

# Parent Power:

## *Nurturing Student Success Through Strong Connections*

Niagara Region Public Health - School Health Team

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# Agenda



1. Introduction to Connectedness
2. The Parent Role: 5 Connectedness Tips
3. Refusal Skills & Connected Conversations



# Reflection

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# Connectedness


Refers to a sense of closeness to others that is important to one's sense of belonging and is based on experiences of relationships with others. In the school setting, connectedness can support students in having meaningful relationships and positive feelings towards adults in their schools and neighbourhoods, with their parents or guardians at home, and/or with their peers

(Human Early Learning Partnership, 2022)

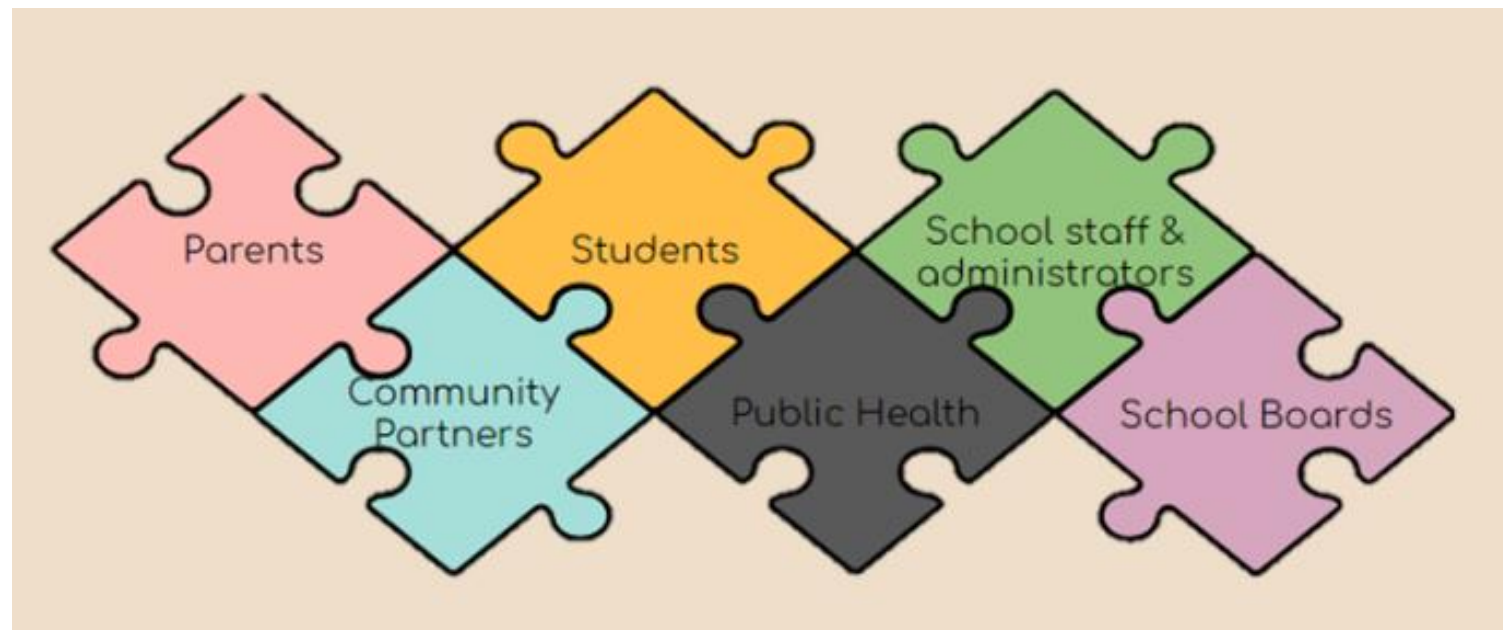
# Connectedness Reduces Risk in Youth:

*Young people do best when they experience strong, positive relationships in all parts of their lives.*

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- Poor mental health issues
  - Experience violence
  - Engage in risky sexual behaviors
  - Use substances

- Increased academic motivation
  - Increased social-emotional growth and learning
  - Increased sense of personal responsibility
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**Social  
Connections  
Include**



# The Parent Role

It's one to look up to!



# How Can I Promote Connectedness With My Student?

## 5 Connectedness Tips

- Express Care
- Challenge Growth
- Provide Support
- Share Power
- Expand Possibilities

# Imagine this scenario...

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*Let's follow this scenario as we discuss our 5 Connectedness tips!*

You are the parent of Sam. Sam is a student who started Grade 9 in September. Sam is transitioning well to High School and is involved in a few extracurriculars such as Band and Ball Hockey. Sam has made a few new friends and is fortunate to have their best friend from elementary school attend the High School.

# 1. Express Care



PAY ATTENTION



PUT DOWN YOUR  
PHONE



BE INTENTIONAL

# Imagine this scenario...

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*How was care expressed?*

*What could be done next to continue the expression of care?*

You had a busy day at work and got home to find Sam sitting in the kitchen looking defeated. You put down your bags and sit next to Sam. Sam doesn't have to say anything for you to know something is wrong. You ask them what is bothering them. Sam shrugs their shoulders and dismisses your question. You know Sam had ball hockey at lunch and band after school. You ask them about their day. Before they can respond your work phone starts going off.

