

Amplifying Positive Social Norms for Prevention

KPC Pre-Conference Workshop

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Our Learning Objectives

Describe

Positive social norms campaigning as part of an environmental strategy for prevention

Identify

Key components needed for effective social norms campaigns

Practice

Drafting positive social norms messages and discuss strategic communications for a community-wide campaign

Our Agenda

- Intro
- Why Perceptions Matter
- Positive Social Norms Approach
- Brownie Break ~3 PM
- Crafting Campaigns
- Process, Plan, Pilots
- Close

Our Dynamics

- Participatory & Inclusive
- Discursive
- Thoughts, questions welcomed
- Relevant to your hopes and needs

Activity: Self Portraits on Stickies

1. Take 3-5 min to draw your self-portrait on a sticky note
2. Use whatever medium you want
3. Be as simple, silly, or serious as you like!
4. Share them with your table
5. Post on flipchart

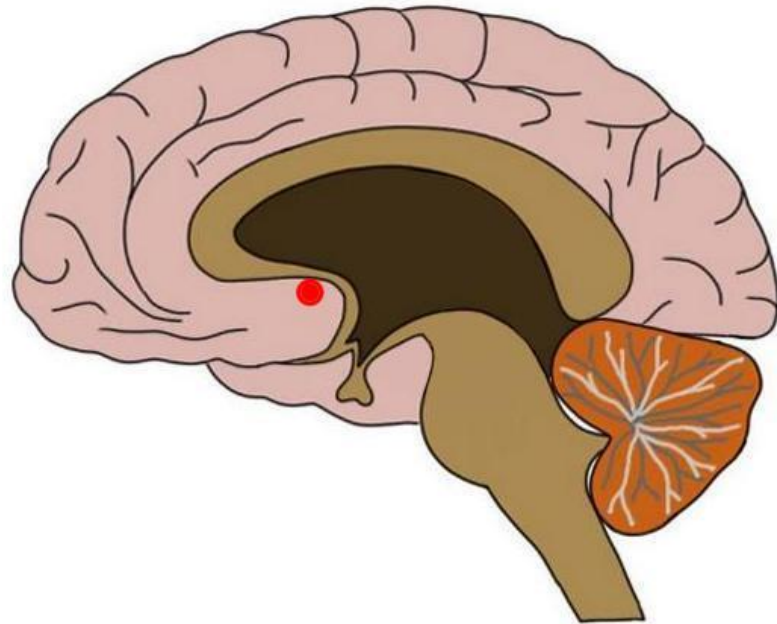


why perceptions matter

Explanations from Neuroscience and Social Psychology

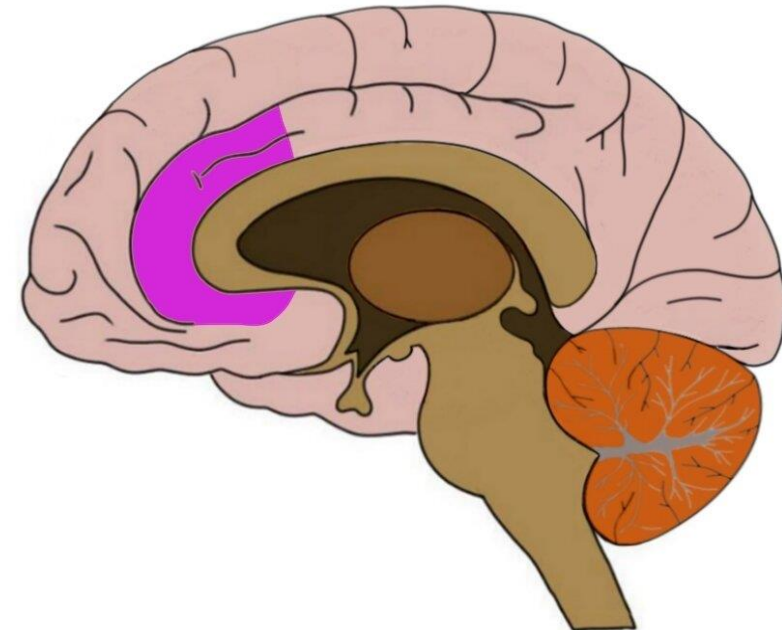
Our Brains Seek Social Belonging

Social belonging



Ventral striatum & nucleus accumbens
activated
Same as physical *reward*

Social exclusion



Anterior cingulate cortex activated
Same as physical *pain*

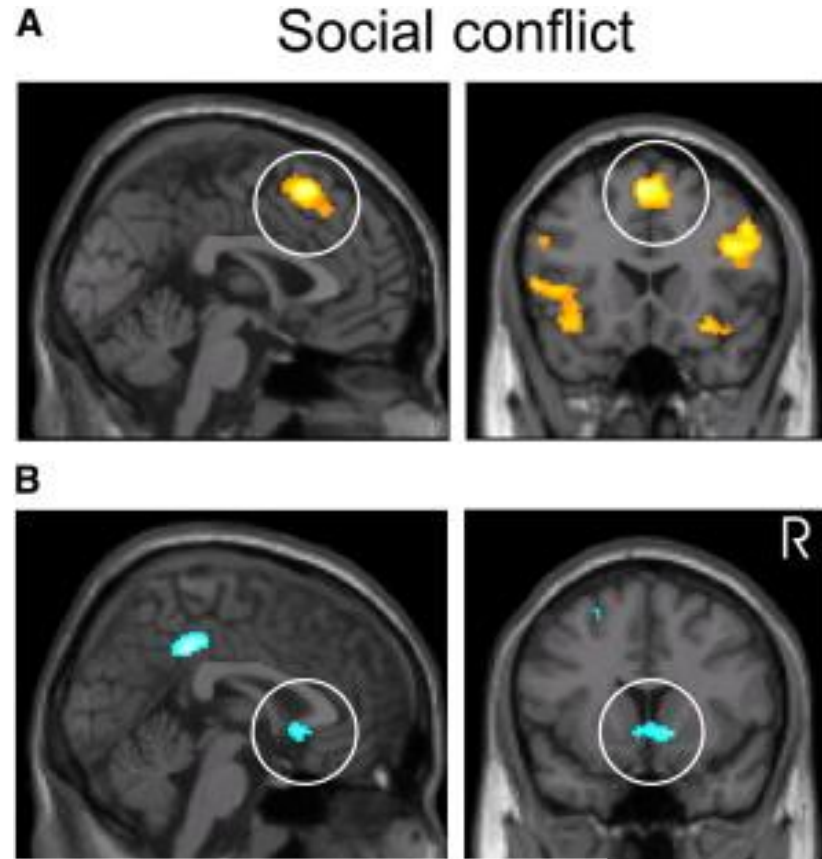
BRAIN GAMES

NEW EPISODES
MONDAYS 9/8C



braingames

Neural Error Monitoring Rewards Conformity



Conflict with group ratings -> Very strong response in participants' **error processing brain areas**
(Rostral cingulate zone)

No conflict with group ratings -> Activated participants' **reward processing brain areas**
(Ventral striatum, nucleus accumbens, posterior cingulate cortex)

Klucharev et al.'s (2009) Figure 3. Social Conflict Effects: Neural Response to Group Ratings in Conflict vs. No-Conflict Trials

Activity: Create for the Concept



1. Get into your assigned color group
2. Search your assigned term and "social norm approach" on the internet/LLM tool of choice
3. Come up with an expressive way to demonstrate the concept (e.g., role play, recite a poem, draw a picture, give a quiz, etc.)
4. Prepare a 30-60 sec demo

Perceptions Can Steer Behavior



Social Conformity

People tend to align their behavior with the majority (even if that majority is imagined)



Pluralistic Ignorance

We assume others approve of something we actually disapprove of (and stay silent)



False Consensus Effect

We overestimate how many people think or act like us



Social Belonging

People are wired for a sense of belonging and consistency

How are these concepts relevant today?



