 Applying strengths and skills

Suggested duration: 50 minutes

This activity has been designed to build on the activity Identifying strengths, skills and strategies.

Course outcomes

1.1 Assess personal strengths and skills to achieve positive outcomes in a range of challenging and changing situations.

4.2 Propose, apply and evaluate solutions to take action to lead and contribute to healthy, safe and meaningful lives.

5.1 Critically analyse situations, attitudes and behaviours that influence independence, health, safety and wellbeing in different contexts.

7.3 Apply skills to take personal responsibility for their actions to protect and enhance the independence, health, safety and wellbeing of others.

What do we want students to know, understand or be able to do?

* Identify solutions to challenging drug and alcohol related situations.
* Evaluate the suitability and effectiveness of a range of skills and strategies designed to assist young people in situations related to drugs and alcohol.
* Assess and apply personal strengths and skills to avoid potentially harmful situations in relation to drugs and alcohol.
* Apply relationship skills in different drug and alcohol related situations, e.g. refusal skills, communication skills and help seeking skills.
* Demonstrate appropriate upstander behaviour in drug and alcohol related situations.
* Demonstrate an ability to select the most appropriate strategy to use in drug and alcohol related situations.

Suggested content

| Learning context | Content |
| --- | --- |
| Relationships  Focus: Developing and maintaining respectful relationships | Applying relationship skills in differing contexts   * appropriate expression of thoughts, emotions and opinions * refusal skills in different contexts and situations, e.g. negotiating consent, drug and alcohol related situations, driver and passenger situations   Valuing and advocating for the rights of self and others   * changing perspectives and challenging stereotypes * respecting others |
| Drugs and alcohol  Focus: Making safe and responsible choices | Identifying solutions and responding to situations which involve the use of drugs and alcohol   * avoidance and assertive behaviours * recognising risk * planning strategies to reduce harm in various situations * assessing and applying personal strengths to respond to situations * recognising influences on decision making and problem solving, e.g. personal, social and cultural values   Responsible behaviour   * protective strategies in drug and alcohol related situations * responsible behaviour in venues * responsible behaviour in other environments, e.g. end of school celebrations, festivals and concerts, public places, parties, moving between venues |

Teaching notes

Creating a safe and supportive learning environment

There are a number of strategies that can be used to create a supportive learning environment which enables students to feel safe to learn and ask questions. They include:

* making students aware at the beginning of Life Ready sessions that disclosing personal information that indicates they may be at risk of harm will be reported to the school principal in all instances. This includes personal disclosures related to instances of abuse, drug use, neglect or sexual activity under the legal age of consent.
* being aware that some parts of Life Ready can be confronting and sensitive for some students.
* enabling students to withdraw if they find issues personally confronting to protect them from making harmful disclosures. Equally, it is important to be prepared for issues that arise as a result of a student making a public disclosure in the classroom.

More information on creating a safe and supportive learning environment can be found on the [Life Ready website.](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/key-learning-areas/pdhpe/life-ready)

Evaluating resources before use

Preview and evaluate all strategies, resources and teaching and learning approaches in full before use with students to determine suitability for student learning needs, stage of development and local school context. Consider the age, maturity, cultural background, sexuality, gender, sex, health and other characteristics of students in your care. Apply professional judgements to all strategies, teaching and learning approaches and resources including audiovisual materials (e.g. videos, media clips and YouTube), interactive web-based content (e.g. games, quizzes and websites) and texts.

Use the [resource review flowchart](https://schoolsequella.det.nsw.edu.au/file/083acd3a-daca-4307-9afe-bc6c888f694a/1/final-resource-flowchart-html5.zip/index.html) to decide about the suitability of teaching and learning resources.

Materials should be reviewed in full and endorsed by the school principal before use in NSW government schools.

Communication with parents and caregivers

Some aspects of Life Ready may be viewed as sensitive or controversial, such as learning about abuse, child protection, drugs, respectful relationships, sexual health, sexuality and violence. Inform parents and carers, prior to the occasion, of the specific details of the Life Ready program, so that parents and caregivers have time to exercise their rights of withdrawing their child from a particular session. In this regard, a parents or caregiver’s wish must be respected.

Establishing how parents and caregivers will be informed about programs and involved in consultation is a school-based decision. Where parents and caregivers indicate they wish to withdraw their child from a program it is useful to negotiate which parts of the Life Ready program they are concerned about. A sample information letter is available on the [Life Ready website](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/key-learning-areas/pdhpe/life-ready).

Learning experiences

Activity one – Case study (20 minutes)

1. Revise with the group some of the strengths, skills and strategies that people can use in difficult, challenging or awkward situations involving drugs or alcohol. Ideas can be found on the student handout.
2. Students work in small groups. Students choose one scenario from the list below, or develop their own drug or alcohol related scenario based on issues that are current in their local community.
3. For their chosen scenario, students complete the following tasks:
   1. choose a strategy that would be suitable for the character to use in the scenario to enable them to achieve a positive outcome.
   2. identify the strengths and skills that are needed to effectively implement this strategy. Why are these strengths and skills important? How would these strengths and skills improve the effectiveness of the strategy or support how the strategy was used?
   3. act out the scenario in small groups. Through this role play students in the group should show the character in the scenario effectively applying the chosen strategy. This should include:

* what they would say.
* where they could go.
* who they could go to for support.

For example: Scenario 1 strategy – Avoidance

Take the drink, thank them for it and walk away. Don’t drink any of it, and tip it out as soon as they are not looking. Find friends that you trust, and stay with them.

