serious risks of drug abuse.

Protective Factors

Review the stories involving Julie, Mike, and Keith. Did their stories have to end in drug abuse? No. Even with the risk factors they faced—a distant parent, drug-abusing peers, and personal stress—their decision to use drugs was ultimately their own.

Just because risk factors exist in a teen’s life does not mean the teen will abuse drugs. While most teens face at least some risk factors for drug abuse, protective factors can help them overcome those risks. A protective factor is a factor that reduces a person's potential for harmful behavior. Having strong protective factors in your life will help you stay drug free.

TEENS Are Asking...

Q: I’ve got many of the risk factors for drug abuse. Does that mean I’m doomed to becoming a drug abuser?

A: No, it does not. Risk factors are just that: factors that increase risk. Having risk factors—even having many risk factors—does not necessarily mean you will become a drug abuser. However, you should be aware that your chances of becoming a drug abuser are likely to be higher than they are for many other people. It is especially important for you to take positive steps to avoid drugs and the people who use them. You should also work hard to develop protective factors against drug abuse.
**Family Factors** Teenagers who have good relationships with their parents and other family members are better equipped to deal with life’s problems and stresses. With close, supportive relationships, teens can seek guidance from parents or siblings and discuss the problems they face. Protective family factors include

- strong and positive family bonds
- parental awareness of a teen’s social activities and peer group
- clear rules that are consistently enforced

**Social Factors** Strong social bonds and supports can cushion the negative effects of stress in your life and act as powerful buffers against drug use. Protective social factors include

- having strong bonds to school and other community institutions
- associating with peers who are drug free
- having friends who are supportive and accepting

**Personal Factors** Stress and negative feelings are a part of life. With guidance from adult or peer role models, teens can learn healthy techniques for managing stress. Other protective personal factors include

- a commitment to success in academics and extracurricular activities
- a personal belief that drug abuse is unacceptable

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**Section 2 Review**

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<th>Key Ideas and Vocabulary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What three general types of factors can either increase one’s risk of drug abuse or protect against drug abuse?</td>
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<td>2. What is a protective factor?</td>
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<td>3. Why is it important to strengthen protective factors in your life?</td>
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**Anti-Drug Messages** For one week, keep a record of all the information you receive from television, the internet, and other media about drug use. What risk factors and protective factors do the media emphasize? Summarize your findings.

**WARNING**

- Communicating | What advice would you give a friend who is abusing drugs to help him or her cope with negative feelings? |
- Evaluating | Despite facing many risk factors, a person ultimately can still say “no” to drugs. Do you agree with this statement? Explain. |

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**Health at Home**

**Anti-Drug Messages** Suggest that students keep a notebook and pen handy when they watch television or use other media so they can record all the relevant information about drug use they receive. Students might note risk factors such as glamorization of drugs in movies. They might note protective factors such as strong family bonds in television programs.