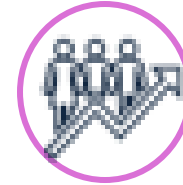
Social Conformity

- Most youth follow perceived norms



Pluralistic Ignorance

- Youth can think their peers approve of drinking, even if they don't



False Consensus Effect

- Youth who drink likely overestimate prevalence



Social Belonging

- It's human nature for youth to desire to fit in

Normative Misperception

- Systematic overestimation or underestimation of peer attitudes or behaviors (particularly, risk behaviors)
- Humans tend to...
 - Overestimate unhealthy behaviors
 - Underestimate healthy behaviors

Overestimation
of risky behavior
by peers



Risky behavior
is normalized



More likely to
engage in that
behavior

Normative Misperception

- Systematic overestimation or underestimation of peer attitudes or behaviors (particularly, risk behaviors)
- "Teens smoke weed, it's just what they do"



Example: youth marijuana use



Youth overestimate how many peers use marijuana



Marijuana use by youth feels normal



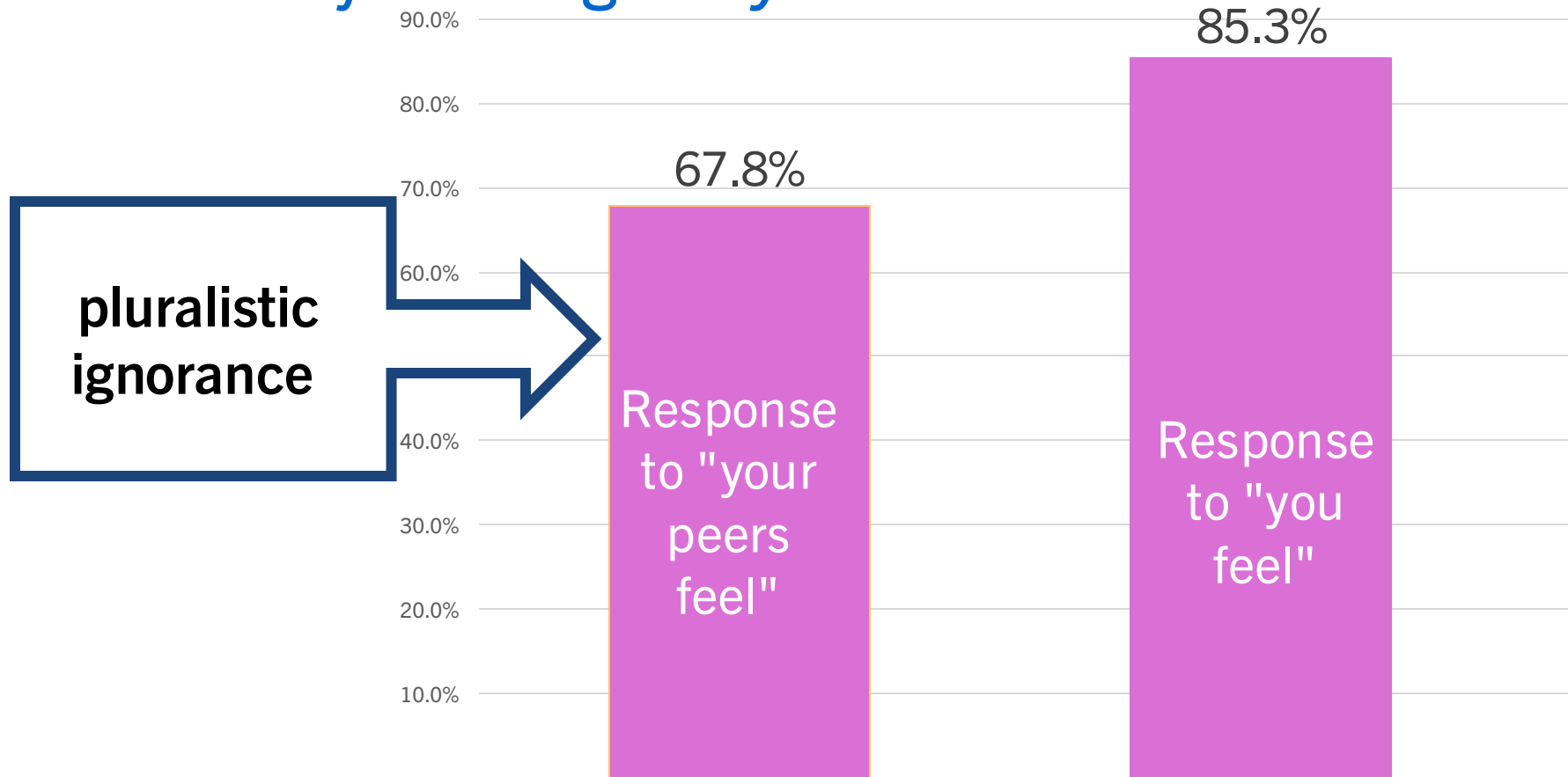
Youth more likely to use marijuana

Alcohol-related Misperceptions Can Increase Risk For...

- Earlier age of first consumption
- Overconsumption by those who already drink
- Other risky drinking behavior
- Driving under the influence
- Parental acceptance of underage drinking

What's the misperception?

*How wrong do you/your peers feel it is for someone your age to use marijuana regularly?**



Social Norms are Perceptions, Applied

Unwritten rules of behavior – what people believe is typical and accepted

Descriptive Social Norms

"What people do around here"

Perceptions of how common an attitude or behavior is

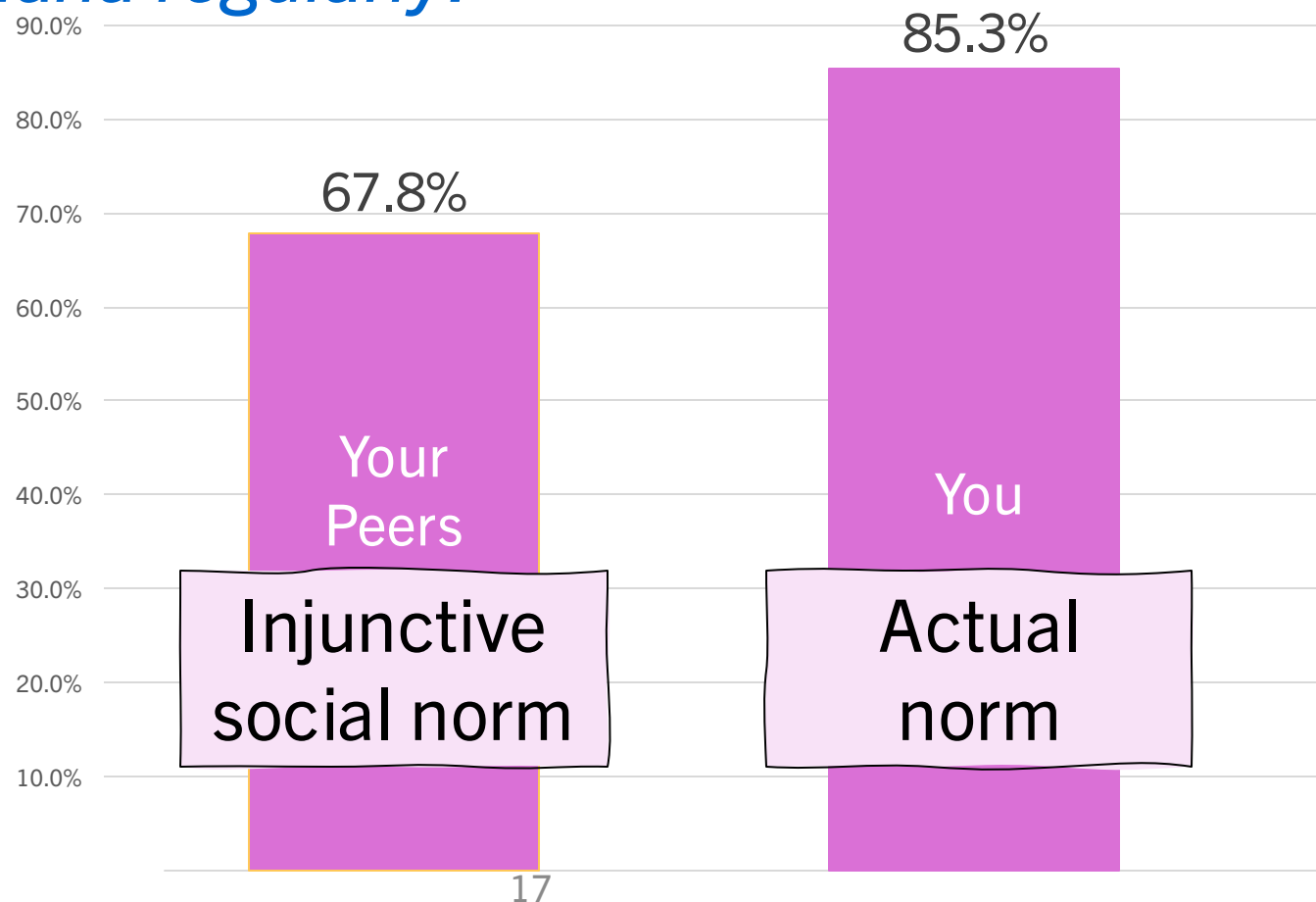
"What people approve of around here"

Perceptions of what attitudes or behaviors others approve or disapprove of

Injunctive Social Norms

Which is descriptive, which is injunctive?

*How wrong do you/your peers feel it is for someone your age to use marijuana regularly?**



*2024 Arizona Youth Survey data from Grade 10 respondents in Yavapai County, via Arizona Criminal Justice Commission

Recap: What term or concept from this section is the stickiest for you?

