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Since March, I have been sharing information about our Project Towards No Drug Abuse (TND) curriculum offered in Elgin and Larkin High Schools. We are wrapping up the school year with the last three sessions, 10-12, focusing on “The Benefits of Positive Thinking,” “Gaining Perspective,” and “Decision-Making.” The purpose of session 10 is to increase students’ awareness of their patterns of thinking and emphasize the benefits of positive thinking. The session also provides information about the reasons people get in violent situations and how to avoid violence. The activity in the classroom is a discussion and demonstration in which students learn how positive thinking, choices, and behavior, or negative thinking, choices and behavior are tied together as process “loops”. The students discuss how negative thought and behavior loops can lead to stress and violence. They review and discuss methods for avoiding violence.

Session 11 helps students examine their specific attitudes toward drug use in the context of their general views toward social problems. The classroom activity is a demonstration in which students discuss what it means to have a radical, moderate, and conservative view about a social issue. They participate in a demonstration in which they state and briefly debate their views on three specific social issues (gun control, anti-smoking laws, and drug use). They learn that most people have moderate views about drug use.

Session 12 motivates youth to think through the pros and cons of drug use and make a commitment regarding whether or not they want to avoid drug abuse. The primary activity in the classroom begins with a discussion of steps in the decision making process. The students practice using the decision-making process by considering a hypothetical scenario involving alcohol use, completing a decision making worksheet, and discussing their choice. Students complete a “Personal Commitment” worksheet in which they make a commitment regarding drug use (e.g., to think about the dangers of drug use, reduce or quit drug use, or continue to be drug free). They are asked to share their commitments with the class. The activity concludes with a video that shows testimonials from young people who made a commitment to stop using drugs.

That concludes our series of articles on substance abuse prevention education with local high school freshman in Elgin. Students need all the support they can get from their family, the school and community resources, like Renz Center, to make positive choices that may influence the rest of their life. Renz Center is committed to empowering individuals to lead healthier lives through our prevention and treatment programs. I hope to be able to share more substance abuse prevention education information with you in the future.

All of the Reflejos articles can be accessed online at <http://renzcenter.org/index.php/what-s-happening-main>. For more information related to TND call Ricardo Gasca, Prevention Coordinator, at 847-742-3545 x264.