

Information Summary



Name of curriculum: *Reconnecting Youth: A Peer Group Approach to Building Life Skills (2nd edition)*

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Contact Solution Tree for a free sample (prospectus) of the RY Curriculum.

Reconnecting Youth program website address: <http://www.reconnectingyouth.com/ry>

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Type of curriculum: Indicated prevention program for preventing drug abuse, violence (aggression/depression), suicide-risk behaviors and high school dropout

Grade level: 9-12

Years developed: 1989-2003

Training requirement/cost: For best results, RY Leader training is necessary for all individuals who will be implementing the RY curriculum, along with their supervisor/RY Coordinator. Training in administrative leadership in RY is also available for high school principals and agency administrators who plan to implement RY. *Contact our office for current prices and availability.*

Initial implementation training for 14 participants is \$14,000 for the 4-day training; additional participants (up to 16 total) may be added for \$1,000 each. Training for 8 participants is also available, at \$8,000 for the 4-day training. The cost for one participant at another site's training is \$1,000.

All personnel who will be implementing RY should have their own copy of the full curriculum set. All training participants will need the *Getting Started* (Module 1) and the Student Workbook, both included in the full curriculum set or available individually.

We recommend a one-day follow-up implementation consultation every 6 months during the first year of implementation; "free" phone consultation is available during this time as well. We also recommend at least one follow-up consultation each subsequent year to manage implementation challenges and to assess implementation fidelity.

Cost of curriculum: \$299.95 U.S. plus shipping for the 2nd edition of the curriculum and \$24.95 for the Student Workbook (set of 10 for \$211.95). You may order through our office or Solution Tree.

Program content and process: Social skills training (in self-esteem enhancement, decision making, personal control, interpersonal communication); and measurable goals for achieving program outcomes of reduced drug involvement, suicide risk behaviors, and school failure. Development of a positive peer group culture is the essential small group medium in which skills training occurs and is practiced.

Essential group structure and instructional methods: RY is intended to be high school-based, offered as a class that is part of the regular curriculum taken for elective credit and graded. Critical is the small group format with a 1:10-12 teacher-to-student ratio, and a trained RY teacher who excels in building positive interpersonal relationships with high-risk youth.

RECONNECTING YOUTH

Brief description of the program:

Reconnecting Youth: A Peer Group Approach to Building Life Skills (RY) is a school-based indicated prevention program that targets young people in grades 9–12 who show signs of poor school achievement and potential for high school dropout. They may also show signs of multiple problem behaviors (such as substance abuse, aggression/depression, or suicide ideation). *RY* teaches skills to build resiliency with respect to risk factors, and to moderate the early signs of substance abuse. To enter the program, students must have fewer than the average number of credits earned for their grade level, have high absenteeism, show a significant drop in grades, or have a record of dropping out of school.

The program incorporates social support and life skills training with the following components:

- ◆ *The Reconnecting Youth class*, a semester-long, daily class divided into five major units: Getting Started, Self-Esteem Enhancement, Decision-Making, Personal Control, and Interpersonal Communication using an 80-lesson curriculum. This semester-long intervention integrates small-group work and life-skills training models to effectively enhance the personal and social protective factors of high-risk youth;
- ◆ *Social activities and school bonding* to establish drug-free social activities and friendships, as well as to improve a teen's relationship to school; and
- ◆ *School system crisis response plan* for addressing suicide prevention approaches.
- ◆ *Parent involvement* including active parental consent and support of the *RY* goals for their youth.

Research shows that this program improves school performance; reduces drug involvement; decreases deviant peer bonding; increases self-esteem, personal control, school bonding, and social support; and decreases depression, anger and aggression, hopelessness, stress, and suicidal behaviors. Further analysis indicates that the support of the *RY* leader contributes to decreases in drug involvement, depression and suicide-risk behaviors, as well as increases in school achievement.

Research base for this curriculum:

Efficacy of the *Reconnecting Youth (RY)* prevention program was initially demonstrated in a moderately sized school district where potential dropouts typically represented 10–15% of the student body. Tests of the underlying prevention theory provided early evidence of the importance of the teachers' support and caring in increasing peer support, decreasing drug involvement, and increasing school achievement.

These early studies led to additional, federally funded (by NIDA and NIMH), experimental tests of *RY*, which an enhanced curriculum (with attention to suicide prevention). This research supported and extended the initial tests of the *RY* prevention model for potential high school dropouts. Results demonstrated that participation in *RY* was associated with decreased drug control problems and consequences, decreased hard drug use, and decreased drug use progression; similar trends were not observed among controls. In other behavioral domains, youth who participated in *RY* increased their grades across all classes, while youth in the control group showed no change. *RY* but not control youth showed increasing trends in school bonding and personal control, and decreased deviant peer bonding. Participation in *RY* was also linked with decreases in depression and suicide-risk behaviors.