# Expressing Care Can Look Like...



ASKING FOLLOW-UP  
QUESTIONS



FINDING JOY IN  
THEIR INTERESTS

# 2. Challenge Growth



PROMOTE STRIVING FOR  
FUTURE GOALS



CHALLENGE YOUTH TO  
CRITICALLY THINK



UNDERSTANDS MISTAKES  
ARE PART OF THE  
LEARNING PROCESS



PRAISE THEM FOR HARD  
WORK

# Imagine this scenario...

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*How was growth challenged?  
What could be done next to continue the challenge of growth?*

Sam had mentioned that at band practice today the audition signups for the Spring Concert solos were released. Sam opened up and said they were thinking of trying out but they didn't sign up. You ask them why they didn't sign up. Sam responds with saying they felt they were too young, that there were seniors who were better fit for the solo parts. You encourage them to try out anyways as they have been practicing so hard. Sam mentions the sign up for auditions has closed, that it's too late.

# Challenging Growth Can Look Like...





# 3. Provide Support

- Break down skills into smaller steps
- Shift levels of support as needed



# Imagine this scenario...

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*How was support provided?  
What could be done next to continue the provision of support?*

You encourage Sam to email their Band teacher to ask if they could make an exception and work with them to find an alternate time to audition. Sam agrees this could be a good idea but has never had to write an email to a teacher before. They explained they wouldn't know where to begin.

# Providing Support Can Look Like...

Helping

Helping young people when they encounter obstacles

Showing

Showing youth how to ask for help

# 4. Share Power

**Let young people make decisions**

**Help young people think through their options**

**Learn from young people—and show it**

# Imagine this scenario...

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*How was power shared?*

*What could be done next to continue the sharing of power?*

You help Sam finalize the email to their Band teacher. When drafting the email Sam mentioned he would want to propose retaking his audition sometime early next week. But on Monday after school he has ball hockey practice.

Tuesday is his grandfather's 80th birthday party and he promised to help set up after school. Sam quickly becomes frustrated all over again. You help Sam think of alternative times for the audition. Sam suggested to go on Spare Period as this is the same time as the band teacher's prep period.

# Sharing Power Can Look Like...



Include your children in thinking about decisions when making choices



Take time to understand each other's point of view

# 5. Expand Possibilities

Ask questions related to their interests



Connect youth with people, places, ideas, cultures and new skills

# Imagine this scenario...

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*How were possibilities expanded?  
What could be done next to continue expanding possibilities?*

After reflecting on Sam's experience with band, you are realizing that band is more meaningful for them at this time than ball hockey. You have plans for Friday and are not usually interested in the arts, but you want Sam to explore their new interest. The local theatre has a new band coming to town for a weekend concert. You know Sam is usually unsure about trying new activities, but you offer to go with them to encourage trying something new.