1. What's the first thing that comes to mind?
2. Write it on a sticky note
3. Place on Why Perceptions Matter flipchart



positive social norms approach

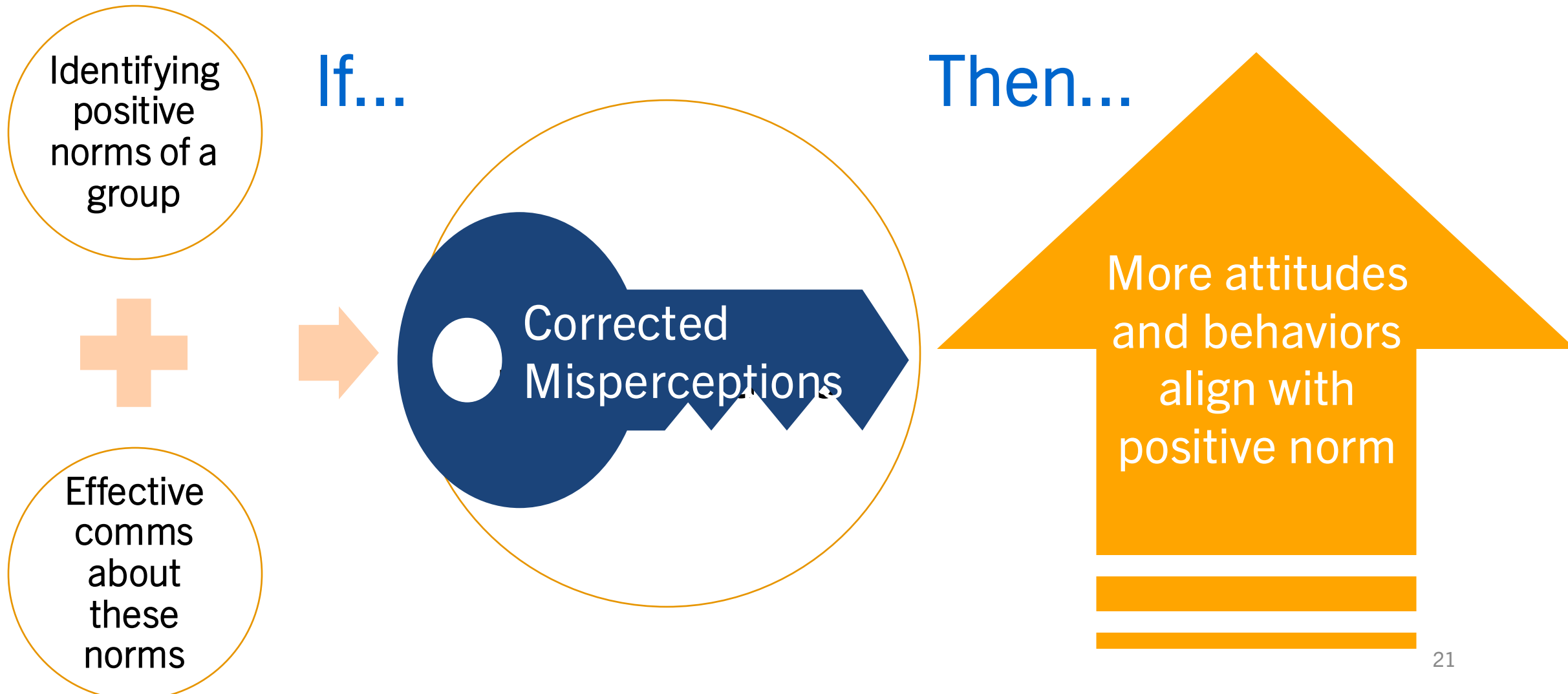
Changing Behavior by Promoting Positive, Actual Norms

Social Norms Theory Recap

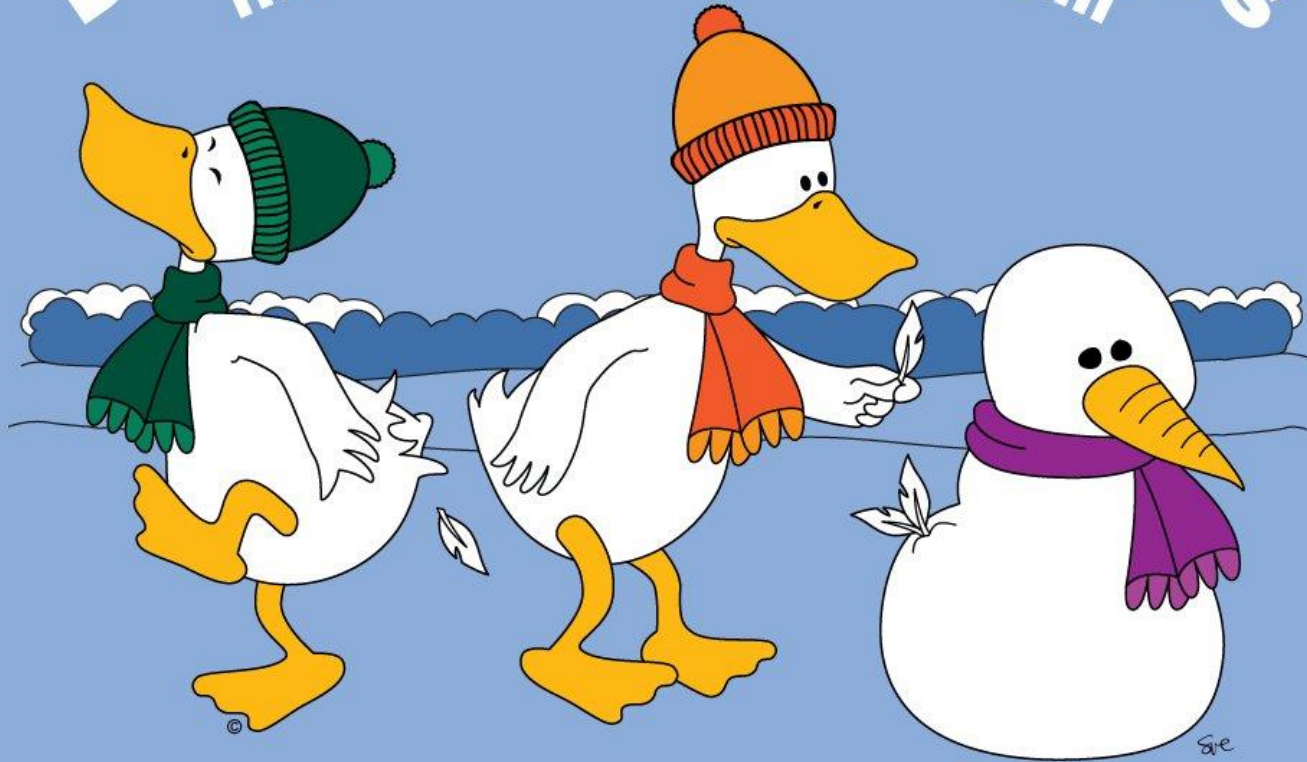
- Social norms are the unwritten rules of behavior within a group
- People act based on *what they believe* (perception) is normal, not what *is* actually normal
- Correcting misperceptions and revealing actual norms can influence an individual to adjust their behavior to align with their new understanding of the norm

TLDR: People usually behave according to what they think is the norm

Social Norms Approach Theory of Change



Duck, Duck, Goosebumps
most Spartans keep it chill



72% of MSU students consume 0-4 drinks
when they party

Example

- Michigan State University's ducks campaign
- Strong engagement by students
- Documented effectiveness

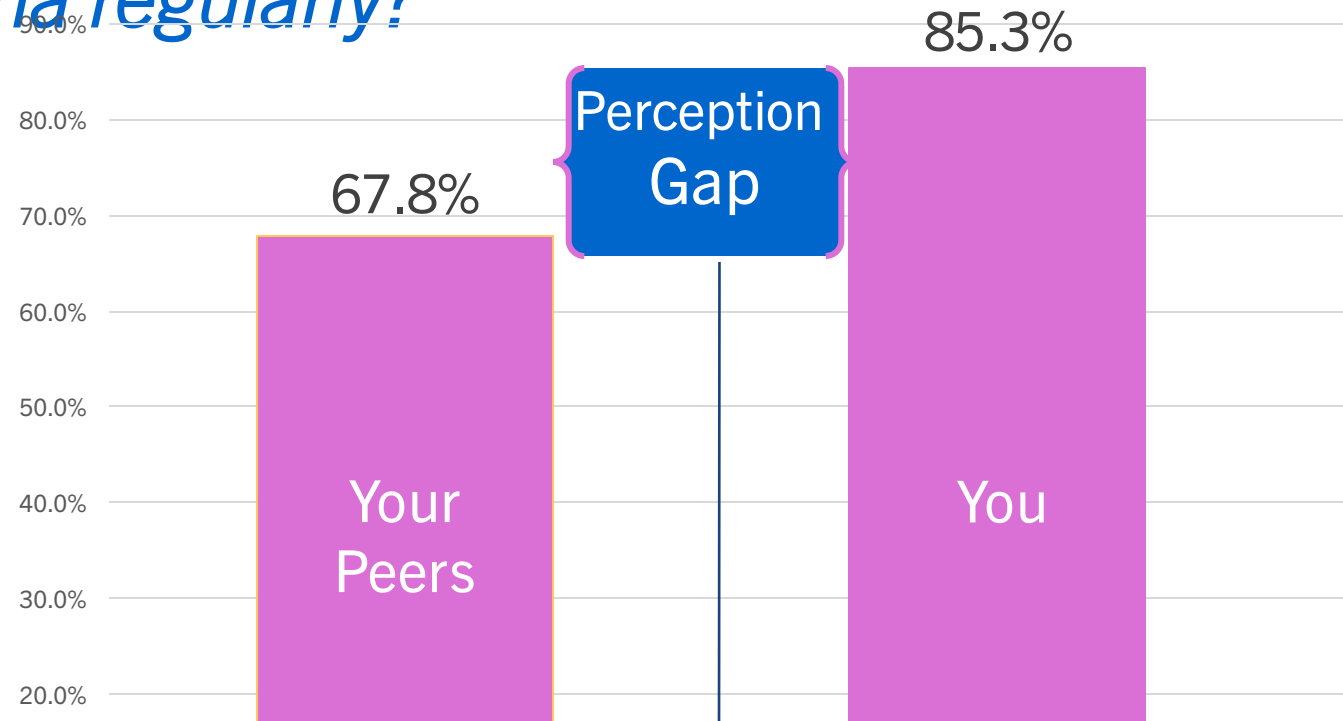
Is a social norms campaign an environmental prevention strategy?

