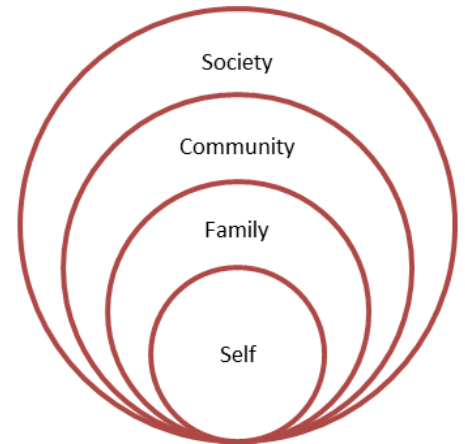# Risk and Protective Factors for
Substance Use and Mental Health Disorders

Risk and protective factors are a set of influences that can be present in the individual, family, social/peer and community/society domains. Risk factors found in society include discrimination, marginalization, and poverty. Societal protective factors include culture and religion.

Many influences that place children and adults at risk for developing substance use disorders also place them at risk for mental health disorders. Substance use and mental health disorders frequently occur together:

- It is well known that 30% to 75% of people with substance use disorders also have mental health disorders; such as, depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder.

- Mental health disorders in youth may also include attention deficit or oppositional disorders.

- Additional physical health disorders are often experienced by individuals with substance use and mental health disorders which include: chronic pain, obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, irritable bowel syndrome, arthritis, and lung disease (e.g., asthma, emphysema, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease).
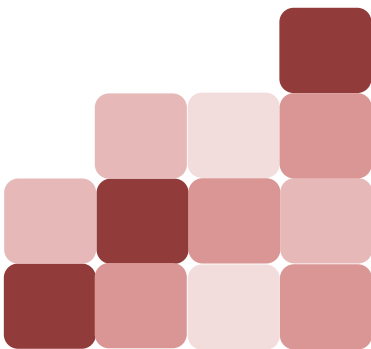
Building Resilience

Prevention practitioners target risk and protective factors to address and change behavioral health disorders.

Both risk and protective factors build on one another. The presence of one risk factor makes an individual more likely to experience additional risk factors. The presence of protective factors then sets the stage for a child or adult to encounter more protective factors. Thus these factors are essential to a person's well being.

Effective prevention strategies focus on building resilience by reducing risk factors and strengthening protective factors that are most closely related to the problem being addressed.

RESOURCES

Reference: Collaborative for the Application of Prevention Technologies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration. *Prevention and Behavioral Health.* http://captus.samhsa.gov/prevention-practice/prevention-and-behavioral-health

For More Information: National Institute for Mental Health Information Center https://infocenter.nimh.nih.gov/index.cfm
SAMHSA http://www.samhsa.gov/

How to get help: Office of Recovery Oriented Systems of Care, MDCH, http://www.michigan.gov/bhrecovery

Youth

Risk Factors

Individual/Self: Difficult personality; difficulty controlling behaviors and emotions; positive attitudes toward drug and alcohol use

Family: Parents that use drugs or alcohol; parents who are hostile, overly permissive, or lacking warmth; poor attachment with primary caregivers; lack of consistent supervision; sexual, physical or emotional abuse

School/Community: Community violence; school transitions or stress; poor school performance; bullying or peer rejection; peers who use/have positive attitudes toward substance use; access to drugs/alcohol; retailers selling alcohol to minors

Society: Prejudice/discrimination; favorable attitudes toward youth substance use; overexposure of alcohol marketing and advertising; high alcohol outlet density; low enforcement of laws prohibiting sales to minors; low cost of alcohol

Protective Factors

Individual/Self: Ability to control emotions/behaviors; attachments; communication, language and academic skills mastery; ability to develop friendships; age-appropriate physical development; positive self-esteem; ability to use coping and problem-solving skills

Family: Parental involvement; supportive, reliable/consistent caregivers with structure, monitoring and clear expectations expressed on behavior/substance use; verbal rather than physical discipline

School/Community: Relationships that allow genuineness; sense of accomplishment/self-worth; opportunities that promote a sense of belonging, mastery and value; anti-bullying policies/practices in school; participation in religious/spiritual activities; presence of a mentor

Society: Policies that protect groups; policies limiting youth access to substances; alcohol excise taxes; regulation of alcohol outlet density; social host liability laws; enforcement of laws prohibiting sales to minors

Adult

Risk Factors

Individual/Self: Difficulty controlling emotions; poor attachment history; lack of coping or problem solving skills; losses related to physical health or disability

Family/Relationships: Trauma history-physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect; witness to violence; family conflict/ disruption/ dysfunction; family members with addiction; mental health issues or incarceration; social isolation or lack of social support and friendships; recent loss of important relationships

Employment/Community: Community violence; employment stress; loss of job; incarceration or legal involvement; lack of meaningful community involvement; absence of social support; over-service, price discounting at alcohol retailers

Society: Prejudice/discrimination; lack of positive cultural identity; high alcohol outlet density; low cost of alcohol

Protective Factors

Individual/Self: Secure attachment style; positive self-esteem; adaptability; ability to use coping, problem solving, and emotion regulation skills; biological/physiological stability

Family/Relationships: Supportive relationships with spouse/partner, children, and/or extended family members; strong social support network

Employment/Community: Meaningful employment that contributes to a sense of accomplishment and self-worth; opportunities to be involved in social and community activities that promote a sense of belonging, accomplishment, mastery and value; engagement in religious or spiritual activities

Society: Policies that protect groups, such as civil right policies; anti-discrimination policies; socio-economic stability; alcohol excise taxes; regulation of alcohol outlet density; commercial host liability laws; maintaining limits on the hours and days of sale