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Effective Strategies for Youth-Focused Substance Use Prevention and Harm Reduction Messaging

Department of Public Health (DPH), Substance Abuse Prevention and Control (SAPC), Harm Reduction Branch

Learning Objectives

- Understand the principles of social marketing and how they apply to youth-focused substance use prevention and harm reduction.

- Develop skills in crafting compelling messages that motivate youth to adopt healthier behaviors and attitudes toward substance use.

- Evaluate the effectiveness of social marketing campaigns and measure youth engagement, behavior change, and campaign outcomes.

Can messaging campaigns spark positive behavior change?

Can messaging campaigns spark positive change?

ABSOLUTELY!

Social Marketing

Promotes

Positive social transformation

Focuses On

Influencing positive behaviors rather than selling products
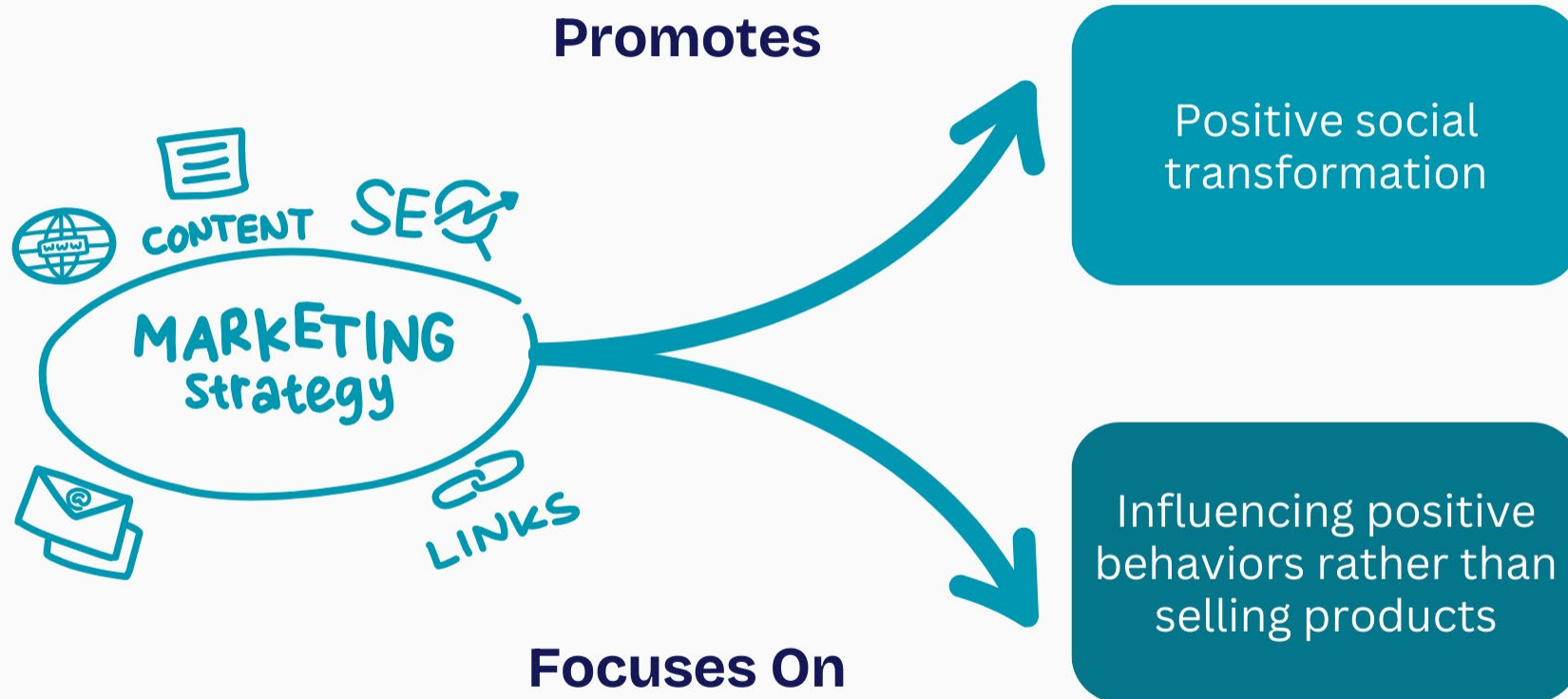
Social Marketing Defined

The discipline of social marketing focuses on developing a strategic marketing mix to influence behavior change for sustainable, healthy, and equitable communities.

In other words,...

changing behaviors for good

About Social Marketing

What it IS:

- Motivates behavior change by helping reduce barriers and ensure desired benefits
- Causes positive societal outcomes
- Research/evidence-based strategies
- A marketing discipline
- Audience centric approach
- Primarily voluntary behaviors

What it is NOT:

