

# PROTECTIVE FACTORS

## TAKEAWAYS

01

Continuous Communication

02

A Sense of Belonging

03

A Feeling of Competence

04

Finding Passion and a Path

*Operation Survival was founded in 1988 in the hopes of stemming the inevitable tide of drugs and alcohol seeping into the community.*

*Operation Survival provides evidence-based programming in the local yeshivas and public schools, arts programs, rap groups, positive alternatives, and crisis assistance to thousands of students each year.*

*The program also networks with other agencies to disseminate information to educators, clergy, social service and medical professionals, and community agencies.*

*Operation Survival is the first program to combat alcoholism and substance abuse in both the Jewish and African-American communities of Crown Heights, and has been credited with bringing the racially diverse community together in common cause.*

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VOL. 1

PREVENTION  
101  
Help Save a Life.



Tools for parents to help protect kids from drugs.

A project of Operation Survival

## COMMUNICATION

In real estate, the three most important words are “location, location, location.” In parenting, the three most important words are “communication, communication, communication.” It is important for parents to always maintain open communication with their kids from a young age. Parents need to make it very clear to their child that there is nothing he or she can tell them that is too scary for the parents to handle, and that the parents will not judge the child when the information is communicated. Parents need to be the people children always feel safe talking to.

*By opening these lines of communication, children are much more likely to confide in their parents when they see their peers behaving in ways that are not healthy.*



**IN** the field of substance abuse prevention, there is a concept known as protective factors.

These are conditions or behaviors present in an individual's environment that decrease his or her chances of falling prey to addiction and other risky behaviors. The following are some protective factors that parents can provide, no matter the age of their children.

## BELONGING

As part of ensuring open communication, parents need to build their children's feelings of belonging — in their family, in school, and in the community. Parents can foster belonging by creating a family culture where they address topics by starting with a phrase such as, “In our family, we do . . .” Creating this culture and this sense of belonging as a family and then talking the same way about the community and the school makes a child feel as if he or she is part of something bigger.



*Children need to feel connected to their environment and the people in it. The more healthy connections people have, the less likely they are to be susceptible to addictive behaviors.*

## COMPETENCE

Parents also need to give their children a sense of competence and self-worth. This does not mean constantly praising them and telling them they are amazing, but rather giving them skills. This could mean teaching them a musical instrument, giving them art lessons, or simply helping them find what they are good at and ways to develop it.



*A sense of competence breeds self-confidence in a child, and self-confidence breeds all kinds of positive things, such as the ability to resist peer pressure.*

## WHEN

parents work to create and maintain good communication with their children, give them a real sense of belonging, provide them with the skills to develop self-confidence, and help them find both a passion and a path, they have set up powerful protective factors for their children.

## PASSION & PATH

We often talk about two essential building blocks to a productive life: **PASSION AND A PATH.**

Passion is self-explanatory. The most successful people are those who discover something they love to do or be involved in. A child who has a passion for something, whether it is music, art, sports, woodworking, or whatever it may be, is more likely to turn to that when they need downtime or a boost.

But aside from passion, a person needs a direction in life, a path, so they know where they are going. These two ingredients will help children maintain healthy behaviors, which will, in turn, ward off negative influences. When children have a passion and a path, they know what is expected of them. This creates a lot of internal structure and feelings of safety.

► Based on an interview with Mrs. Dena Gorkin, CPP, for Prevention 101 series.

