

**THE  
FACTS.  
YOUR  
FUTURE.**

# **INSTRUCTOR GUIDE**

**Lesson 2:  
Building  
Coping Skills**

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**TheFactsYourFuture.org**





# 2.1 OVERVIEW

## Before You Begin

This guide is intended for use when administering *The Facts. Your Future. Substance Abuse Curriculum* in a classroom setting. The curriculum is designed to comply with and meet the Florida Substance Use and Abuse Standards (HE.912.SUA). The target audience is youth in grades 9-12.

Prior to administering this lesson, it is recommended that instructors have reviewed the following:

- *The Facts. Your Future. Drug Facts for Instructors*
  - Fentanyl
  - Alcohol
  - Marijuana
  - Vaping
  - Prescription Drugs
- *The Facts. Your Future. Substance Abuse Curriculum - Lesson 1: Defining Choices Instructor Guide*
- *The Facts. Your Future. Substance Abuse Curriculum - Lesson 2: Building Coping Skills Instructor Guide*





It is recommended that instructors have resources and information available for organizations that provide drug use and abuse counseling and treatment services to teens in need. Information is located at the end of this guide and at [TheFactsYourFuture.org](https://TheFactsYourFuture.org).

Below is a list of equipment and materials suggested to facilitate *The Facts. Your Future*. Lesson 2 – Building Coping Skills:

- Computer (optional)
- Whiteboard or blackboard
- Screen large enough for multiple participants to view the resources
- Participant copies of Lesson 2 activities and worksheets
- Blank paper
- Post-it notes
- Vision Board Activity Materials (e.g., magazines, photos, and other art supplies to help bring the vision board to life)

For each lesson, a sample script is provided for the instructor along with a list of recommended resources.

## Notes

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## Overview

In Lesson 2, participants will learn that healthy coping strategies can help to build resilience, while unhealthy coping strategies create risk for long-term harm. As participants begin to think about what is important to them and how this impacts their personal boundaries, they will also learn about refusal skills to help them build the confidence to hold to healthy boundaries and avoid risky behaviors, including opioids and other drug use.

## Learning Objectives

By the end of Lesson 2, participants will be able to:

1. Define resilience and understand how to increase resilience through developing healthy relationships.
2. Identify stressors and be able to differentiate between healthy and unhealthy coping strategies.
3. Know how to define, set, and enforce their personal boundaries.
4. Understand what refusal skills are and know how they are used.

## Standards

Lesson 2 addresses the following Substance Use and Abuse Florida Health Education Standards:

- HE.912.SUA.2
- HE.912.SUA.4

## Timing

Lesson 2 is 40 minutes long. This curriculum is designed with built-in flexibility, allowing instructors the ability to adapt the material to the time frame they have to deliver the content. Recommendations are provided for guidance about how to implement each section.

## What's Included

Included in Lesson 2 are the following instructional and supplemental materials:

- **Instructor Guide** – This guide includes recommendations for implementation, examples for learning objectives, video links, and sample worksheets and activities included in Lesson 2.
- **Participant Worksheets** – Lesson 2 includes several participant engagement activities and worksheets. These resources can be downloaded and printed for distribution at: [TheFactsYourFuture.org/curriculum](https://TheFactsYourFuture.org/curriculum)

## Key Terms

- **Resilience** – Resilience is the ability to adapt, cope, and thrive in the face of tough or stressful situations.
- **Stressors** – Thoughts, feeling, situations, or events that cause feelings of stress.
- **External Stress** – Stress coming from forces or influences that are not easily controlled.
- **Internal Stress** – Self-induced stress coming from personal thoughts or expectations.
- **Response Tendency** – How an individual typically responds to everyday stressors.

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**Standard 2.1** - Analyze the legal, mental and social consequences of underage consumption of alcohol.

**Standard 2.2** - Distinguish how external factors, including industry practices, can influence behaviors related to tobacco, nicotine use, and/or vaping.

**Standard 4.1** - Propose strategies that can reduce health risks for self and others for potential pressures at the college or career level.

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In 2023, 64% of Florida high school students reported experiencing at least one adverse childhood experience.

- **Coping Strategies** – Actions and thoughts to help deal with stressful events and make them less uncomfortable.
- **Healthy Coping Strategies** – Actions and thoughts that help better manage and respond to stress and build resilience.
- **Unhealthy Coping Strategies** – Actions and thoughts that may offer a sense of relief when responding to stress through avoidance or escape, but typically lead to harmful behaviors.
- **Personal Boundary** – A limit set that lets other people know what is okay and not okay to say and do to you, or around you.
- **Refusal Skills** – A strategy that can be used to say no to peer pressure, such as using opioids and other substances.
- **Personal Brand** – The way you want to represent yourself to the world.
- **Physical Boundary** – Physical boundaries are boundaries that refer to physical space and touch.
- **Emotional boundary** – Emotional boundaries are boundaries that refer to feelings including limitations on when to share and not share personal information.
- **Digital boundary** – Digital boundaries are boundaries that refer to what a person is okay doing, seeing, and feeling while using technology and how they want to be treated by others.