- Social media
- Advertising or communications only campaigns
- Propaganda
- Corporate social responsibility
- Manipulation or social engineering
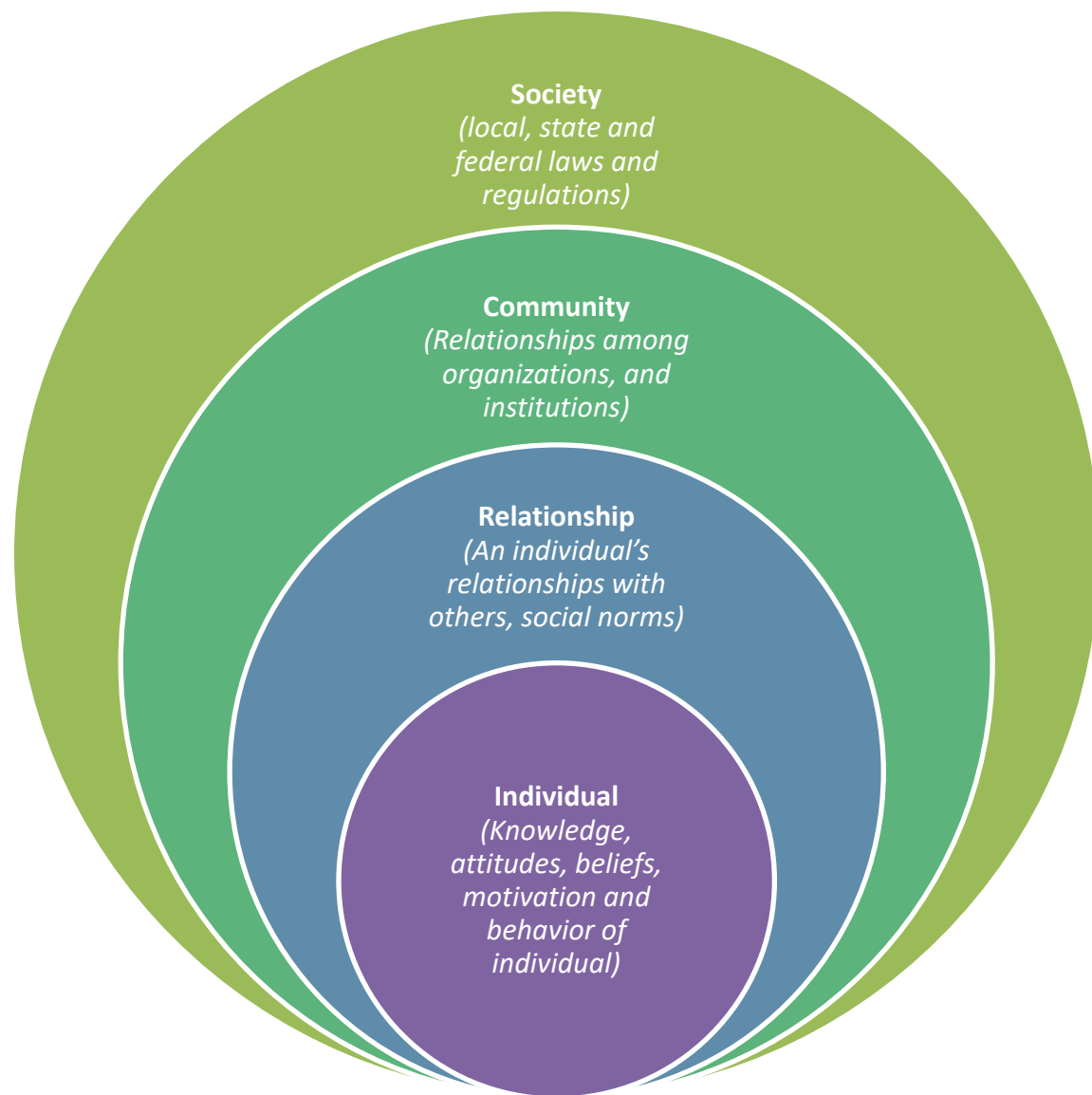- Behavioral economics

Pitfalls to Avoid with Social Marketing

- Awareness does not lead to behavior change
- Education alone does not change behaviors
- People do not change their behaviors because it is "the right thing to do"
- People do change their behaviors when the benefit and/or motivator to them outweighs the barrier

Risk Factors

Protective Factors

Risk Factors

Protective Factors

Society (local, state and federal laws and regulations)

Community (Relationships among organizations, and institutions)

Relationship (An individual's relationships with others, social norms)

Individual (Knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, motivation and behavior of individual)

Fragmented social systems
Low economic opportunities
Racism
Lack of policies
Lack of Resources
Traumatic Community Events
Poverty
Homelessness
Community Violence
Peer Rejection
Lack of Adult Supervision
Association w/drug using peers
Parental Conflict
Poor Problem-Solving Skills
Lack of Awareness
Anxiety
Genetics
Poor social skills
Low self-esteem

Increased support services
Existing and Enforced laws
Ongoing policy engagement
Opportunities for Community Engagement
Clear Expectations and Behaviors
Positive Norms
Family Structure
Clear Expectations
Supportive & Loving Relationships
Positive Development
Positive Engagements
Academics
Positive Coping Skills

Social Marketing: 10 Step Planning Process

Step 1: Identify Project Purpose, Goals, and Objectives

Example: Food Waste Prevention

Purpose *(Why are we doing this?)*	Reduce climate emissions associated with wasted food.
Goal *(What will the impact be?)*	Prevent household food waste
Objectives *(What needs to happen to achieve the goal?)*	• Raise awareness about the amount of food being wasted (define the problem) • Change food waste behaviors related to shopping, storage and prep

Pitfall to Avoid: Objective Not Measurable

Make sure your objectives are Measurable

- Decide how you are going to measure
    - What data do you need?
    - How are you going to collect it?
    - Do you have the necessary baseline data to measure change?

If your objective is not measurable, need to redefine and pick one that is

OBJECTIVES NOT MEASURABLE

Step 2: Research: Stop, Look & Listen

Let the research guide program development!

- Use research to:
    - Determine current behaviors
    - Identify priority audiences
    - Identify barriers and motivations for desired behaviors
    - Test concepts/messages
    - Set baselines for evaluation

- Find and mine existing research sources
- Do primary research if needed

Pitfall to Avoid: Audience Assumptions

You are not your priority Audience

Avoid the urge to assume you know how
your audience acts, thinks or feels.