A replication study of *RY* (funded by the U.S. Dept of Education) was conducted in a large, multicultural, urban school district where the rates of at-risk youth were in the 40 to 50% range. Replication studies in Texas reveal program goal achievement: decreased drug involvement and increased school performance. Current research (funded by NIDA) includes a study of the effects of a full year of *RY* along with a parent program.

What is critical to successful implementation and fidelity to the *RY* Model?

High fidelity to the curriculum design and school-based structure; a 1:10-12 teacher-to-student ratio; use of the criteria for student selection; and adherence to the selection criteria for *RY* teachers/group leaders (it is essential that *RY* teachers be effective with and committed to working with at-risk youth); implementation training for *RY* group leaders, program coordinators and school principals.

RECONNECTING YOUTH

Reconnecting Youth has garnered numerous honors and awards including the following:

- Selected by the US Department of Education (2002) as one of the SAMHSA model programs that DOE would fund through their grant application process.
- Honored in May 2000 as a model program for the 1999 Exemplary Substance Abuse Prevention Awards presented at the U.S. Congress. Co-sponsored by Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, the National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors, the National Prevention Network, and the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America, Washington, DC.
- Selection in Drug Strategies' publication, *Making the Grade: A Guide to School Drug Prevention Programs*, as the only research-based high school drug prevention program in the US to receive an "A" grade (1999);
- Designation in the White House's First Annual Report on School Safety (1998) as one of the top-tier, demonstrated programs for working with high-risk adolescents;
- Selection in Drug Strategies' publication, *Safe Schools, Safe Students*, as one of only five research-based youth violence prevention programs in the country to receive an "A+" grade (1998);
- Recommendation by the U.S. Department of Education through the Safe and Drug Free Schools Program as successful in preventing drug use and violent behavior among youth (1998);
- Recognized by NIDA as one of the year's top three prevention programs (1996) and featured in NIDA's video production, *Coming Together on Prevention*. (Available from NCADI, P.O. Box 2345, Rockville, MD 20847-2345, 1-800-729-6686); and
- For her work on *RY*, the National Educational Association named Dr. Eggert as an *Innovator* (1999) in prevention and the education of high-risk youth.

For more thorough research information on *RY*, see the various websites above as well as the following:

- Eggert, L.L., Seyl, C., & Nicholas, L.J. (1990). Effects of a school-based prevention program for potential high school dropouts and drug abusers. *International Journal of the Addictions*, 25, 773-801.
- Eggert, L.L. & Herting, J.R. (1991). Preventing teenage drug abuse: Exploratory effects of network social support. *Youth & Society*, 22, 482-534. (1993). Reprinted, *National Prevention Evaluation Research Collection*, Rockville, MD: Aspen Systems.
- Eggert, L.L., Thompson, E.A., Herting, J.R., Nicholas, L.J., & Dicker, B.G. (1994). Preventing adolescent drug abuse and high school dropout through an intensive school-based social network development program. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 8, 202-215.
- Eggert, L.L., Thompson, E.A., Herting, J.R. & Nicholas, L.J. (1995). Reducing suicide potential among high-risk youth: Tests of a school-based prevention program. *Suicide & Life-Threatening Behavior*, 25(2), 276-296.
- Eggert, L.L. (1998). Reconnecting Youth: An indicated prevention program. In *National Conference on Drug Abuse Prevention Research*. NIH Publication #98-4293. Rockville, MD: DHHS, NIH, NIDA, (pp. 57-72). Available from NCADI, P.O. Box 2345, Rockville, MD 20847-2345, 1-800-729-6686, or an electronic version can be obtained through NIDA's website at <http://www.nida.nih.gov/MeetSum/CODA/Youth.html>.
- Thompson, E.A., Horn, M., Herting, J.R. & Eggert, L.L. (1997). Enhancing outcomes in an indicated drug prevention program for high-risk youth. *Journal of Drug Education*, 27(1), 19-41.
- Thompson, E.A., Eggert, L.L., & Herting, J.R. (2000). Mediating effects of an indicated prevention program for reducing youth depression and suicide risk behaviors. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 30(3), 252-271.
- Eggert, L.L., Thompson, E.A., Herting, J.R., & Randell, B.P. (2001). Reconnecting youth to prevent drug abuse, school dropout, and suicidal behaviors among high-risk youth. In E. Wagner and H.B. Waldron (Eds.), *Innovations in Adolescent Substance Abuse Intervention* (pp. 51-84). Oxford: Elsevier Science.

See also the Fact Sheet on Reconnecting Youth at SAMHSA's Model Programs website, a comprehensive resource of proven programs for preventing or decreasing substance abuse and other high-risk behaviors: <http://modelprograms.samhsa.gov/pdfs/FactSheets/Reconnecting.pdf>