# Expanding Possibilities Can Look Like...

1

Challenging youth  
to spend time with  
people who are  
different than  
them

2

Trying new  
experiences

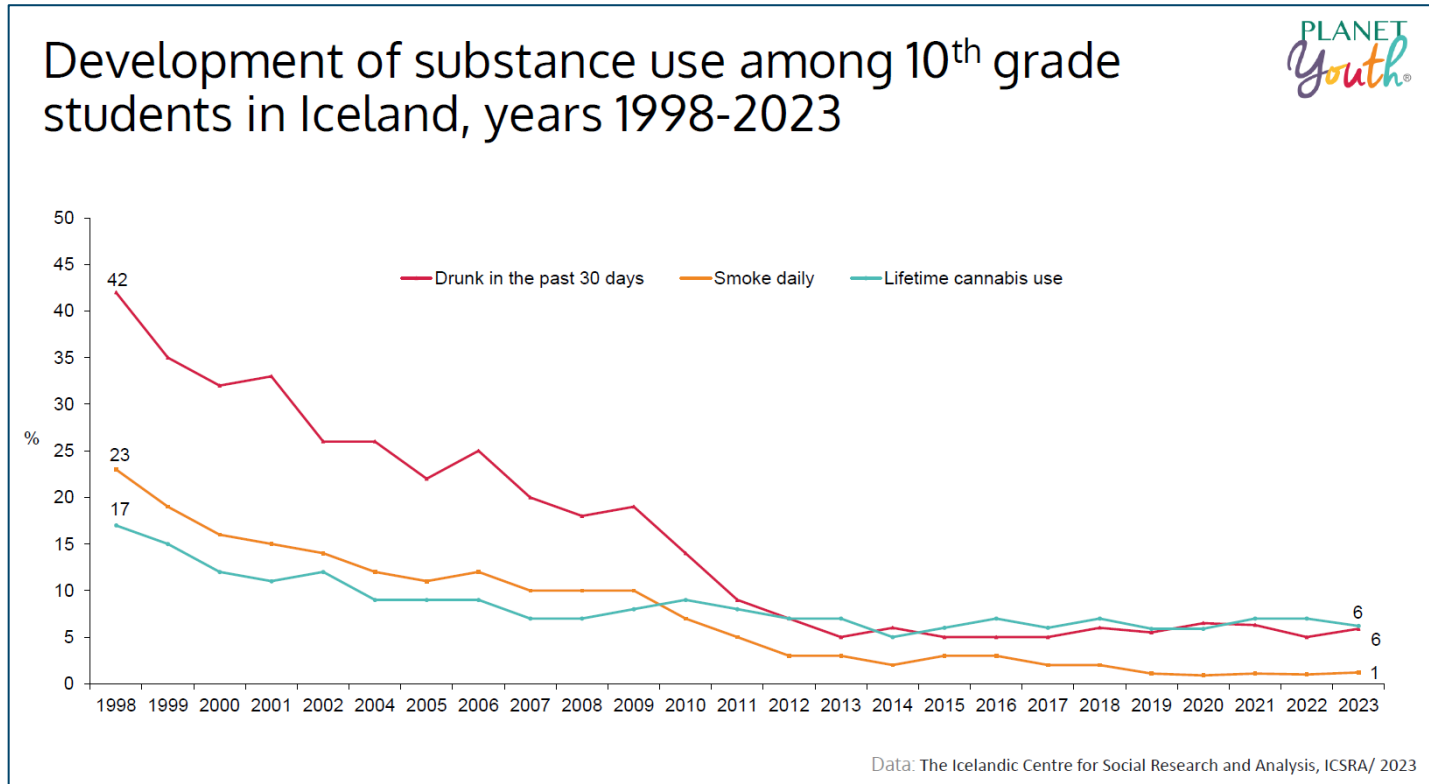


# The Parent Role as a Protective Factor

# Icelandic Prevention Model: Planet Youth

## Guiding Principles:

1. **Society is the patient**
2. **Meaningful connection is a treatment**
3. **Sustained attention as a treatment**
4. **Builds community-specific and institution-level capacity for leadership and problem-solving**
5. **The scope of the solution matches the scope of the problem**



### Domains:

- Family
- Peer group
- School
- Leisure (out of school time)

# The adolescent brain



- The stereotypical ‘issues’ in adolescence have less to do with ‘hormones’ and much more to do with the developing brain
- Significant changes continue from teen years right through the 20’s
- “Neural Growth Pains” lead to a stronger, faster, more sophisticated brain in adulthood

# Risk vs. Reward Analysis

## Adolescents tend to:

- Overestimate the benefits of risky behaviours
- Underestimate the potential harms
- Reward system is “supercharged”; it’s hypersensitive to the rewarding feeling of risk-taking in adolescence
- Risk taking is not always a bad thing e.g. risk of asking your crush to the dance.

## Social risk:

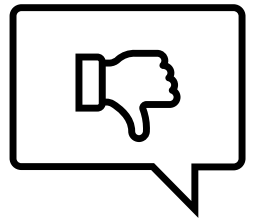
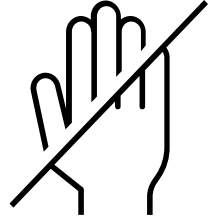
Avoiding social risk might matter more to adolescents than avoiding other types of risks.



# **Refusal Skills & Connected Conversations**

# Refusal skills

1. Just say "No"
2. Suggest an alternate activity
3. Leave the situation
4. Reverse the pressure
5. Use humour
6. Ignore the offer
7. Give an excuse
8. Pass the blame
9. Pull in help
10. Change the subject



# Talking about risky behaviours

- Find the right moment
  - Keep an open mind
  - Put yourself in your teen's shoes
  - Be clear about your goals
  - Be calm and relaxed
  - Be positive
  - Be patient and ready to listen
- Set a positive example
  - Don't lecture
  - Find a comfortable setting
  - Be aware of body language
  - Get support
  - Keep the conversation going



# Communicating Rules

Rules must have reasons

1. To keep them safe
2. To prepare them to navigate a world full of rules

Make sure teens understand why we set rules

- We love them
- To ensure they live within safe and moral boundaries

Set clear expectations for risky behaviours

Determine non-negotiables



# Responding to questions



Encourage curiosity



Find answers to questions in a collaborative manner



Provide age-appropriate, evidence-based information

# Responding to misinformation



**Approach with curiosity:** Instead of shaming them for sharing incorrect information aim for an open conversation.



**Break it down:** There may be layers to what is incorrect or harmful about what is being said. Go step by step to make sure they understand these layers.



**Thinking critically:** If possible, take the opportunity to discuss trustworthiness of sources, in the media or elsewhere. It may be worth asking where they found this information to create a learning moment about critical thinking.

# In summary



Fostering a connected relationship with your child is important



Connection is a protective factor against risky behavior



Engaging in difficult conversations around risk-taking behaviors with open and honest communication is essential



Connectedness can be strengthened between parent and child through important conversations

On Behalf of the School Health Team:

# Thank You



# Questions?

# References

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