Instead, use research to define
these things with your priority audience

Gathering Insights: Top Four Reasons Youth **Choose** to Use Substances
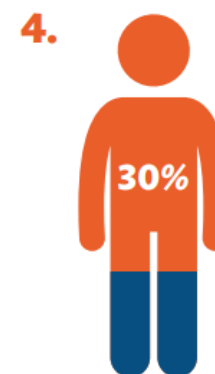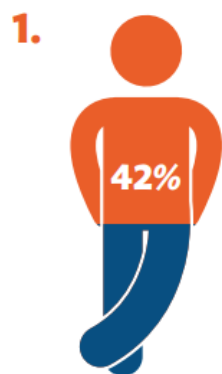
Youth - Having conversations around substance use:

Who youth **trust most for accurate information** about substance use	Who youth are **comfortable talking with** about substance use

Step 3: Identifying Desired Behavior Change

Determine the specific desired behavior changes that are the most direct path to achieving the program's goals
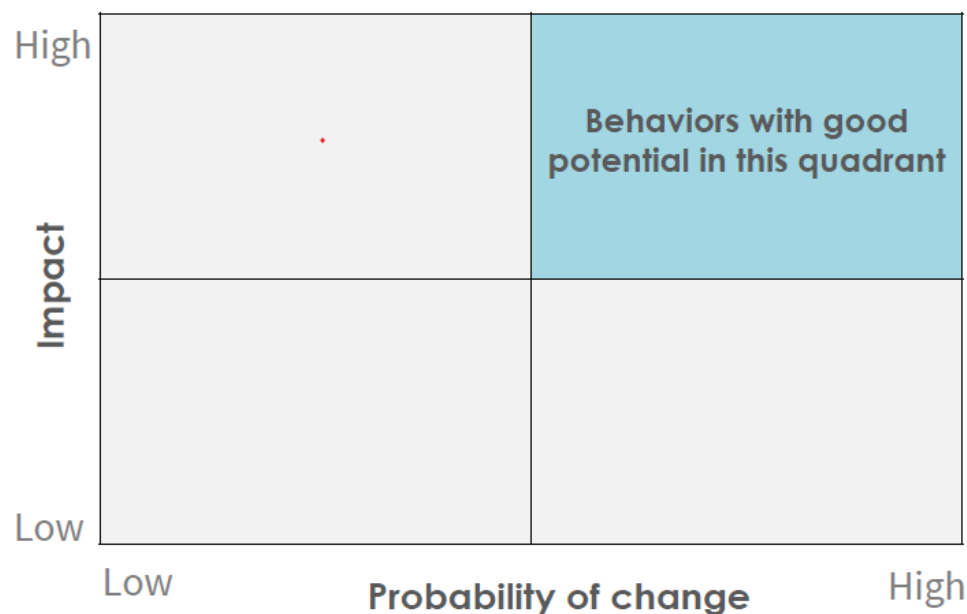
Bxs should be specific and should not be divided into small chunks.
Example: "Get Vaccinated" Vs "Get the Flu Vaccine" – addressing different audiences as well as unique barriers and motivators

Pitfall to Avoid: Choosing too many Behaviors

If you try to tell people too many things, they will do nothing

Ideal is to focus on one behavior at a time since each behavior will have unique barriers, benefits and motivators

Don't try to "get it all in at once"

Step 4: Defining Priority Audiences

Show Me   Help Me   Make Me

Pitfall to Avoid: Audience = "The Public"

Your audience is not "everyone" or "the public"

- If you try and be everything to everybody, you will end up being be nothing to nobody
- Need to segment your audiences and base strategies on their unique barriers and motivators to the desired behavior change

Step 5: Mapping Barriers, Benefits & Motivators

Barrier:

Anything that reduces the probability a person will conduct the desired behavior

Benefit:

What benefit will be delivered to the audience if they practice the behavior?
What's in it for them?

Motivator:

What will motivate the audience to act to change their behavior?