## Note To Instructors

In this section, participants will be introduced to the concepts of resilience, stressors, healthy and unhealthy coping strategies, and setting and maintaining boundaries.

Resilience could easily be a lesson by itself. For purposes of this lesson, resilience can be thought of as a lens through which to view the key concepts introduced in Lesson 2 (e.g., stressors, boundaries, and coping skills). **Resilience** is defined as the ability to adapt, cope, and thrive in the face of tough or stressful situations. In 2023, statewide research indicates that 64% of Florida high school students have experienced at least one adverse childhood experience, such as exposure to drug abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, or family violence in the home.<sup>1</sup> Childhood adversity has been widely shown to increase the likelihood of young people developing a drug use or mental health challenge in their lifetime. Even without knowing a participant's history, it is safe to assume that many youth have experienced, or will experience, adversity and can therefore benefit from building resilience.

While the figures around prevalence of childhood adversity might be daunting, at its core, a conversation about resilience is a conversation about hope. It is important for instructors and participants to know that resilience is not innate or predetermined, and is a skill that can be learned and built over time. Another key aspect about resilience is the importance of fostering healthy relationships as a way to increase resilience. Research has consistently shown that supportive relationships with family, teachers, and other adults can be critical in building resilience in youth.<sup>2</sup> Helping youth to identify the healthy, stable relationships in their life can lead to less risky behaviors now and in the future.

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1 <https://www.flhealthcharts.gov/ChartsDashboards/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=SurveyData.FYSAS.Dataviewer&cid=0001>

2 National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2015). Supportive Relationships and Active Skill-Building Strengthen the Foundations of Resilience: Working Paper No. 13. Retrieved from [www.developingchild.harvard.edu](http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu).

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To assist in the development of more resilient and healthy youth, the Florida Department of Education has developed a Resiliency Toolkit available at [https://www.cpalms.org/standards/Resiliency\\_Toolkit.aspx](https://www.cpalms.org/standards/Resiliency_Toolkit.aspx). You can also visit [buildresiliency.org](http://buildresiliency.org) for more resources.





# 2.2 RESILIENCE

## Overview

In this section, participants will be introduced to resilience and that it is a skill that everyone can learn.

 **KEY TAKEAWAY:** Resilience is a skill that can be learned.

 **TIME:** 2 minutes

 **RESOURCES NEEDED:**

- Instructor Script

## INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT

 We've all been through difficult times:

- Trouble keeping up in school
- A fight with a friend
- The loss of a pet
- Moving to a new town where you didn't know anyone
- A rough breakup
- Loss of a loved one

You might have initially felt like there was no way you'd ever feel like yourself again; the self you were before the big event. Over time, you adjusted to your new normal and remembered things that made you laugh and feel like yourself. Maybe someone even said to you, "You'll get through this, you're so resilient." And, you did.



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13 is the average age of first time drug and alcohol use, which is why drug education is **more critical for this age group.**

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**Reflection Question:**  
Can you think of a time when you feel that you displayed resilience?



But what does it mean to be *resilient*? And why does it matter?

**Resilience** is the ability to adapt, cope, and thrive in the face of tough or stressful situations. Unlike something you are born with or not, resilience is something you can learn, practice, and increase over time.

We're starting today's conversation with resilience because it affects how you deal with stressful situations in your life - whether positive or negative, healthy or unhealthy. And, it impacts your choices about opioids and drug use. So, even if dealing with stress has been difficult in the past, you can learn skills to help you better handle the challenges you face. That sounds great, right? But how do you do it?

There are many ways to build resilience, and one of the most important ways is having supportive relationships in your life. Relationships with family, teachers, other adults, and friends can be critical in building resilience. We will discuss this more in Lesson 3.

There are other factors that help build resilience like using positive coping strategies, implementing problem-solving skills to tackle complex situations, having opportunities for fun and rest, and getting perspective on a situation by asking yourself questions like:

- What would you tell a friend in your situation?
- Will this matter in a month from now? A year from now?
- What about this situation CAN you control?


Ultimately, when we talk about resilience, it's important to remember it's something you build. This means it takes time. Everyone can build resilience, but we all have different starting points. So it's important to start where you are. This means if you've previously responded differently or in less healthy ways, just knowing this can help you make different decisions. Having awareness about what you'd like to do differently in the future is a critical step in changing behaviors from less healthy to healthier moving forward.