- Based on socioecological model
- Universal approach (e.g., entire school is exposed)
- Aim for group/population-level change
- Long-term focus
- Most effective when implemented as part of multi-pronged approach



Data Will Direct Your Campaign

*How wrong do you/your peers feel it is for someone your age to use marijuana regularly?**

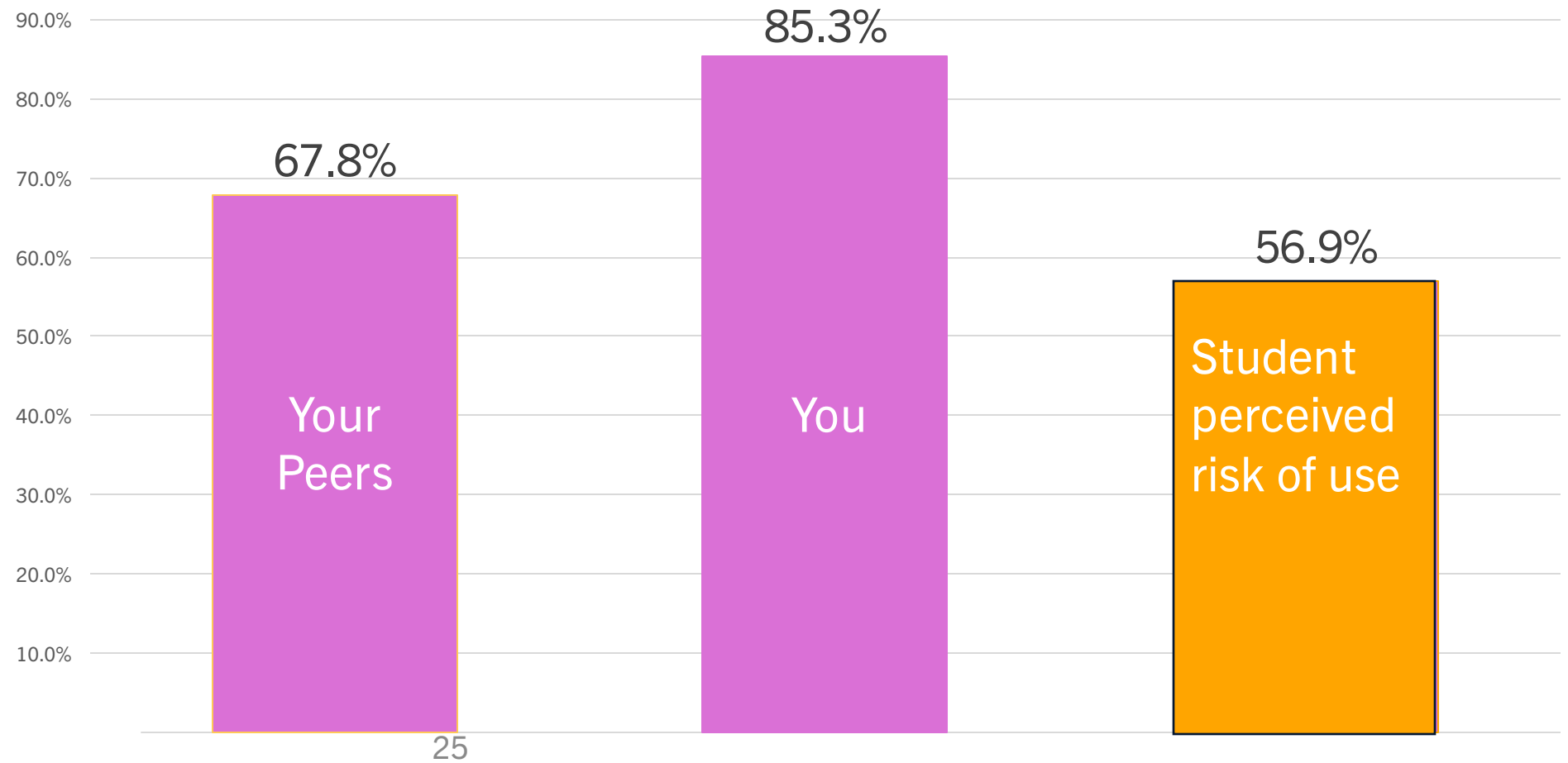


 Perception gap = opportunity for social norms approach!



Could we reduce past-30 day use?

*How wrong do you/your peers feel it is for someone your age to use marijuana regularly?**



16.4%
Past-30 day use

25

*2024 Arizona Youth Survey data from Yavapai County, via Arizona Criminal Justice Commission

Avoid Risk Messages, They Can Backfire

- Reinforces the belief that the risk behavior is common
- Can label and stigmatize
- Risk of harm messages quickly discredited when audience sees someone engaging in the risk behavior is "fine"
- Not every problem can be dire
 - Teaches people to tune you out (boy who cried wolf)
 - Save risk messages for rapidly growing and dangerous trends (e.g., fentanyl overdoses)

Fear-based Messages Are a Big Nope

- Reinforce

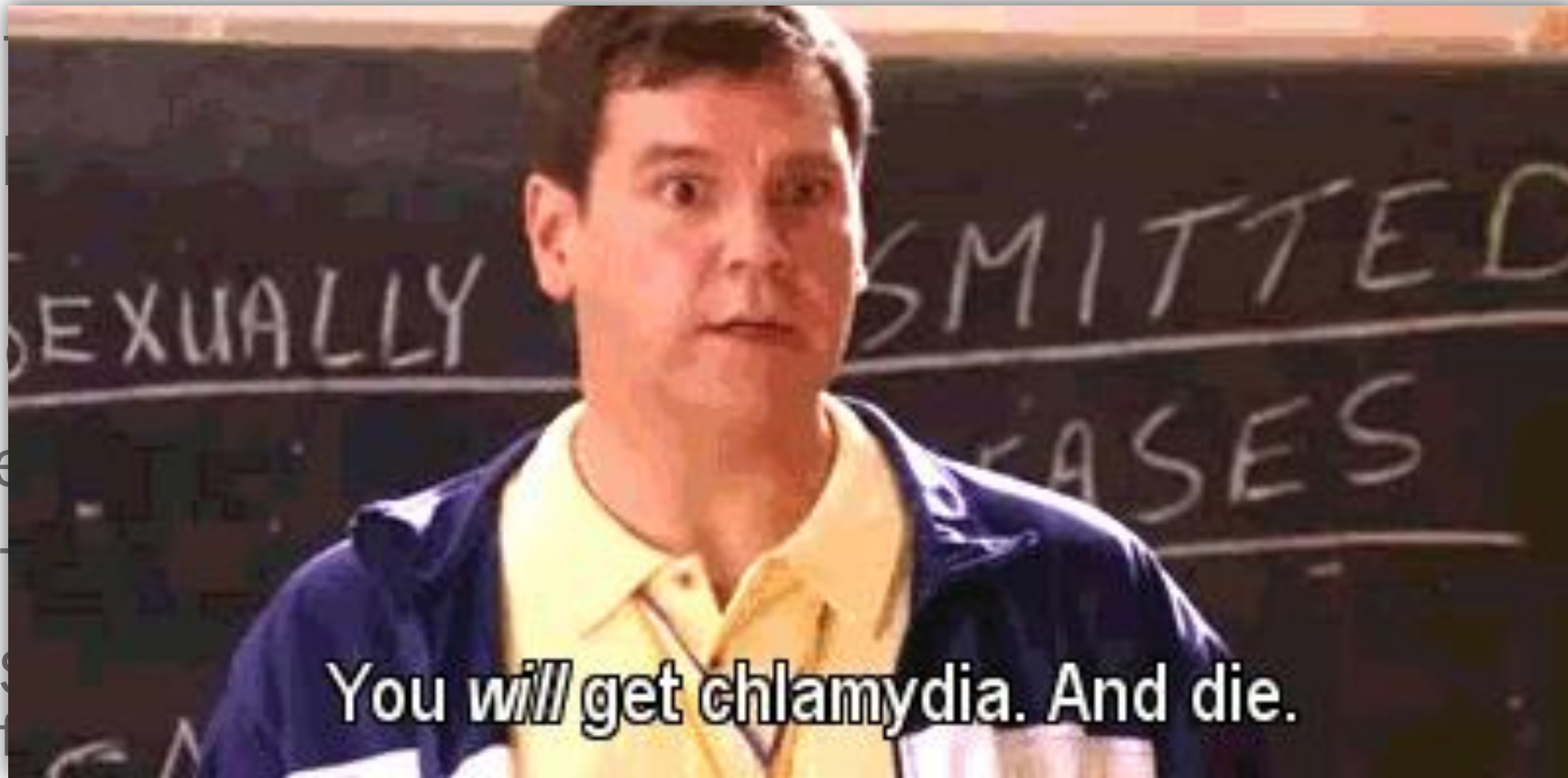
- Can

- Risk
some

- Not e

 -

 -



sees

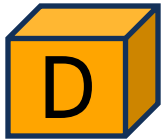
e.g.,

A Note from Change Management

Effective organization-wide or community-wide change efforts rely on individuals...