Benefits Outweigh Barriers = Bx Change
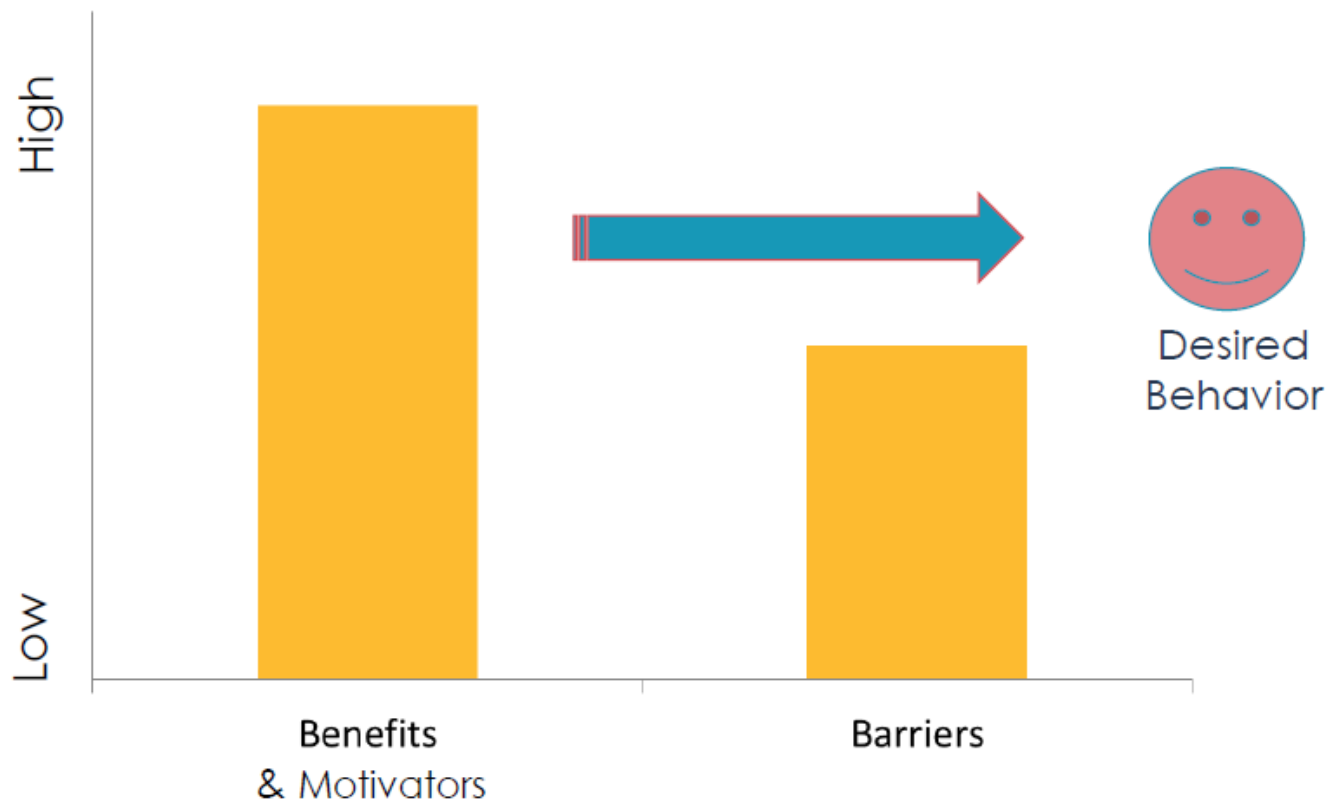
Benefits do NOT Outweigh Barriers = No Bx Change
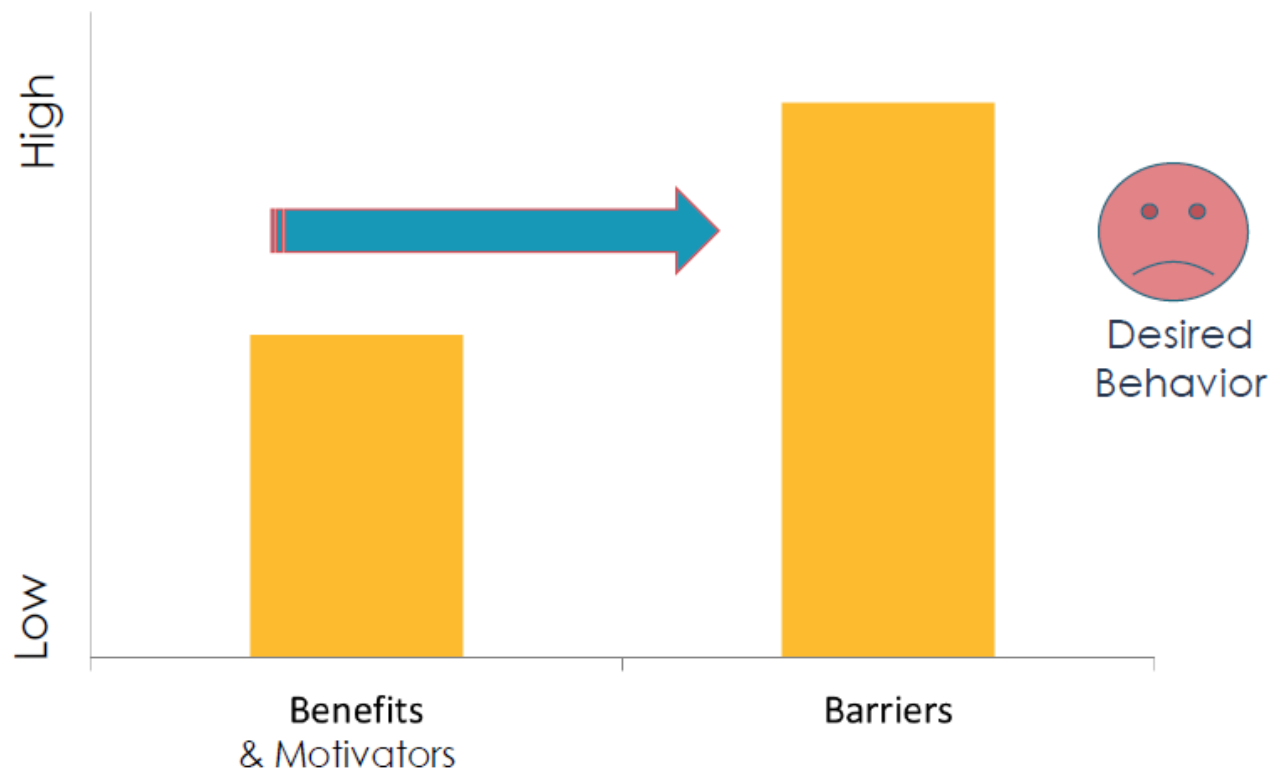
Pitfall to Avoid: Buried in Barriers