But before we talk more about how we respond or cope with difficult events, let's define something we all face...*stress*.


# 2.3 STRESSORS

## Overview

In this section, participants will learn about everyday challenges called stressors. These stressors can be internal or external. Participants will consider how they respond to the everyday stressors in their lives and examine whether they are healthy or unhealthy responses.

 **KEY TAKEAWAY:** Understanding how we respond to stress can help us develop healthy coping strategies.

 **TIME:** 12 minutes

 **RESOURCES NEEDED:**

- Instructor Script
- Participants will need blank paper and a pen or pencil
- Activity: Your Response Tendency Worksheet

## INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT

**Instructor Note:** For the purpose of this lesson and curriculum, stressors refer to **everyday stress** rather than traumatic stress. **Everyday stress** may refer to common situations and events many young people face such as an upcoming exam, a fight with a friend, fear of getting in trouble, etc. Young people who suffer from **traumatic stress** have been exposed to one or more traumatic events (e.g., abuse, death of a parent, natural disaster) in their lifetime and develop persistent responses that





affect their daily lives even after the traumatic event is over (*National Center for Traumatic Stress Network, SAMHSA*). While there may be some similarities in how individuals respond to everyday and traumatic stress, responses to traumatic stress are usually immobilizing, automatic, and instinctual. Responses to everyday stress may follow patterns that can be identified and adjusted based on the situation and resilience of the individual.



Everyday **stressors**, just like the name implies, can be anything that causes you to feel stressed. This could be thoughts, feelings, situations, events...really anything. Some stressors seem common among your friends and people you know, like a big test coming up or having a fight with a friend, but stressors can also be unique to you such as family expectations or planning for your future.

There are different categories or types of stress too. To keep it simple, let's divide stressors into internal and external.

Think back to Lesson 1 where you learned the different influences in your life and how they impact your decisions.

**External stressors** come from outside influences that you likely can't control and can include:

- **Academic stress:** schoolwork and tests
- **Social stress:** making and keeping friends, deciding which party to go to, bullying, and more
- **Family stress:** a sick loved one, your relationship with your parents and siblings, etc.
- **World events:** what we see and hear about in the news, like community violence
- **Significant life changes:** a move, changing schools, graduating from high school, or the death of a loved one

**Internal stressors** are a bit harder to notice because no one may know they're there except you. They can include things like:



- The expectations you have of yourself. For example, your response to academic and social stressors are tied into your own internal expectations.
- How you see yourself and how you think others see you.
- Making decisions about opioids and drug use or other risky behaviors.

We all have stressors in our life, so let’s talk about what’s stressing you out right now.

**38% of disciplinary actions in Florida schools involve drugs and illicit substances.**

### Activity: What's Stressing You Out Right Now?

- **Purpose:** The purpose of this activity is to help participants identify stressors in their life.
- **Method:** Instructor-led discussion and participant reflection
- **Instructions:**
  1. Instructor directs participants to take out a blank piece of paper and something to write with.
  2. Instructor asks the first question (see below) and instructs participants to respond out loud. Option: Write participant responses on the board where everyone can see them.
  3. Instructor directs participants to use their blank piece of paper for the remaining reflection questions (follow prompts in the Instructor Script).

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## INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT

**Instructor Note:** Participants may be reluctant to discuss personal stressors. To that end, this activity begins as an instructor-led discussion asking for the group’s responses aloud. Then, it moves to a guided self-reflection/journaling activity where participants write down their personal responses for themselves. **Instructor prompts** have been included after each question to guide discussion, if needed.



Before we begin, make sure you have a blank piece of paper and something to write with.

For the first question, let's discuss as a group.

### **1. What stresses you out the most, in general?**

Some examples may be:

- Giving a presentation
- Family members
- Feeling left out
- Needing help to pay bills at home

Now, on your blank piece of paper, draw a circle in the center of the page and label it Stress. In that circle, write down your answer(s) to the following question:

### **2. What is something that is stressing you out right now?**

Think about your week and list one or more things that are weighing on your mind. This could be a specific test, an upcoming game or event, a conversation you need to have...anything. No one will see your answers.

Now that you've thought about something that's stressing you out, how are you feeling? On your paper, above the circle, draw a line coming from the Stress circle and at the top of the line, write your answer to this question (draw one line for each response to the question below). Note: You can have multiple responses.

### **3. How do you know when you are feeling stressed?**

If you're not sure you can tell, here are some examples:

- Feeling angry or irritable
- Having trouble focusing
- Your mood changes
- You get a headache

If this is hard for you to answer, think about how your best friend knows something is bothering you. Has someone else you're close to noticed you are stressed?



