

Summary of key points for 'Social influence' and Social Norms approach

Peer influence

Adolescents do not only influence one another in negative 'unhealthy' ways. Peer influence may actually serve to reduce risky use and/or increase the use of harm reduction strategies.

It is erroneous to consider that there is a single 'youth peer culture'. There are multiple peer cultures which change over time and individuals also move between them.

Alcohol Expectancies

Adolescents hold a range of 'expectancies' about alcohol. Positive ones include alcohol's ability to increase confidence and sociability and bind individuals to a social group. Negative ones include violence, aggression and unplanned/unprotected sex.

Expectancies change with increasing drinking experience. Furthermore, girls rate friends' rejection more negatively than do boys, and boys rate becoming tearful more negatively than do girls.

The relevance of norms

Perceived norms – young people tend to overestimate both the prevalence of risky alcohol use (i.e. the descriptive norm) and the social acceptability of it (i.e. the injunctive norm).

Inflated perceptions are a risk factor for problematic alcohol use. Providing normative information to correct misperceptions is an effective strategy.

Normative alcohol education

Alcohol programs that provide norm setting present credible feedback about rates of use (prevalence) and acceptance (approval).

Normative education focus on correcting erroneous perceptions of the prevalence and acceptability of alcohol use. This approach focuses on opinion, as opposed to facts and information about drug use.



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