It's typically easy to write a LONG list of barriers

- To be effective, narrow your list to the top 1 2 barriers
- This is so you can plan messaging and social marketing strategies that can overcome the key barriers preventing change.
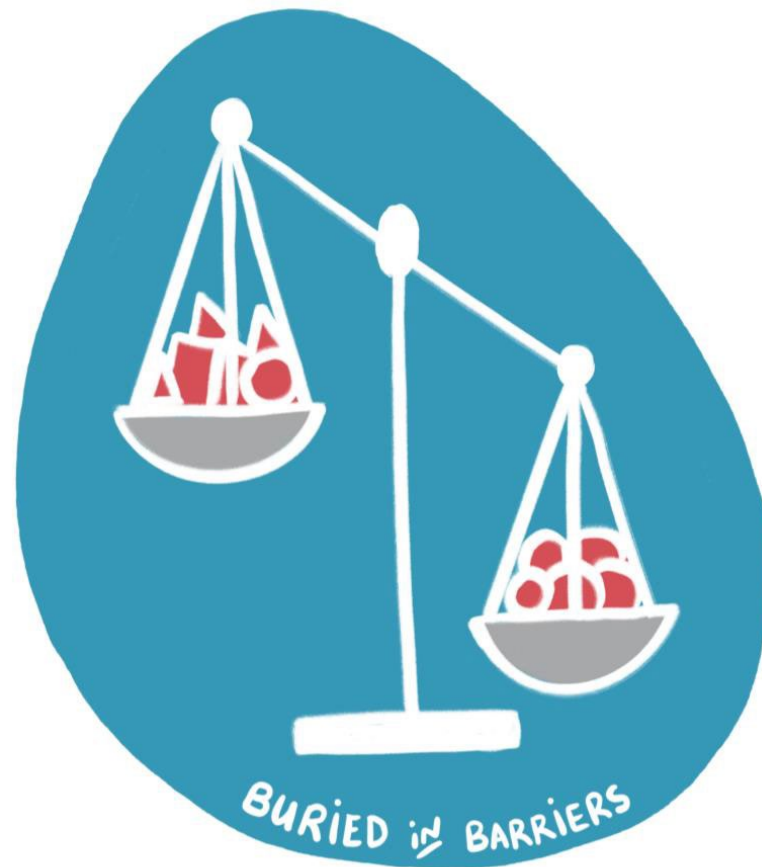
Step 6:Plan Your Social Marketing Intervention

| Social Marketing Tool	Description
Commitments	Making a commitment to change a behavior makes it more likely that people will follow through
Social Norms	People will often change their behaviors if they believe everyone else has done so
Social Diffusion	Peer and referent groups spread behavior change through conversations, interactions and observations of each other
Cognitive Dissonance	Pointing out when a person's values, attitudes or beliefs do not match their behaviors
Prompts	Putting reminders to act close to the location of the behavior
Incentives	Providing a tool or discount that helps overcome a barrier to trying the behavior
Convenience	Making it easy for people to do the behavior
Recognition/Feedback	Report back to people to let them know that their behavior is making a difference

Social Norms Example: MSU High Risk Drinking
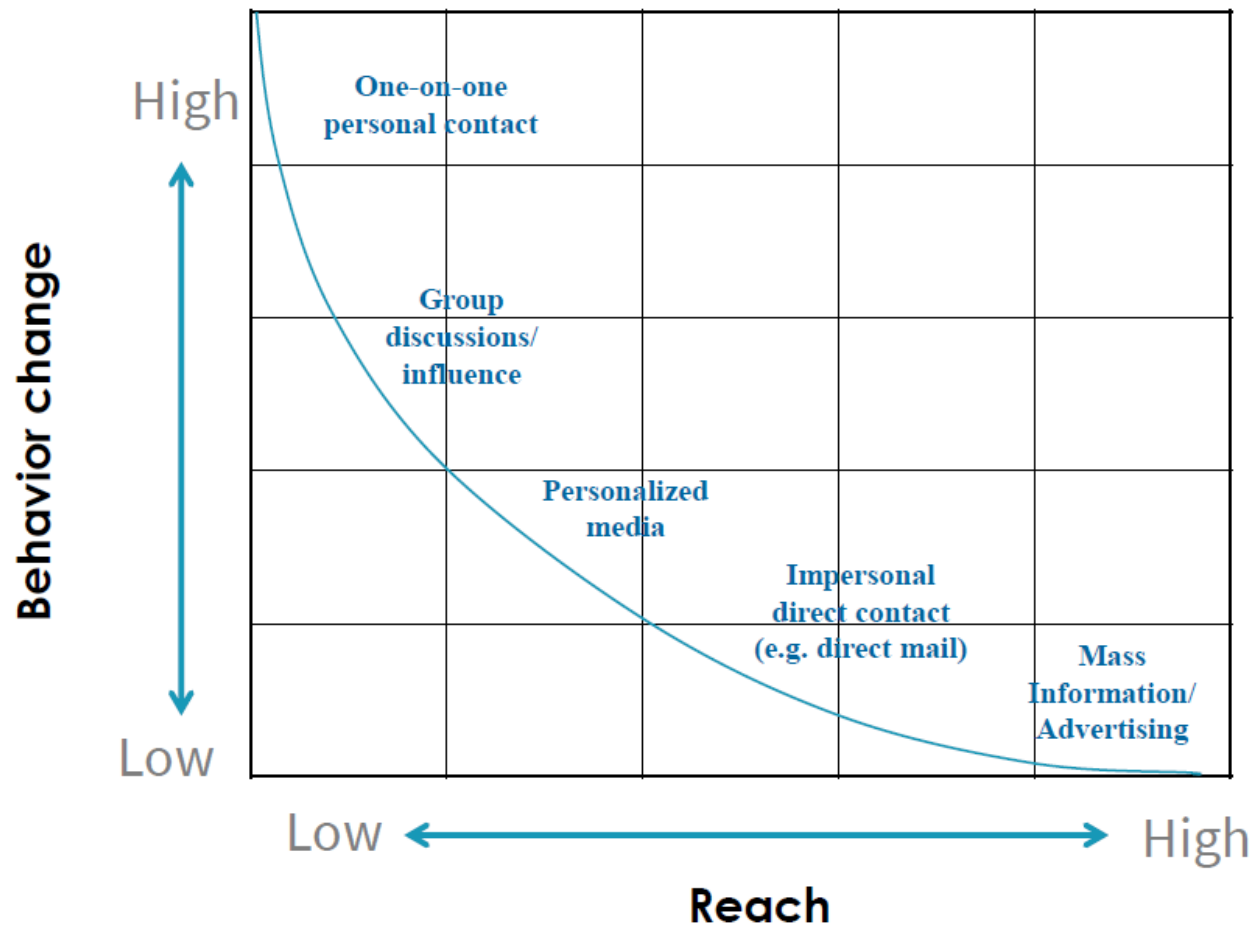
Pitfall to Avoid: Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance is when a person's values, attitudes or beliefs do not match their Behaviors.