If you can tell that you're starting to feel stressed, now ask yourself:

**4. What is your typical response to feeling stressed?**

This is your go-to response and can include things like:

- Talking to a friend
- Hiding out
- Going for a walk
- Using drugs or alcohol
- Eating junk food

On your paper, below the circle, draw a line coming from the circle, and at the bottom of the line write some of your typical responses (one line per response). You can list more than one.

It's important to acknowledge that some of your go-to responses may not be healthy, so it's helpful to think through these things when you're calm. Next question:

**5. Do you think this response is healthy or unhealthy?**

Draw a circle around any response you think is healthy and a square around any response you think is unhealthy.

Now, turn your piece of paper over and make two columns. Label one column Healthy and the other column Unhealthy and answer the following:

**6. What do you think makes it a healthy response? An unhealthy response?**

Write down all the things you can think of that might make your responses to stress either healthy or unhealthy. Do you notice any type of pattern or tendency in your responses, whether healthy or unhealthy? If so, draw a line between responses that seem connected to you.

Knowing how you typically respond to stress can help you implement new strategies if your go-to response

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**It only takes two salt-sized grains of fentanyl to kill someone.**

**Notes**

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isn't healthy. Also, you can better notice signs that you're starting to become stressed and address it earlier.

Let's take a quick self-assessment to see if you notice any patterns in how you typically respond to stress.

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## Activity: Your Response Tendency Worksheet

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Take a moment to pause and give participants an opportunity to notice how they are feeling following the discussion on stressors. Provide time and space for participants to discuss further, if needed.

- **Purpose:** The purpose of this activity is to help participants identify tendencies when responding to everyday stressors.
- **Method:** Self-Assessment / Quiz (non-graded)
- **Instructions:**
  1. Instructors should print and provide participants with a copy of the Your Response Tendency Worksheet.
  2. See worksheet for explanation and instructions.
  3. Participants should complete worksheet on their own.
  4. Worksheet should take three to five minutes.

**Instructor Note:** Consider using the following discussion prompts in conjunction with the Your Response Tendency Worksheet. Ask participants to verbally identify how they think they respond to stress to see how well they know themselves.



1. Now that you have completed the worksheet, did anything about your tendency surprise you?
2. Now I will read aloud all of the tendency response descriptions:
  - Bulls tend to respond to stress by charging forward – addressing or confronting the situation head-on, often without thinking too much about the consequences.
  - Ostriches tend to respond to stress by putting their head in the sand. They may withdraw, escape, or try and avoid the situation altogether.
  - Possums tend to respond to stress by playing dead – often feeling stuck or numb to the situation and unable to move forward or take action.
  - Fawns tend to respond to stress by going with the



- flow – asking for help first, seeking the approval of others, and trying to keep the peace.
- 3. Do you still feel your response tendency sounds like you?
- 4. Do you have examples of how your response tendency can be used to say no to using opioids or other drugs?

**Instructor Note:** Consider asking one representative from each of the four response tendencies to give an example of how their tendency might respond to a scenario in which they're being pressured to use opioids or other drugs.

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FUTURE.**

Name: .....

## YOUR RESPONSE TENDENCY

Everyone responds to stressors differently. It's helpful to understand how you tend to respond to stressful situations because this can influence your actions. If you tend to respond in a way that isn't helpful, you can implement coping strategies to help you positively advocate for yourself and others.

This self-assessment will identify your response tendency and help you write an advocacy action plan in Lesson 3.

**INSTRUCTIONS**

Consider the following scenarios and circle the answer that best describes you. Try to answer what your likely response would be, not what you think it should be.

**Q1 When faced with a challenging assignment or test, my initial reaction is to:**

- A. Dive in and start working on it immediately.
- B. Feel overwhelmed and unsure where to begin.
- C. Avoid thinking about it until the last minute.
- D. Seek help or guidance from others to navigate the task.

**Q2 If I experience conflict with a friend or family member, my gut response is to:**

- A. Address the issue directly and try to resolve it.
- B. Give myself some space to process my feelings.
- C. Pretend like everything is fine to avoid confrontation.
- D. Seek support or advice from someone I trust.

**Q3 When dealing with a major change or unexpected challenge, I tend to:**

- A. Adapt quickly and look for solutions to overcome the obstacle.
- B. Feel anxious or overwhelmed by the uncertainty of the situation.
- C. Avoid thinking about the situation altogether and distract myself.
- D. Seek reassurance or guidance from others about how to proceed.