...being **Aware** of and understanding the Why



...**Desiring** to engage and participate (making a choice)



...having **Knowledge** on how to do things differently



...strengthening their **Ability** to take action and implement



...practicing and receiving **Reinforcement** to sustain the change

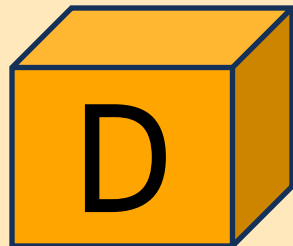


Social Norms Approach ↑ Change Desire

Effective organization-wide or community-wide change efforts rely on individuals...



...being **Aware** of and understanding the Why



...**Desiring** to engage and participate
(making a personal choice)

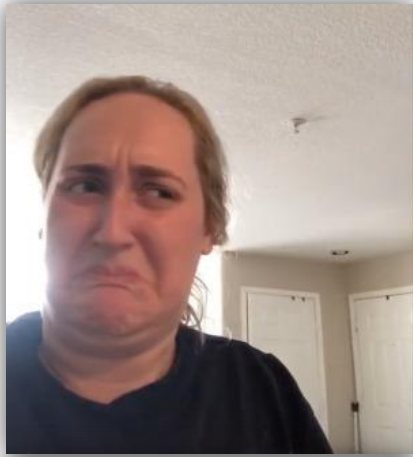


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It's All About (Re)Framing



"1 out of 4 teens are drinking every week"



"Most (75%) teens choose not to drink at parties"

Recap: Positive Social Norms Approach, Because _____

1. In one breath, fill in the blank
2. Summarize on a sticky note
3. Post your sticky note on the Positive Social Norms Approach flipchart



crafting campaigns

Key Components Needed for Effective Social Norms Campaigns

What should our campaigns do?



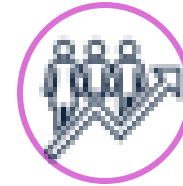
Social Conformity

- Most youth follow perceived norms
- Need to make positive norms visible



Pluralistic Ignorance

- Youth can think their peers approve of drinking, even if they don't
- Need to reveal misperceptions



False Consensus Effect

- Youth who drink likely overestimate prevalence
- Need to show accurate data from a credible source



Social Belonging

- It's human nature for youth to desire to fit in
- Need to connect prevention to community pride

Social Norms Marketing Campaigns: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

Presenter

William DeJong, PhD

Higher Education Center

for Alcohol and Drug Misuse Prevention and Recovery

Powered by: The Ohio State University

Campaign Messaging Don'ts

- ⊘ Don't include risk factors or any negative data
- ⊘ Don't use a moralistic or judgmental tone, nor stigmatizing terms
- ⊘ Don't use directive messaging
- ⊘ Don't use decimals (e.g., 78.2% - round to 78% or 8/10)
- ⊘ If mentioning number of drinks or number of times using, don't list the highest number – list a range (e.g., 0-4 drinks, 1-3 times)

 Your aim is to uncover and affirm strengths that already exist



Resource: [NIH's A better way to say that webpage](#)

Campaign Design Don'ts

- ⊘ Don't use images with a negative undertone
- ⊘ Don't use images that may reinforce stigma
- ⊘ Don't use images of substance use, overdose, drugs, and drug use paraphernalia
- ⊘ Don't use images of confinement, criminalization, suffering
- ⊘ Don't ignore diversity among your focus population





**91% OF YOUNG ADULTS
DRIVE SOBER!**

**NO MATTER HOW YOU GET HOME,
STEER CLEAR**

MOSTSTEERCLEAR.ORG

Neighborhood House TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMISSION

Campaign Messaging Musts

- ✓ Must have the normative message on it
- ✓ Must be a norm approved by majority (Linkenbach says 51%+, DeJong says at least 60%)
- ✓ Must use a whole number (e.g., 70%, or 7 out of 10...)
- ✓ Must include accurate facts from trustworthy sources, cited
- ✓ If mentioning alcoholic drinks, include drink equivalency line (e.g., 1 drink = 12 oz beer, 5 oz glass of wine, or 1.5 oz liquor)
- ✓ Use plain language – simple, clear

Campaign Design Musts

- ✓ Depict the positive vision, what you want to grow!
- ✓ Attention-getting
- ✓ Attractive to intended audience
- ✓ Memorable
- ✓ Intended audience needs to see themselves in comparison group (e.g., graphics, photos)
- ✓ Easy readability (ideally, ADA-compliant font type, size, contrast, and colors)



Activity: Campaign Audits

1. Join your letter group
2. Use the Audit Checklist for your assigned campaign
3. Be ready to report-out



Activity: Campaign Audits

Oakland
University's
goose named
Positive Norm

DID YOU KNOW?

87%
OF OU STUDENTS
DO NOT USE
MARIJUANA!

SPRING 2025 SOCIAL NORMS SURVEY

COOL!

PN

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY
ALLIANCE OF COALITIONS FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES
Oakland Community Health Network
Developmental Disabilities · Mental Health · Substance Recovery

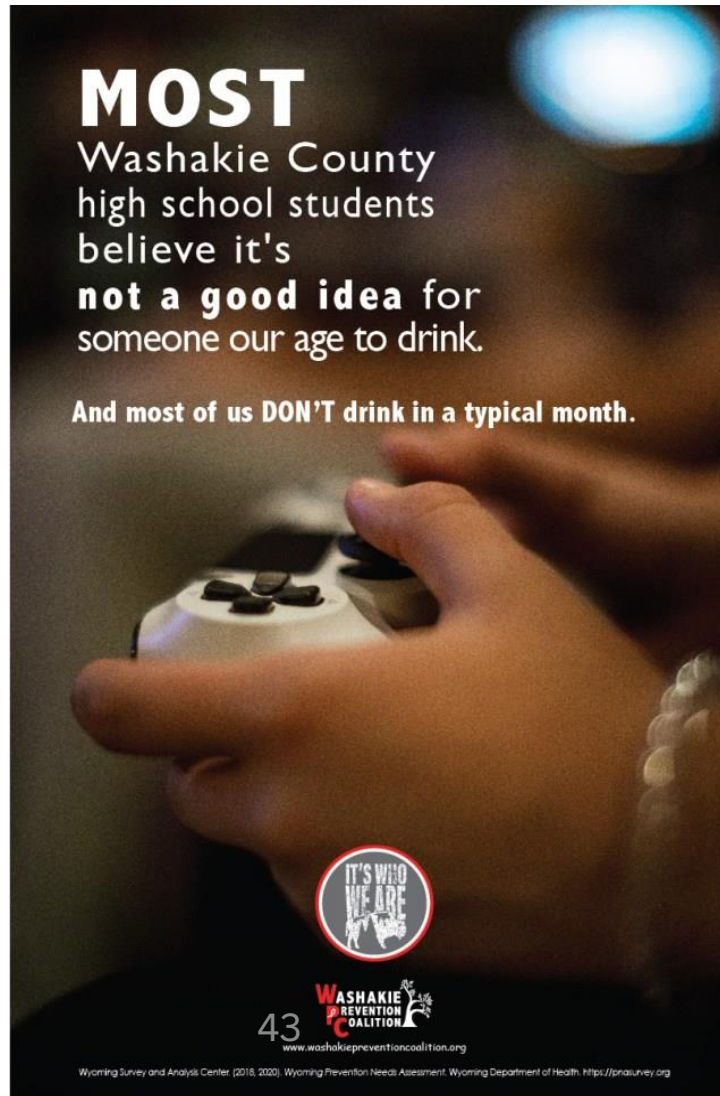
Activity: Campaign Audits

Northwestern
University's
1 in 3
campaign



Activity: Campaign Audits

Washakie
County's (WY)
It's Who We Are
campaign




MOST
Washakie County
high school students
believe it's
not a good idea for
someone our age to drink.

And most of us **DON'T** drink in a typical month.

43
WASHAKIE
PREVENTION
COALITION
www.washakiepreventioncoalition.org

Wyoming Survey and Analysis Center. (2018, 2020). Wyoming Prevention Needs Assessment. Wyoming Department of Health. <https://praisurvey.org>



MOST (66%)
Washakie County
high school students
DON'T drink alcohol
in a typical month.