- True for many public health issues.

- Trap: assuming cognitive dissonance will make it easier to change behavior.

- In fact, it is often harder. People don't pay attention to your message they've "checked that box"

- First step is to point out dissonance; then you have a powerful foundation for behavior change
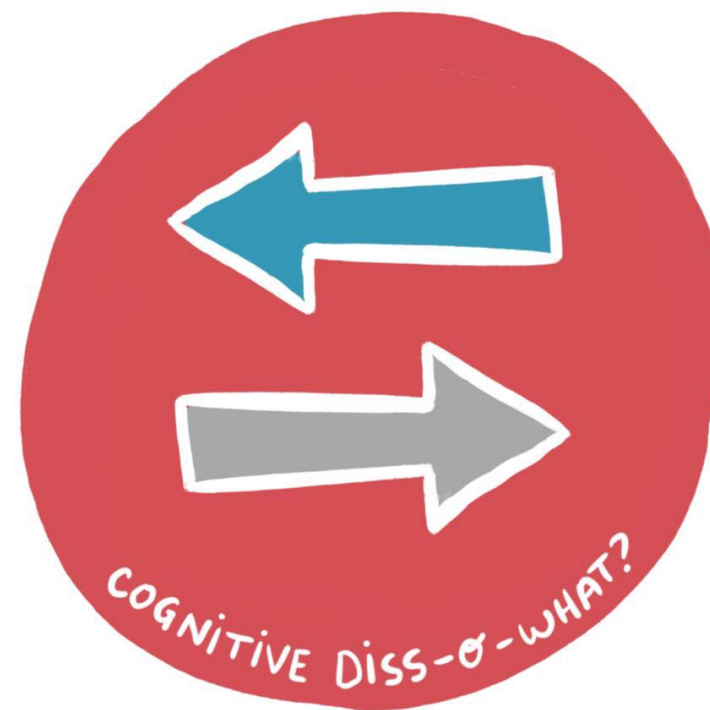
Step 7: Create an Effective Messaging Strategy

Map what you want your audience to...

Think → Feel → Do

Messages should be…

- Simple
- Emotional
- *Positive emotions will resonate more with audiences. Avoid using scare tactics.
- Benefits, Not Features
- Relevant and Timely

Pitfall to Avoid: Message Clutter

- The average person is exposed to between 2,000 and 3,000 marketing messages each day.

- We have 3-5 seconds to catch someone's attention.
- Millennial will spend 14 seconds more on content.
- Gen Z will spend 8 seconds more on content.

- Content needs to be compelling!

MESSAGE CLUTTER

Pitfall to Avoid: Avoid Fear Based Messaging, Moralistic Appeals, and Exaggerated Social Norms
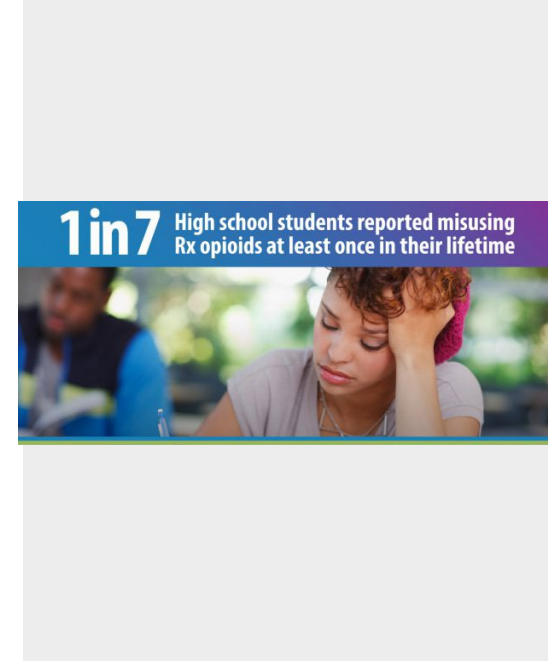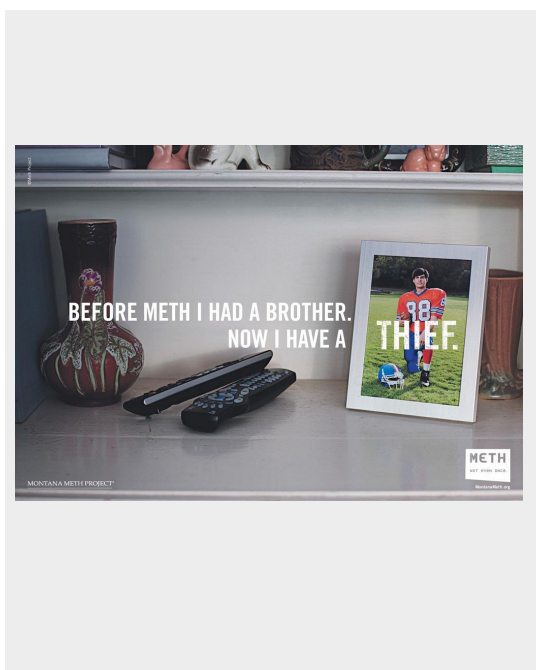
How Effective is this Campaign?

What's Effective? What Isn't?

Failure to address knowledge gaps pertaining to prevalence of counterfeit pills laced with fentanyl.

Color Psychology: Red is known as a color that stands for danger, violence, and aggression.