**Q4 If I have a lot on my plate and feel overwhelmed, my typical response is to:**

- A. Prioritize tasks and create a plan to tackle them one by one.
- B. Feel unsure where to start and avoid dealing with it until I really have to.
- C. Ignore the stress and distract myself with other activities.
- D. Reach out to friends or family for support or assistance.

**Q5 If someone offers you opioids or other substances at a party or social gathering, how would you likely refuse (i.e., say no)?**

- A. Firmly decline and explain that you're not interested in using substances.
- B. Ignore the question, bring up another topic, or make a joke that distracts.
- C. Plan what you would say before you're in a situation to say no so that you do not feel stuck.
- D. Seek support from friends or leave the situation to avoid temptation and peer pressure.

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Calculate Your Response Tendency →

**Notes**

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# 2.4 COPING STRATEGIES

## Overview

In this section, participants will dive deeper into healthy and unhealthy coping strategies. Participants will develop their own coping strategy toolkit to give them immediate access to ideas that can help them respond to everyday stress, develop boundaries, and build the refusal skills needed to resist risky behaviors such as using opioids and other substances.

-  **KEY TAKEAWAY:** Develop healthy coping strategies that can be implemented anywhere.
-  **TIME:** 7 minutes
-  **RESOURCES NEEDED:**
  - Instructor Script
  - Post-it notes
  - Large notepad or poster board (optional)

## INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT

-  Now that you have a good understanding of how you typically respond to stress, or your response tendency, let's explore coping strategies in detail.

**Coping strategies** are things we *do* and *think* to help us deal with stressful events to help make them less uncomfortable. You may have learned from the Your Response Tendency Worksheet that you tend to react one way most of the time. Maybe you saw that you have a tendency to respond one



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**Drug overdose deaths of Florida's youth up to age 17 increased 43% from 2020 to 2021.**



way in some situations, like with family, and another way when the stressful situation involves your friends. This is all helpful information as you think about how you tend to respond and can compare it to how you want to respond.

Coping strategies vary from person to person and some are healthier than others.

**Healthy coping strategies** build the skills of resilience, making you better able to respond to different kinds of challenges. It can be simple things like taking a hot shower or bath, going for a walk, talking to a good friend or family member, or doing a deep breathing exercise.

**Unhealthy coping strategies** can provide short-term relief, but they typically lead to harmful situations. These types of coping strategies might include finding ways to get away from (escape) or avoid the negative emotions you feel instead of helping you process these feelings and move forward. Unhealthy coping strategies, like vaping, using





opioids or other substances, or doing dangerous activities, can make stress and other aspects of your life much worse, and result in serious harm or death..

## Activity: Healthy Coping Strategies Collage

- **Purpose:** The purpose of this activity is to help participants curate a variety of healthy coping strategies they can use when facing everyday stress.
- **Method:** Group Discussion
- **Instructions:**
  1. Instructor provides participants with multiple post-it notes.
  2. Instructor asks participants to tell the class what some of their healthy coping strategies are for dealing with stress.
  3. On the post-it notes, ask the participants to write down ideas from the group that sound good to them or their own ideas.
  4. At the end, have the participants put all their post-it notes in one place to make a collage (e.g., on the wall of the classroom, a poster board, a large writing tablet, etc.) and keep it in the classroom for them to see regularly (Note: This can be a good daily reminder for youth).



When thinking of positive coping strategies, think of things you can do anywhere and with other people around. As we discuss possible strategies as a class, take a few of these post-it notes and write down a positive coping strategy on each note.

**Instructor Note:** After the following questions, examples are provided to help participants think through healthy strategies they can use anywhere.



### 1. What is a healthy coping strategy you can use anywhere?

Some examples may be:

- Taking slow, deep breaths
- Counting to 100
- Closing your eyes and paying attention to how your body feels (e.g., tense, tired, etc.)

**Overdoses kill more U.S. citizens than breast cancer, guns, and car crashes combined.**

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Ask participants to identify their own examples of healthy and unhealthy coping strategies using the examples as a prompt.



- Saying or writing positive affirmations
- Making a to-do list

## 2. What is a healthy coping strategy you can use at home?

Some examples may be:


- Talking to a friend or relative
- Eating a favorite snack
- Watching a funny or uplifting video
- Walking barefoot or putting your feet in the grass
- Playing with a pet
- Taking a short nap
- Yoga or other movement
- Listening to music

Now that we have some ideas written down, let's put them all together (on the wall, poster board, table, etc.) so we can all see them. Which of these options do you like the best? Sometimes, with healthy coping skills, you may need to try three or four things before you start to feel better, and that's ok. The sooner you begin to implement healthy coping strategies when you start to feel overwhelmed, anxious, frustrated, or sad, the better they will work, and the more resilient you will become.