IT'S WHO
WE ARE

WASHAKIE
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Activity: Campaign Audits

University of
Memphis's *Be
Tiger Well*
campaign

79.5%

OF UOFM TIGERS BELIEVE
THERE IS A GOOD SUPPORT
SYSTEM FOR STUDENTS ON
CAMPUS TO GET THROUGH
DIFFICULT TIMES.

**Think Well
Feel Well
Do Well**

**BE TIGER
WELL**



Activity: Campaign Audits

Link
Together
Coalition's
(IL)
campaign



Activity: Campaign Audits

Impact Norwood Prevention Coalition's (MA) *We Are The Norm* campaign

78%

of Norwood youth make healthy decisions by NOT using electronic vapor products.



We Are The Norm



What do we need to communicate?



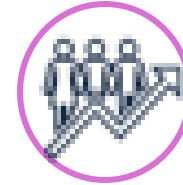
Social Conformity

- Most youth follow perceived norms
- Need to make positive norms visible
- "Most teens don't drink"



Pluralistic Ignorance

- Youth can think their peers approve of drinking, even if they don't
- Need to reveal misperceptions
- "You're not alone in making healthy choices"



False Consensus Effect

- Youth who drink likely overestimate prevalence
- Need to show accurate data from a credible source
- "Few actually drink - your perception matters"



Social Belonging

- It's human nature for youth to desire to fit in
- Need to connect prevention to community pride
- "At our school, we take care of each other"



OLIVIA

Former 8th Grade Student
Jemtegaard Middle School

Recap: Feel, See, Hear



Feel / Sense



See / Notice



Hear



the how in four phases

A Simplified Way to Start a Positive Social Norms Campaign

Positive Social Norms Approach Made Simple in 4 Phases



Uncover the
Positive



Measure
Misperception



Construct
Interventions



Track Outputs
& Outcomes

1st Phase: Find What You Want to Grow

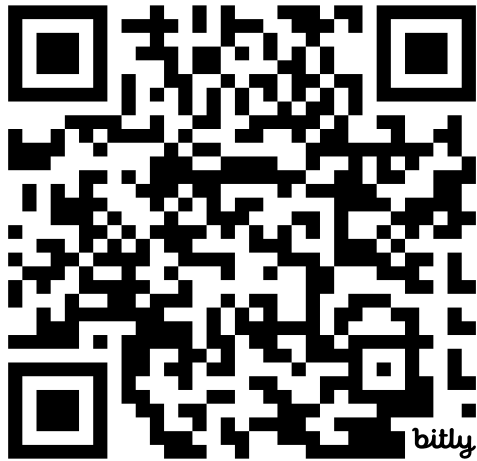


Uncover the
Positive

Science of the Positive (Linkenbach)

- The positive already exists
- We can grow and expand positives across schools and communities
- Use local data to identify the protective factors and healthy norms

Activity: Find the Positive in Normandale



1. Access the Normandale Case Study
2. Review their data
3. List the positives on your group's flipchart



2nd Phase: Prioritize Perception Gaps



Measure
Misperception

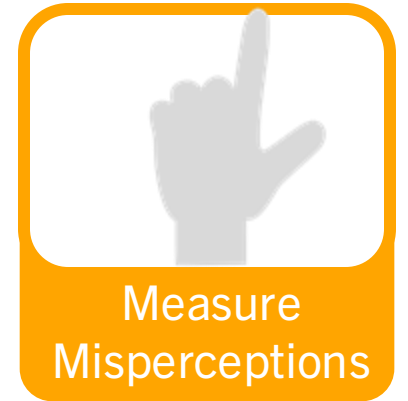
Perception Gap = Opportunity

- Review the data for any gaps and misperceptions of the positive
- Override our natural tendency toward the negative
- This step is finding that distortion to intervene upon

Activity: Select a Normandale Misperception to Correct



1. Identify misperception gaps in the data (5 min)
2. Determine the gap to prioritize (2 min)
3. Update your group's flipchart



3rd Phase: Create / Adapt / Replicate

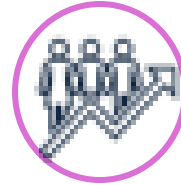


Construct
Interventions

Social Norms Campaigns

- Great starting point – good bang for your buck
- Focus on correcting the misperceptions that are prioritized for the community
- Use best practices to develop campaign message and visual design

What do we need to communicate?



Social Conformity

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Pluralistic Ignorance

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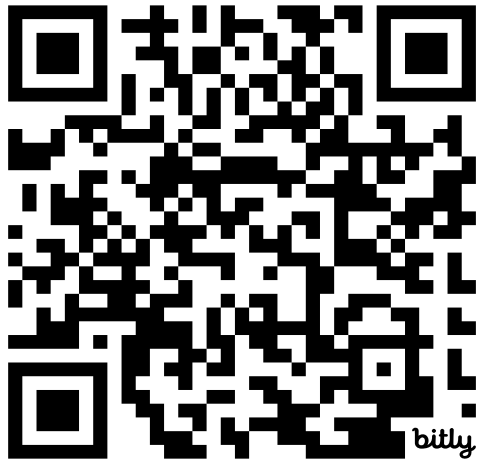
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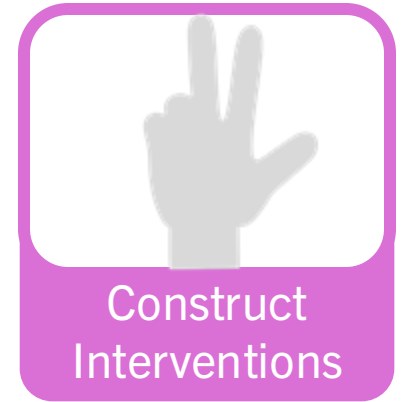
Social Belonging

- It's human nature for youth to desire to fit in
- Need to connect prevention to community pride
- "At our school, we take care of each other"

Activity: Draft Campaign Messages / Designs



1. Refer to the guidelines
2. Draft possible campaign messages / designs to correct the norm misperception in Normandale
3. Feel welcome to sketch or use AI
4. Update your group's flipchart
5. Be ready to share



4th Phase: Evaluate to Empower



Track Outputs
& Outcomes

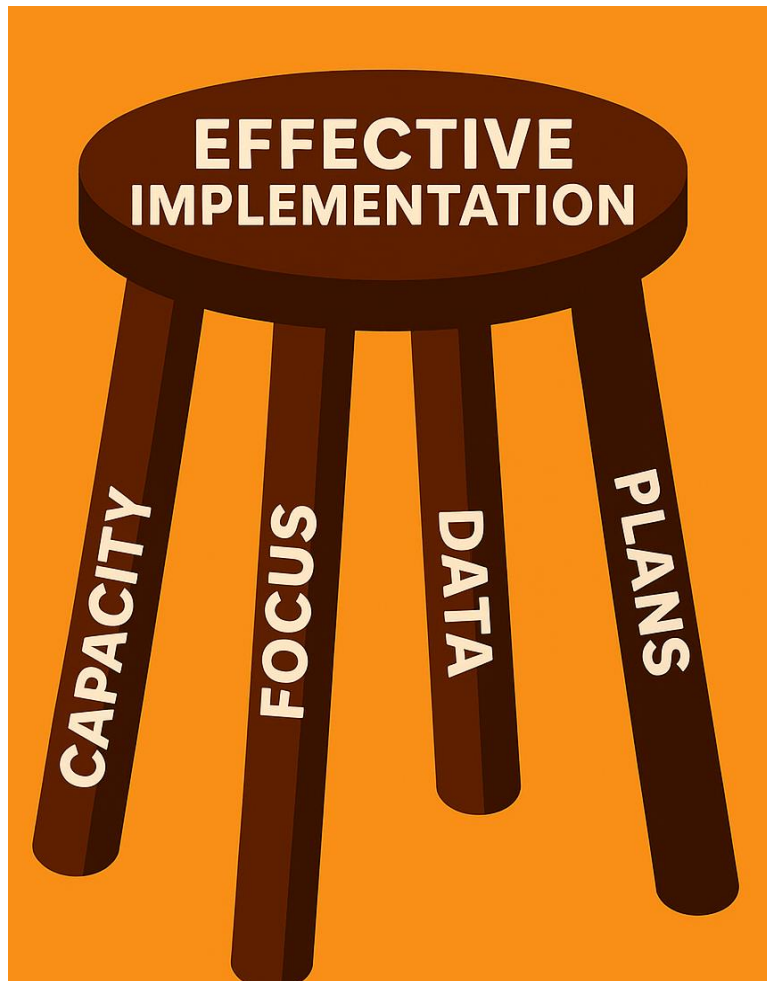
Monitor to Adjust, Improve, Celebrate

- Long-term Outcome: Increase pro-health attitudes and behaviors in the community
- Intermediate Outcome: Reduce misperceptions about the positive norm
- Short-term Outputs: Campaign delivery and exposure

