# Drug/Gambling Education
## as Health Promotion

**Helping Schools**

### Multiple ways to address risk and resilience



Reduce
risk factors

Increase
protective factors

Fulcrum < < <

**Build capacity/resilience
(promotive factors)**
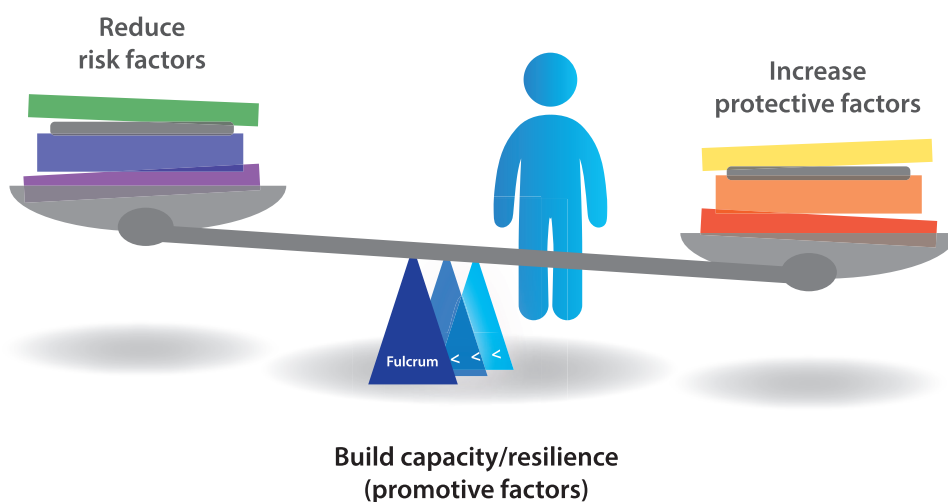
"Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" and "health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health"

**(World Health Organization, 1946, 1986)**

By Dan Reist and Mahboubeh Asgari

### A role for classroom-based education

Many factors influence the effects drug use or gambling might have. Strategies to improve positive outcomes often focus on reducing *risk* factors and increasing *protective* factors. Protective factors specifically mitigate the impact of risk factors. As a result, they work best when targeted to high-risk populations. **Promotive** factors do not focus on risk but on building the capacity of people. They benefit everyone and should be the focus of universal programs (Sameroff, 2010). They might be seen as moving the fulcrum in the model such that risk factors are less harmful, now or in the future.

Drug/gambling education is a universal strategy. As such, its focus should be on developing the capacity of all students, as individuals and cohorts, to understand and manage themselves and their environments. This involves far more

than drawing attention to risk or seeking to inoculate against risk. It includes building the capacity to adapt to changing circumstances and to deal with past, present and future adversities. The focus of this education is nurturing student resilience in a world in which drugs and gambling are readily available and often promoted.

### Keys to building capacity and nurturing resilience

1. **Enhancing belonging and connectedness:** Well-being involves embodied experiences of connectedness with school, community, peers and adults that help the individual find their place within the social community (Blum, McNeely, & Rinehart, 2002; Mallick & Watts, 2007a; McNeely & Falci, 2004; Youth Researchers, 2016).

2. **Focusing on supporting agency and building a sense of purpose:** A sense of increased personal self-knowledge and understanding is essential in the development of informed decision-making and self-management and requires a self-reflective rather than didactic or authoritarian educational approach (Hevey, Smith, & McGee, 1998; Mallick & Watts, 2007b; Shanker, 2014).

3. **Building critical thinking and social skills:** Learning in collaboration with others involves analysing ideas, attitudes, beliefs and norms and ultimately developing meaning for oneself which requires the honing of both critical thinking and social skills (Aldinger & Whitman, 2005; Burbules, 2004; Moffat, Jenkins, & Johnson, 2013).

4. **Nurturing a recognition of fallibility:** Gaining an appreciation for one's place in the world "without putting oneself in the centre of the world" is critical to well-being and requires individuals to develop humility and be able to "relax within the scope of uncertainty," respecting other possibilities beyond oneself while still forming personal conclusions (Biesta, 2017, p. 420; Gadamer, 2004, pp. 355–386; Moffat et al., 2013; Weber, 2013).

5. **Developing storytelling and rewriting skills for making sense of one's life:** The story of our own identity that we tell ourselves is influenced by the many voices from our past and present experiences, but it is nonetheless a story *we* tell, and it influences our well-being. Developing skill in seeing the multitude of alternatives within the many voices allows one to rewrite a new story that is meaningful to oneself and others (Bakhtin, 1981; Gadamer, 2004; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998).

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