# 2.5 BOUNDARIES

## Overview

In this section, participants will learn how to identify and set personal boundaries – another important coping strategy. They will begin to make the connection between their personal boundaries and refusal skills and learn the importance of practicing what they will say or do when faced with situations that challenge their personal boundaries.


 **KEY TAKEAWAY:** Knowing boundaries makes saying no easier.

 **TIME:** 7 minutes

 **RESOURCES NEEDED:**

- Instructor Script

## INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT

 Identifying and setting boundaries with other people is also a positive coping strategy because it helps you protect your time, energy and emotions.

A personal boundary is a limit you set that lets other people know what is okay and not okay to say and do to you or around you. With or without knowing it, you've likely set many boundaries in your life. Some examples are:



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42% of pills tested for fentanyl contained at least 2 mg of fentanyl, considered a potentially lethal dose.



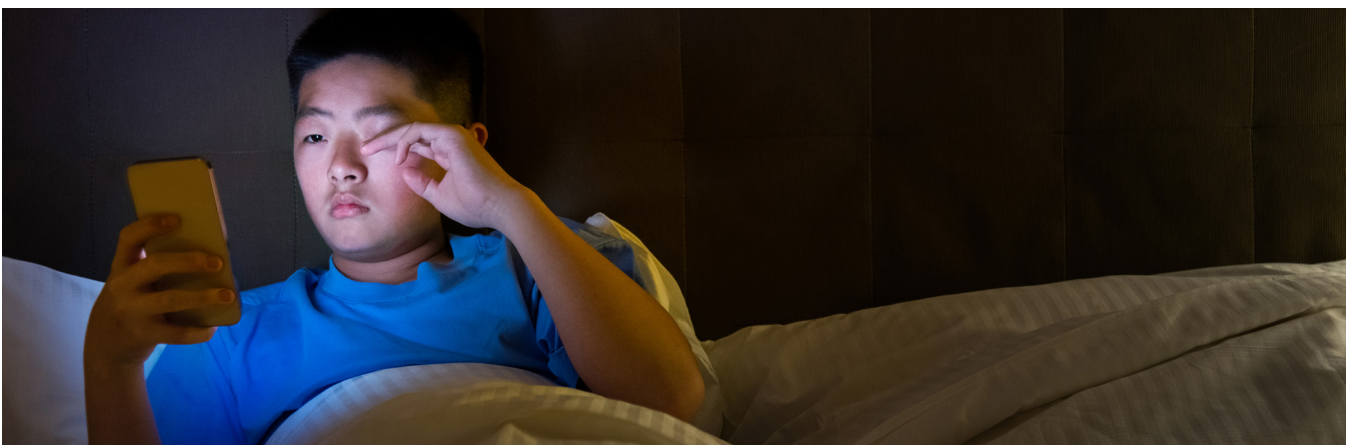
- Maybe someone sat too close to you, and you moved over to give you both more room. You were setting a **physical boundary**.
- Maybe someone was spreading rumors about a friend, and you spoke up letting them know that wasn't ok. You set an **emotional boundary** here.
- Maybe you blocked or unfollowed someone on social media who posted rude or derogatory messages. This is one example of creating a **digital boundary**.

Your boundaries may vary depending on the person or the situation, and they will likely change over time.

Sometimes we set boundaries through our actions – like giving a fist bump to someone coming in for a hug. Other times, it's important to be more explicit about our boundaries, like saying directly, "I go to bed at 10:00 when I have to wake up early the next morning for school. Please don't text me in the middle of the night."

Setting boundaries may feel challenging and unfamiliar at first, similar to starting a new workout or hobby. The first time you try, it might seem impossible.

When possible, it's helpful to think about what your boundaries are *before* you're in a situation where you need to enforce them.





**Instructor Note:** Consider using the following discussion prompts to help participants understand the concept of boundaries and practice enforcing boundaries before they are confronted with a personal boundary violation.

## Instructor Discussion Prompts



Let's talk through a situation where it might be helpful to: (1) think about what your personal boundaries are, and (2) how to enforce them...before you need to.

### Example Scenario:

It was a regionals baseball game, and Javier got the game-ending out as shortstop to win the game. Afterward, Javier is invited to a bonfire to celebrate. He is still feeling pain in his hip and leg from the fall as he lunged to catch the last out.

As he left the dugout, he didn't realize he was limping a bit on the way to the parking lot. David, a senior, noticed Javier's pain as they walked to their cars. He offered Javier a couple of pills that he had left over from his recent wrist surgery, telling him it should take the edge off so he could actually enjoy the celebrations that night and then to take another to be ready for tomorrow's game. "You can't be a starter if you're hurt tomorrow – you've got to mentally stay in the game," David says. Javier's unsure how to say no, even though he wants to. He ends up taking the pills and wondering how to act if David asks him to take another before the game the next day.