Moralistic & All or None Messaging

Failure to effectively support low barrier access to life saving resources

Effective Campaign Example

- Educates audiences of counterfeit opioids
- Explains what fentanyl can cause
- Appropriate color scheme - evokes clarity of thought and communication

*Room for improvement:

What is the call to action?

Other types of Fear Based Messaging Campaigns

School Assemblies
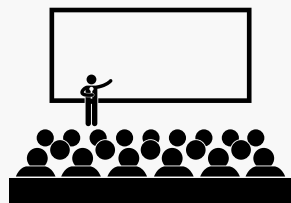
Create temporary emotional arousal but do not impact behavior or intentions to use substances.

Personal Testimonies

Normalize substance use by reinforcing incorrect norms that "everybody uses."

Mock Car Crashes

Is ultimately a fear-based strategy.

Step 8: Identifying Partners

Look for partners with:
- Complementary mission/goals
- Audience overlap
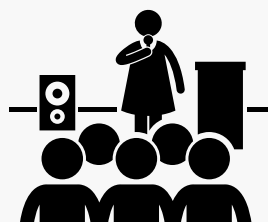- History of collaboration/community involvement

Things that partners can bring to the table
- Communications channels to the target audience
- Money/in-kind resources/incentives
- Data and/or data analysis
- Credibility with target audience

Partner Examples

- Colleges and Universities
- Parents/Parent Groups
- CBOs and Nonprofits
- Local Celebrities/Sport Figures
- Restaurants
- Retailers
- Local Media

Pitfall to Avoid: Working in Silos

Adopting efforts which only focus on one specific environment (e.g., campus, non-profit location, etc.), rather than collaborating with influential partners may lead to:

- Missed opportunities for engagement
- Lack of cohesive information
- Repetitive Questions
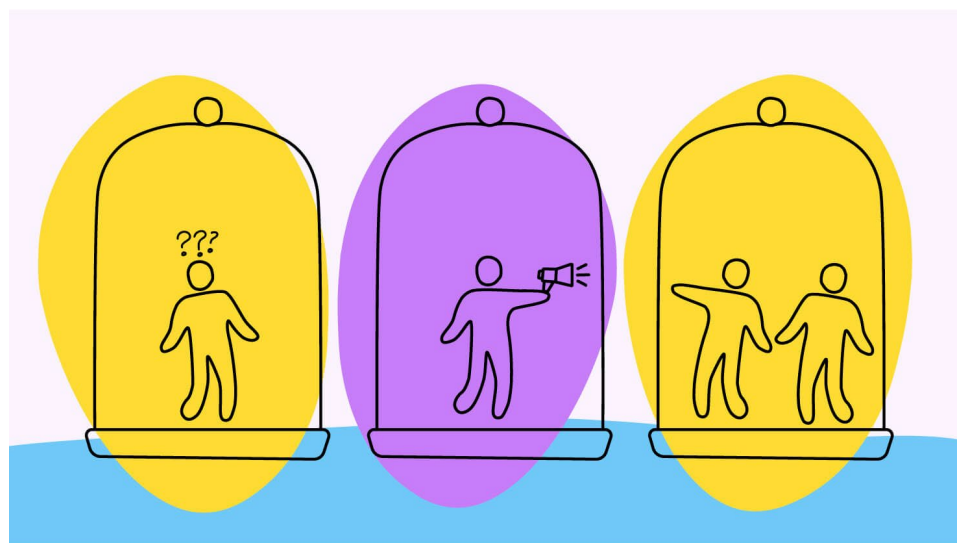- Frustration and Dissatisfaction
- Insufficient Resource Allocation

Image Credit: Image by Anahi Alanis

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Step 9: Developing a Marketing Plan

Don't start with this step!

- Strategies are broad, tactics are specific
- Both should support primary intervention strategy
- Look for an integration of tactics so audiences are exposed to messages multiple times and ways
  - Strive to reach your audience through at least three channels a total of 3-7 times
- Consider piloting your approach

Marketing Tactic Examples

- One-on-one outreach
- Tools and Incentives
- Promotions
- Social Media
- Advertising
- Community Outreach & Events
- Digital and Mobile Engagement

Pitfall to Avoid: Starting with this step

Don't start with this step!

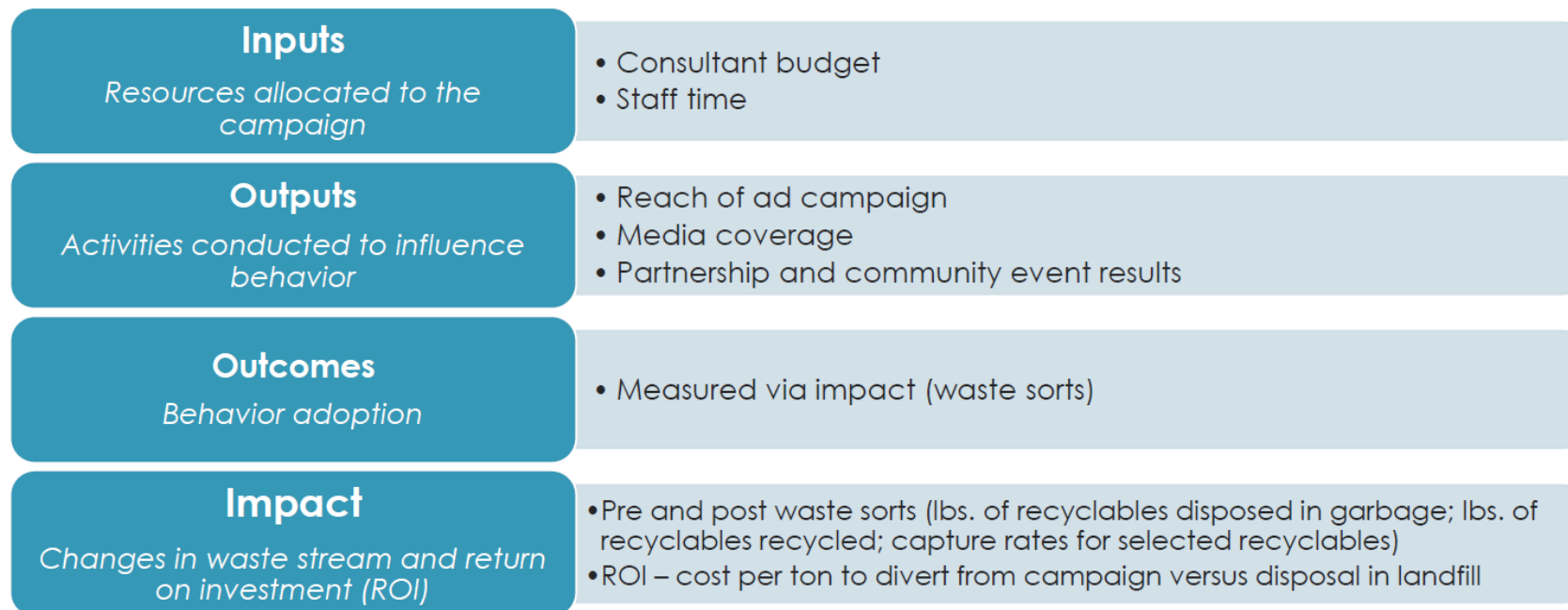• Instead take the time to complete steps #1-8 first
• Starting here will reduce the effectiveness of the program