To Be Effective, We Need More than Good Campaign Design



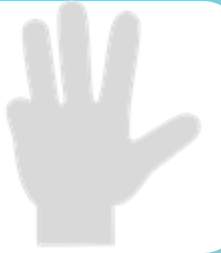
Track Outputs
& Outcomes



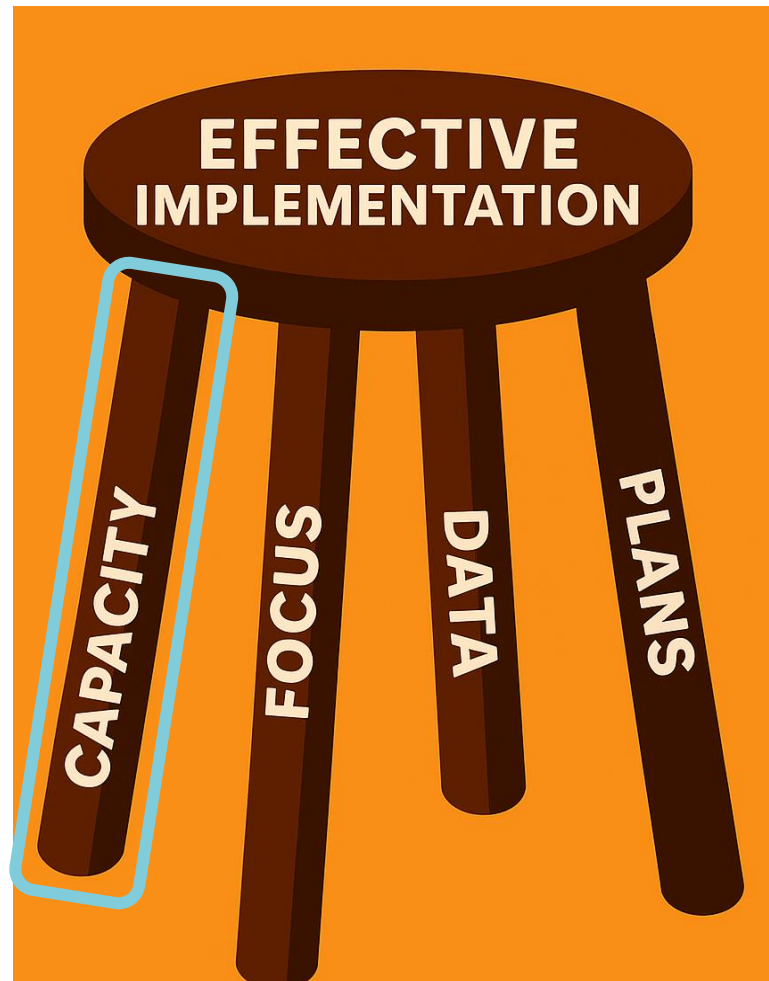
- Core components = most essential and indispensable elements of an intervention
- Consistently found to contribute to the intervention's effectiveness
- Environmental strategies tend to have moderate rigidity

Capacity

A Core Component of Evidence-based Social Norm Campaigns



Track Outputs
& Outcomes



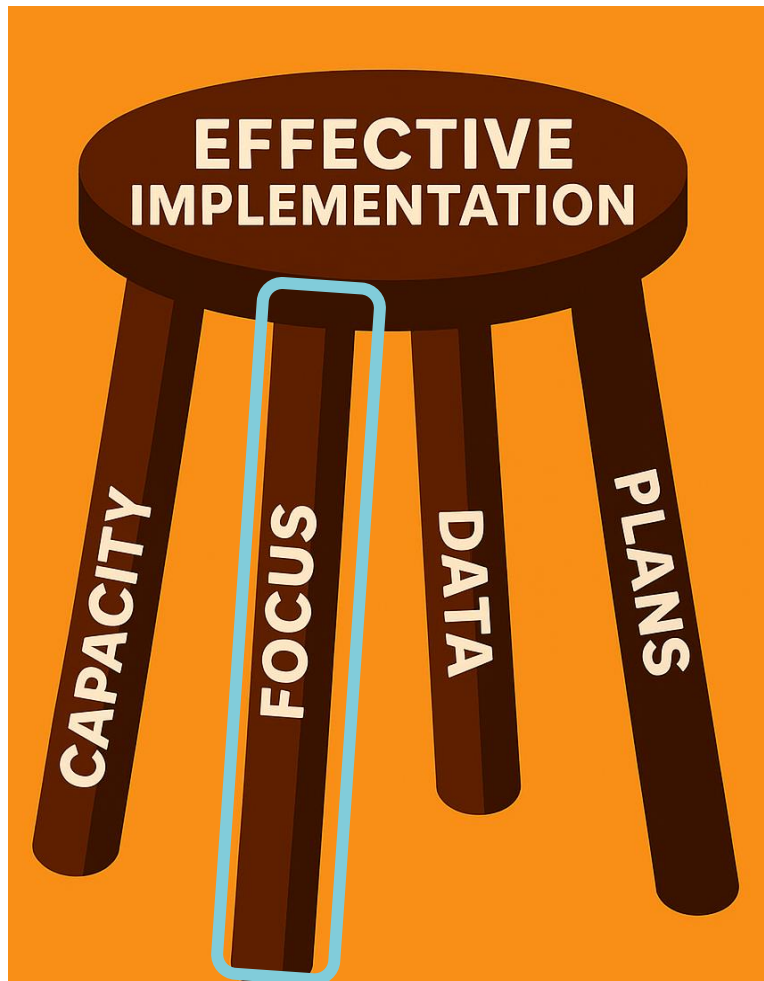
- Project staff trained in social norms campaigning
- Implementation team roles defined
- Ongoing support built in
- Key stakeholders are ready and willing to implement social norms campaigns (e.g. school administrators, staff, local media, parent groups)

Focus

A Core Component of Evidence-based Social Norm Campaigns



Track Outputs
& Outcomes



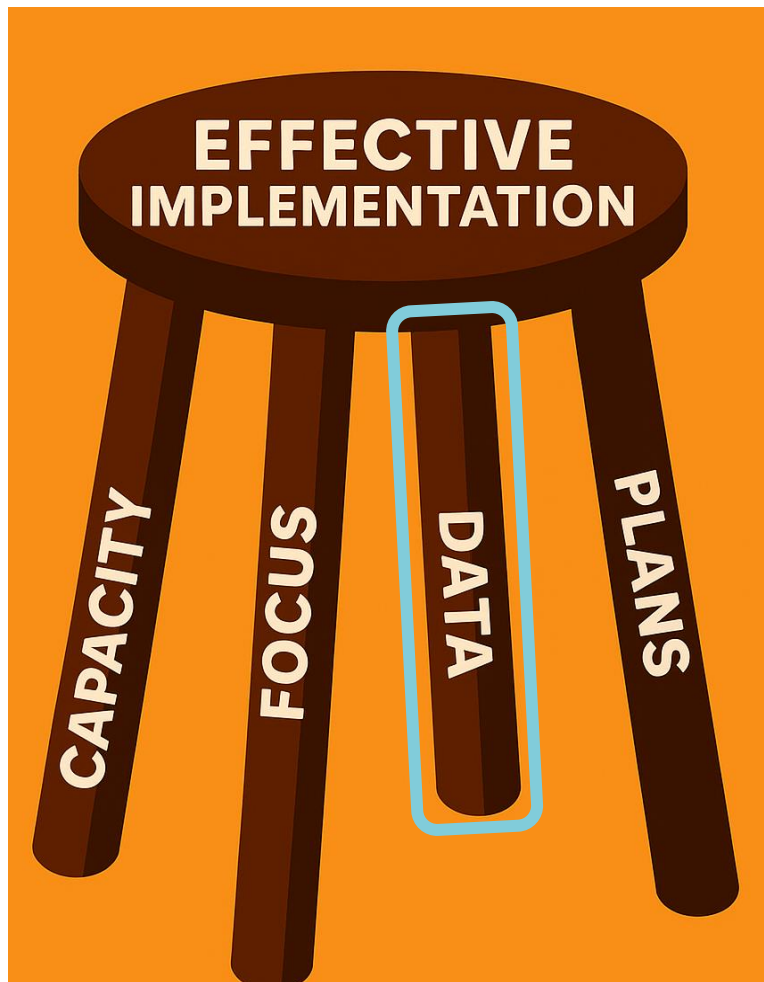
- Defined problem (e.g., percentage of peers who vape weekly, not vague notions of vaping in general)
- Specific focus population and peer reference group (e.g., "other students in your class")

Data

A Core Component of Evidence-based Social Norm Campaigns



Track Outputs
& Outcomes



- Local data on focus population's...
 - Perceptions of peer's typical behaviors/attitudes/perceptions
 - Exposure to other social norm messages
 - Protective factors/pro-health behaviors (e.g., designating sober driver)
- Ideally, a baseline survey



[Resource: HIDTA's Baseline Social Norms Survey template](#)⁶³

Measuring Perceptions of Behavior Occurrence



Track Outputs
& Outcomes

Descriptive Social Norms

- Self-reported behavior (what they do)
"During the past 30 days, on how many days did you have at least one alcoholic drink?"
- Perception of what peers do
"In the past 30 days, about what percent of students at your school drank alcohol?"

