

Protective Factors and Risk Factors

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Strengthening protective factors around young people has multiple lifelong benefits. Protective factors buffer against the effects of risk factors.

Use this checklist of some protective factors and risk factors to identify how you can support a young person.

Some protective factors

Individual

- Internal locus of control
- Positive sense of identity and belonging
- Social skills
- Critical thinking and decision making skills
- Spiritual connection
- Hope for the future

Peer

- At least one close, supportive friend
- Participation in positive peer activities (e.g. sports, drama)

Family

- Family connectedness
- Parent supervision and interest in development

School

- School connection
- Vocational pathway
- Academic achievement

Community

- Positive adult relationship outside of the family
- Positive activities
- Cultural connection
- Feeling safe in the community

Some risk factors

Individual

- Emotional distress
- High levels of risk taking
- Poor social skills

Peer

- Peer substance use/favourable attitudes to use
- Peers who engage in problem behaviours

Family

- Parental substance use
- Poor family relationships
- Neglect or abuse
- Family poverty and isolation

School

- Low school connection
- Low academic achievement
- Peer rejection

Community

- Lack of support, training, employment opportunities
- Neighbourhood problems/poverty
- Lack of positive activities