1. Why might it be helpful to think about saying no in advance?
2. Why might we sometimes say yes when we really want to say no?

### Debrief:

Javier knew his personal boundary: He didn't want to use drugs. But he did it anyway. Why? Partly because he was unprepared to say no. Knowing what you will say or do in relation to a personal boundary before you are confronted with a violation of that boundary is known as a **refusal skill**. This specific strategy is critical when it comes to setting boundaries around things like deciding to use opioids or other substances.

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**Using even prescription drugs without consulting a doctor can result in medical complications and even death.**

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# 2.6 REFUSAL SKILLS

## Overview

In this section, participants will apply what they have learned so far when confronted with a personal boundary violation. They will learn the importance of identifying what is important to them, practicing refusal skills (bold refusal skills), and sticking to their boundaries. They will learn how to make this easier by identifying what is important to them.



**KEY TAKEAWAY:** Know your why.



**TIME:** 12 minutes



**RESOURCES NEEDED:**

- Instructor Script
- Activity: My Brand Story & Vision Worksheet
- Blank paper

## INSTRUCTOR SCRIPT



While a firm no is often all you need to say when confronted with something you don't want to do, there may be times when you want to give a reason.

The following refusal skills can be used when just saying no to opioids or other substances as well as other things you don't want to do.



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High school students who legitimately use prescription opioids are **33% more likely to abuse opioids after high school.**



**Provide a reason for saying no.**

- I have to get up early tomorrow.
- I promised a friend I'd drive them home.
- Thanks, but I'm not interested.

**Use your sense of humor.**

- I'm the life of the party as it is, I don't need to \_\_\_\_\_ to have fun!

**Offer something else.**

- I don't feel like going to a party tonight, how about we go play \_\_\_\_\_ instead?
- I don't want to smoke pot after school, but I'm starving. Want to get something to eat?

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As participants discuss refusal skills, remind them that although it can feel like everyone is experimenting with drugs, **90%** of high school students in Florida don't drink alcohol regularly.





### **Change the subject.**

- No thanks. But hey, did you see this video on YouTube? It's hilarious.

### **Leave the situation.**

If someone isn't respecting your no, it might be best to leave the situation altogether. You can't make someone respect your boundaries, but you can choose not to be around people who don't.

### **Remember to surround yourself with people who support you.**

Spending time with other people who share your values around things like using opioids and substances can lessen the chance you're in a situation to have to use refusal skills.

Setting boundaries, practicing your refusal skills, and having a few responses in mind before you're in a situation can help you feel empowered to uphold your boundaries, and it will get easier the more you do it.

**Instructor Note:** If time permits, allow participants a few minutes to think through a refusal skill from the above examples that resonate with them and have them write it down. This will be applicable in Lesson 3.



It's a lot easier to set and uphold your boundaries when you have an idea of what's important to you. If you know you want to go to a specific college and need a certain GPA to get in, then setting boundaries around your study time makes sense. Risky behaviors like skipping school would be off limits for you. This is just one example of how having a goal can help you set and enforce your personal boundaries. It can also make the defining choices you learned about in Lesson 1, like saying no to opioids and other drugs, a lot easier too.

Let's try to help you identify what's important to you.

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**Always talk to your parents if someone offers you drugs or pressures you to do harmful things.**

## Activity: My Brand Story & Vision Worksheet

- **Purpose:** The purpose of this activity is to help participants think through hopes, dreams, and goals they have for themselves, both now and in the future (Note: Remind participants that the future doesn't have to mean when they're an adult. While it can mean this, it can also be one month or one year from now). In other words, what is the story about themselves they want to tell? This culminates in participants creating a personal brand.
- **Method:** Practical Application and Reflection
- **Instructions:** See worksheet.

Seven out of ten  
fentanyl-laced pills  
contain a potentially  
lethal dose of the drug.

**THE  
FACTS.  
YOUR  
FUTURE.**

Name: .....

### MY BRAND STORY & VISION

Knowing what's important to you helps you make the best choices to get where you want to go. Like defining choices, what's important to you may be influenced by friends and family, your culture, and the different groups you're a part of. These factors (and many more) also contribute to who you are as an individual, but they don't necessarily define you. You do. You get to choose who you want to be, what matters to you, and what you envision for yourself. Think of this combination as your personal brand.

The board on the following page will help you picture your goals so that you can decide what things should and shouldn't be a part of your life now to help you achieve your goals, and how to create your personal brand story.