Measuring Perceptions of Approval



Track Outputs
& Outcomes

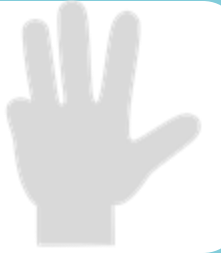
- Peer approval
"Most students think it is wrong for other students to use marijuana"
- Adult approval
"Most adults think it is wrong for students to use marijuana"
- Peer disapproval of negative consequences
"How would your close friends feel if you got into trouble with your school because of your alcohol or drug use?"

Use a
5- or 7-point
Likert scale

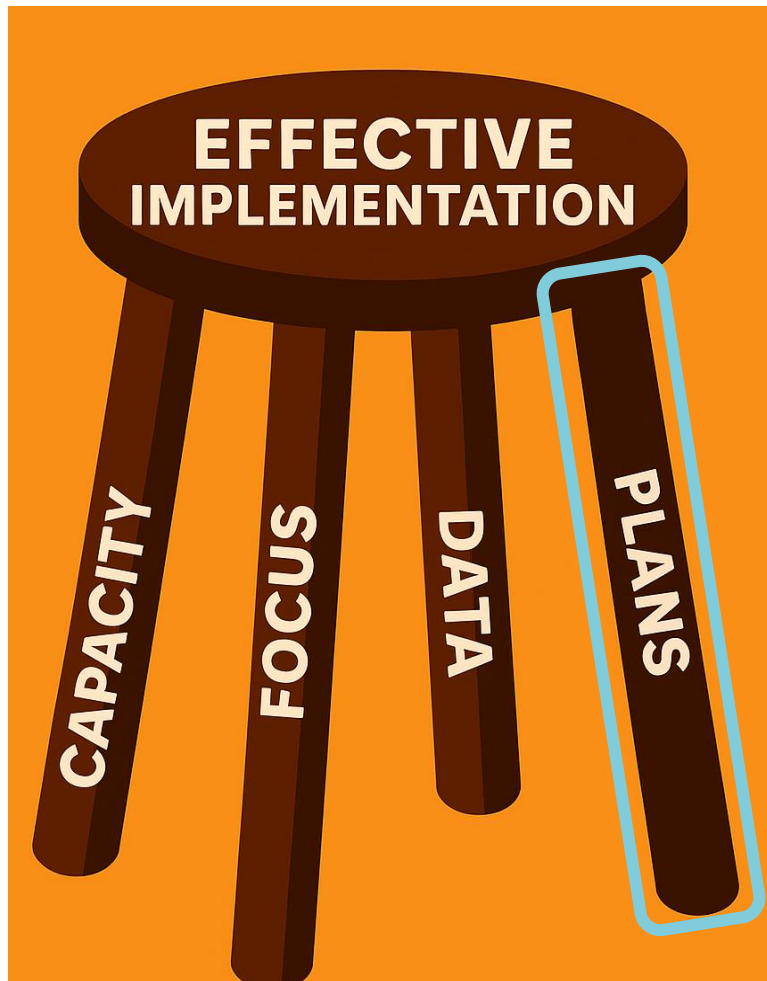
Injunctive
Social Norms

Clear Plans

A Core Component of Evidence-based Social Norm Campaigns



Track Outputs
& Outcomes



- Clear implementation/action plan, with:
 - Consistent and frequent delivery of messages – dosage matters!
 - Documenting and tracking media outputs
 - Gathering feedback on messages, reach from audience
 - Publicity for campaign
 - Regular updates (a "living document")



[Resource: HIDTA's tracking tool templates](#)

Positive Social Norms Approach Made Simple in 4 Phases



Uncover the Positive



Measure Misperception



Construct Interventions



Track Outputs & Outcomes

Activity: One Thing to Keep Building

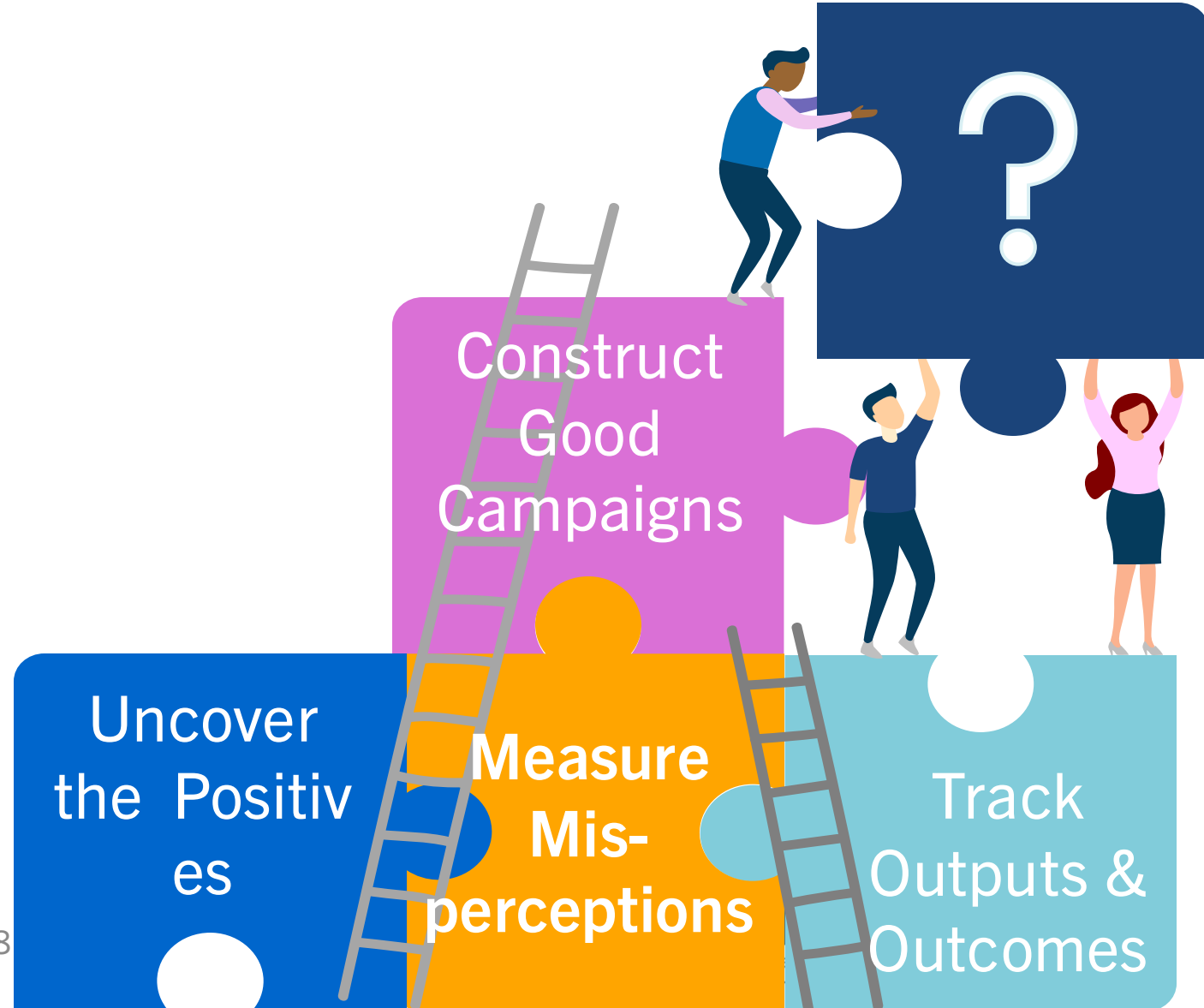
Name 1 thing you're going to...

- Learn more about,
- Do differently,
- Seek help for,

OR

- Help others with...

...to keep building on today





thank you, KPC!

It was wonderful to be back in Kansas

Key Resources for Positive Social Norms Campaigns

A Guide to Implementing a Social Norms Media Campaign for Substance Use Prevention in Secondary Schools



ADAPT
A Division for Advancing
Prevention & Treatment
CULTIVATING PREVENTION

Kansas Prevention Collaborative
It Matters
itmattersks.org

Home Young Adults Youth Previous Years



It Matters

Resources

Print and digital graphics and materials for categories: alcohol, cocaine, fentanyl, marijuana, methamphetamine, prescription drugs, tobacco, and vaping, catered towards youth.

- Digital Ad (300 x 250 px)
- Door Hanger (3.25" x 8" – single side)
- Facebook Graphic (1200 x 900 px)
- Instagram Graphic (1080 x 1080 px)
- Poster (11" x 17")
- Print Ad (7.625" x 6")
- Sticker (4" x 3.25")
- Stuffer (6.5" x 3.625" – single side)
- X Graphic (800 x 320 px)

YOUTH

DOWNLOAD ALL FILES 



Applying the Science of the Positive to Health and Safety



By Dr. Jeffrey W. Linkenbach

The Montana Institute
www.montanainstitute.org

Thanks for Workshopping with Me!

Please feel welcome to reach out with questions, ideas



**Nicole Luciani, MA, ICPS, CLSSGB, CKM,
Prosci® Certified Change Practitioner**

Prevention Organization Development Consultant

nlucianiconsults@gmail.com

References

- Baumesiter, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), 487-529.
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