Step 10: Creating an Evaluation Plan

Inputs:	Resources allocated to the campaign
Outputs:	Program activities conducted
Outcomes:	Behavior adoption measured through quantitative surveys and observation
Impact:	Changes that align with your campaign's purpose

Example: KING COUNTY WA, RECYCLE MORE

Inputs *Resources allocated to the campaign*	• Consultant budget • Staff time
Outputs *Activities conducted to influence behavior*	• Reach of ad campaign • Media coverage • Partnership and community event results
Outcomes *Behavior adoption*	• Measured via impact (waste sorts)
Impact *Changes in waste stream and return on investment (ROI)*	• Pre and post waste sorts (lbs. of recyclables disposed in garbage; lbs. of recyclables recycled; capture rates for selected recyclables) • ROI – cost per ton to divert from campaign versus disposal in landfill

Pitfall to Avoid: Self Reporting Bias

Be aware that people often don't accurately report their behaviors

•Overcome this by looking for ways to measure actual behavioral change (e.g. observational research, waste diverted, etc.) rather than self-reporting

•If you have to use self-reported data, make sure you have baseline data and then measure the change pre and post

SELF-REPORTING BIAS

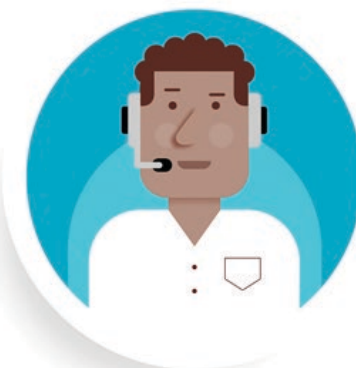# Resources

Substance Abuse Service Helpline (SASH)

SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICE HELPLINE

24/7 **1.844.804.7500**

Toll-free, **available 24/7, year-round** • Interpretation available, including TTY

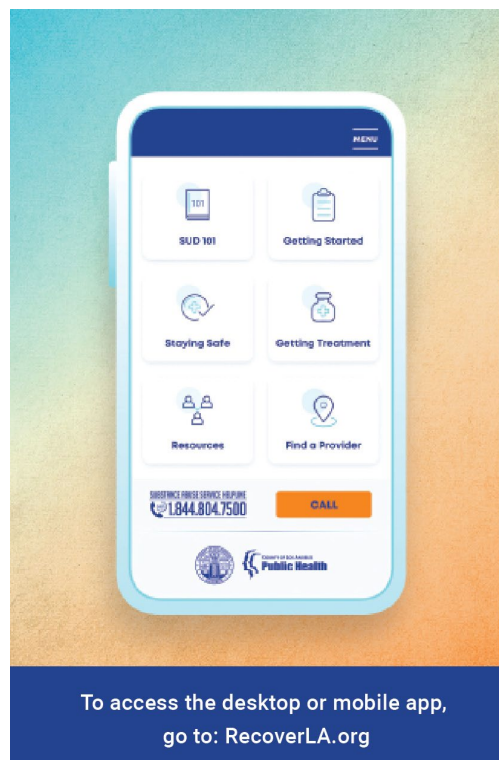1. **Anyone can call the SASH (adults, youth 12+)**

2. **Clinicians/Counselors conduct a screening and connect the caller to a treatment provider**

3. **The SASH operator will connect you with a treatment provider or provides you with a referral options**

Recover LA Mobile App

- Free mobile app
- Provides education and resources for those seeking substance use services for themselves or others
- Available in 13 languages
- RecoverLA.org

QR code can be used to access the app as well

24/7 Overdose Response Hotline

Team Awareness Combating Overdose (TACO)

Fentanyl Test Strips

- Order FTS for pickup + delivery for 1 cent
  - Intended for individual requests (not bulk)
  - 10-minute delivery via Duffl or Handle App (depending on location)
  - Operates Daily
  - Los Angeles Pickup Locations
    - USC (South Central) 10am-1am
    - USC (South Central) 4am-1am
    - UCLA (Westwood): 10am-1am
  - https://www.tacoinc.org/

Questions?

Thank You!

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
Substance Abuse Prevention and Control (SAPC)
Harm Reduction Unit

Email | harmreduction@ph.lacounty.gov