#### Step 1: Craft Your Brand Story

If you had a personal brand, what words would describe you? Consider your values, things that make you unique, parts of you that make you feel proud, parts of your life history that make you who you are, along with things like personality traits, talents, likes and dislikes, interests, accomplishments, and challenges. Be as authentic as possible. Write or draw these elements of yourself in the *My Brand Story box*.

#### Step 2: Think About Your Aspirations (Vision)

Think about your dreams and goals for the future, and the qualities you want to represent your life. Your future goals might include things you want to learn, accomplish, or experience, or places you want to explore or visit. Consider what you want for various parts of your life such as school, career, personal growth, relationships, hobbies, and wellness. In the *yellow boxes*, write some of your goals. \*Note: The future can refer to the next few weeks or months, the next year, or even the next 5 years. It's ok if you haven't thought about some of these things yet. Start where you are.

#### Step 3: Gather Inspiration & Create Your Vision Board

Thinking about your hopes and goals from Step 2, write words, statements, or draw pictures that will remind you of the dreams and goals you have for yourself – the things you want to do. Consider leaving space here if you plan to expand your vision board with printed items that you glue to the board after browsing through websites, social media, magazines, or newspapers for images, quotes, and words. If you'd like, include a date for when you want to accomplish your goal.

##### After High School...

- Graduate!
- Learn how to cook for myself
- Go on a trip



#### Step 4: Reflect and Personalize

Take a step back and look at your vision board. Reflect on the images and words you've chosen, and how they represent your dreams and aspirations. Is this how you see yourself now? Is this how you see yourself in a few years from now? Does the vision you've created reflect what matters most to you? Does it help you to think of how your actions today will help you get to your goals?

**THE FACTS. YOUR FUTURE.**

Create Your Brand Story →

## Instructor Discussion Prompts

It's not always easy to identify what's important to you *now*, not to mention in the future...however far out that is. So, start simple. Here are a few examples to get you started:

- Maybe being clear-headed for your upcoming exams and for swim practice is important to you, so you've made the decision not to drink.
- Maybe you've realized that staying in a routine helps you stay focused and manage your stress, so you refuse to skip school because it stresses you out.
- Maybe you didn't find it fun being around people who were high, so you made some new friends who don't smoke pot.
- Maybe you had followers you didn't know and were seeing rude comments about your appearance, so you've set all your socials to private.
- Maybe you watched how hard it was for a relative to quit smoking, so you've decided not to try anything that is addictive such as smoking or vaping.

## Conclusion

All of this takes practice and time. No one expects you to know all these things right now, but there are some things you've already figured out. So, when you have a goal for yourself or have made a defining decision, consider writing it down somewhere as a reminder – you may even want to pull out your vision board activity from time to time and update it as you learn more about yourself. Knowing what's important to you can build confidence in your decision-making even if other people may not understand, leading you to feel good about your choices.

## Notes

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# How to Get Help

If you know someone has issues with continued opioid or substance use, seek professional help. A doctor can screen for signs of **drug use** and related health conditions and suggest possible next steps. Other more immediate resources include:

## 988 Florida Lifeline

Call, text, or chat 988 to be connected to trained counselors.

[988LIFELINE.ORG](https://www.988lifeline.org)

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## CORE Network

A long-term substance use disorder recovery program designed to establish a coordinated system of care for those seeking treatment for substance use disorder.

[FLCORENETWORK.COM](https://www.flcorenetwork.com)

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## iSaveFL

Drug overdose is a nationwide epidemic and an increasing number of Floridians are losing their lives to overdose - you can help save a life with naloxone.

[ISAVEFL.COM](https://www.isavefl.com)

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## Local Services

If you or someone you know is in need of substance abuse and/or mental health services, our local managing entities can help you locate available programs.

[MYFLFAMILIES.COM/  
SAMH-GET-HELP](https://www.myflfamilies.com/samh-get-help)

# Addressing Prevention with Youth

## Listen

A young person may come to you for advice, or you may notice concerning changes in behavior. Refrain from judgment. Listen, and try to learn more about what's going on.

## Talk early and often

Regular conversations about the risks of opioids and other substances can help. Have a prevention plan, and address drug use in different ways throughout the year.

## Start with the facts

Discuss the mental and physical health impacts of drugs. Focus on the harm drug use can do to academics and relationships.

## Practice

Consider taking time to role play various scenarios about coping with stress, what to do if a friend offers you opioids or other drugs, or what to do if a friend needs help.

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**The Facts. Your Future.** is a multifaceted initiative led by Florida's First Lady, Casey DeSantis, to heighten youth understanding of the dangerous and life-altering effects of drug use.

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Get more Facts for  
Teens about **Opioids  
and Substance Abuse**

[TheFactsYourFuture.org](https://www.TheFactsYourFuture.org)