1. Invite groups to present their role play to the whole group. Allow sufficient time for discussion of key messages after each role play. Discussion may include:
   1. did the role play show a suitable strategy for managing the situation?
   2. was the strategy applied effectively? Why or why not? Provide reasons.
   3. what other strengths, skills and strategies could be used successfully in this situation?
   4. what else could the character do to make sure that they and their friends were safe in this situation?

Strengths, skills and strategies

Sometimes, young people might find themselves in a situation where they are not comfortable. It is important for young people to have a range of strengths, skills and strategies that can be used in different situations to remain safe and increase the chance of a positive outcome.

Strategies

**Refusal skills**

Say no in a way that shows you mean it but without disrespecting others

**Judge the situation**

Assess the situation and trust your judgement. Be flexible and choose the options to maximize positive outcomes.

**Distancing**

Step back from a situation or reduce contact and interaction with people involved. It requires knowing your own boundaries regarding your physical and emotional “comfort zone”.

**Make an excuse**

Give a reason, whether real or not, to get out of the situation if you feel unsure or unsafe.

**Modification**

Make changes to the physical or social environment or modify behaviour to enhance safety and wellbeing for self and others.

**Awareness**

Pay attention to as much in the environment as possible. Using your senses (sight and hearing particularly) to be alert to changes in the environment and being prepared to reduce surprises.

**Assertiveness**

Clearly state your needs, wants and feelings whilst still being respectful of others

**Planning**

Forward think to put decisions into action and lead to positive outcomes. Requires flexibility to adapt plans when situations change.

**Avoidance**

Prevent an unwanted situation by avoiding it or leaving it. Requires you to trust your judgement or your feelings about a situation.

Strengths

**Leadership**

Can organise and encourage others to act

**Courage**

Takes action even when the situation is awkward, or they feel anxiety or fear

**Empathy**

Aware of the needs and feelings of others

**Kindness**

Shows generosity and a willingness to share and help others

**Respect**

Values the diversity in a person or group and challenges own personal beliefs and attitudes

**Caution**

Makes decisions carefully, considering all the options and needs of self and others

**Self control**

Can control actions and stick to decisions

**Persistence**

Keeps trying regardless of previous experiences or success

**Honesty**

Tells the truth regardless of the situation

**Sense of purpose**

Believes that they can contribute to the world in a meaningful way

**Perspective**

Comes up with good advice, considers the big picture, weighs up alternatives and outcomes before acting

**Modesty**

Doesn’t brag about achievements or show off

**Humour**

Sees the light side and helps people laugh

**Creativity**

Comes up with different ways to address situations

**Enthusiasm**

Brings energy and positivity to all situations

**Optimism**

Looks on the positive side of things

**Forgiveness**

Let’s go of anger and resentment and moves on without holding a grudge

**Loyalty**

Always there for others

Knowledge and Skills

Able to put forward a convincing argument

Able to distract people from what they are about to do without making them angry

Able to avoid or negotiate conflict with unreasonable people

Able to provide basic first aid in emergency situations

Able to listen to others, understand the needs and circumstance of others and expresses that understanding

Able to assert own point of view

Able to make meaningful connections with others

Able to assert own point of view

Able to identify people and situations which might be difficult of dangerous

Able to propose alternative when situations are not what is expected or what suits

Knows how to plan for and take action to protect self and others, even when plans change

Able to asses own abilities and use these abilities to work and cooperate with others

Able to seek help where required

Able to influence and persuade others positively

Able to encourage people to look out for themselves

Able to organise safe events and safe travel plans even when other plans fall through

Able to manage emotions effectively and appropriately

Able to make clean decision after assessing alternatives and evaluating outcomes

Able to communicate clearly with others and share thoughts and emotions appropriately

Able to think positively

Able to plan, set and evaluate goals

Scenarios

1. You are at a party. You brought your own alcohol to drink but you have none left. An older student from your school offers you a Vodka Cruiser. The top is off, but the bottle is full. You don’t think you should drink it.
2. You have just started a job. Some of the other people you work with, including your boss, smoke in breaks. They offer one to you. You don’t want to smoke, and also don’t want to put up with breathing in their smoke.
3. You play in a team and you are the only one who is not 18. When you win, the team gets together to celebrate, and most of the players drink alcohol. Some of them encourage you to be one of the team and have a drink too. You don’t want to have any.
4. Your friend has agreed to be the designated driver one night, but you see them having a few drinks during the night. When it is time to go home, your friend says they are fine to drive but you disagree.
5. You are at a Schoolies week celebration. You are partying on the beach with a group of friends and other people that you have just met. Your friend is drunk. One of the guys that you have just met says that he will look after your friend so that you can keep having a good time. You don’t think you should leave them with someone you don’t really know.
6. You are at a friend’s house and no-one else is home. Your friend suggests that you both have a smoke. You have tried marijuana before, but you didn’t like it and don’t want to use it again.
7. You are walking home after a night out with a group of friends. You have all been drinking, and some of the group still have their last drink with them. Some of the group start throwing bottles onto the road, kicking over letter boxes and making lots of noise. You don’t feel comfortable with the way your friends are behaving.
8. You have gone out clubbing on a Friday night. You have already had a few drinks when your friend’s partner suggests that you all take some ecstasy. Everyone else agrees, but you don’t want to join in.
9. Your sister has been using Ice and you are worried that she is becoming addicted. She tells you that she has been given a fine by the police for possession of illicit drugs, and asks you if you can lend her the money to pay for it. You don’t want to give her the money, because you think she needs to take responsibility for herself and you are not sure if she will use it to pay the fine.
10. You are leaving a pub when someone in your group starts mouthing off at another person outside. They are getting really aggressive, and you don’t want them to ruin a good night by getting into a fight.