



Red Ribbon Week (or any week): Effective Prevention Checklist

As recommended by Idaho Youth Summit Speaker, Javier Sanchez

Youth Driven - Adult Guided

Our tendency is to **support what we help create**. When you are **planning activities**, make sure that you **involve teens in the planning process**. This should go beyond asking them what they think of the ideas you have come up with. Allow them to **be a part of the developmental and creative process** from start to finish. If they **feel ownership of the program or initiative** they will also feel more **responsibility for its success**.

Avoid Using Scare Tactics

I've said it before, but I'll continue to say it as long as it needs to be said, **using scare tactics** to convince young people that they shouldn't drink, smoke, get high, join gangs, drop out of school, or make any of a million unhealthy choices **doesn't work!** Young people have an **"it'll never happen to me" mindset** and **telling stories or giving statistics** about someone else that **"it"** happened to often times will do little to nothing to convince them otherwise. Instead of focusing on consequences, your goal should be to **get the young people to focus** on what we call the **PRO-sequences**; the **great things** that happen and **great opportunities** that are opened up to you when you make **great choices**. The bottom line is we are saturated with the consequences and have become desensitized to them. Let's give our young people some **hope** and the **option/opportunity to experience life to the fullest** in a **healthy, safe, and positive** way.

Make Red Ribbon Week a Part of Something Bigger

Red Ribbon Week will come and go and if we don't have a **plan for sustainability** of the message then the momentum behind the message will come and go too. **Red Ribbon Week** can be a **great tool** for **raising awareness** about the **opportunities** that young people have to connect with other teens that are **making healthy choices** and can be a **valuable resource** for them as they **navigate their high school years**. Giving students the **chance to connect** with a club or program like Idaho Drug Free Youth will help you **create and sustain an effective and impactful** campaign.

Don't Make Information Your Focus

Young people have heard all the facts and statistics about alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs and I would venture to say that there isn't a startling new piece of information that would really **get their attention**. If information was enough then the tobacco industry would put themselves out of business. What is on the side of every pack of cigarettes? Information. So it clearly **has to be something bigger**. Young people aren't moved by information, **they're moved by inspiration and connection**. Find ways to **inspire your students to be the best** they can be and to **create connections** with other students that are making the same **healthy choices**.

Focus on the Positive

People have more of a desire to stand **FOR** something than **AGAINST** it. I would challenge you to make the focus of your campaign or programming - **positive peer prevention**. Your students should be **encouraging and demonstrating** to their peers how **positive choices lead to positive experiences**. When you **focus on the negative** what you are doing is magnifying it. When you magnify something you are **making it appear larger than what it actually is**. The **majority of young people** in this country are **on the right track and making the right choices**. Red Ribbon Week is an opportunity for their **voices to be heard** and their **actions to be recognized**. Instead of magnifying the negative, **let's focus on amplifying (increasing the strength of) the positive** teens doing positive things in their **homes, schools, and communities**.

-Javier Sanchez, R.E.A.C.H. Communications

For more information about Javier Sanchez and R.E.A.C.H. Communications visit: www.reachspeakers.com