



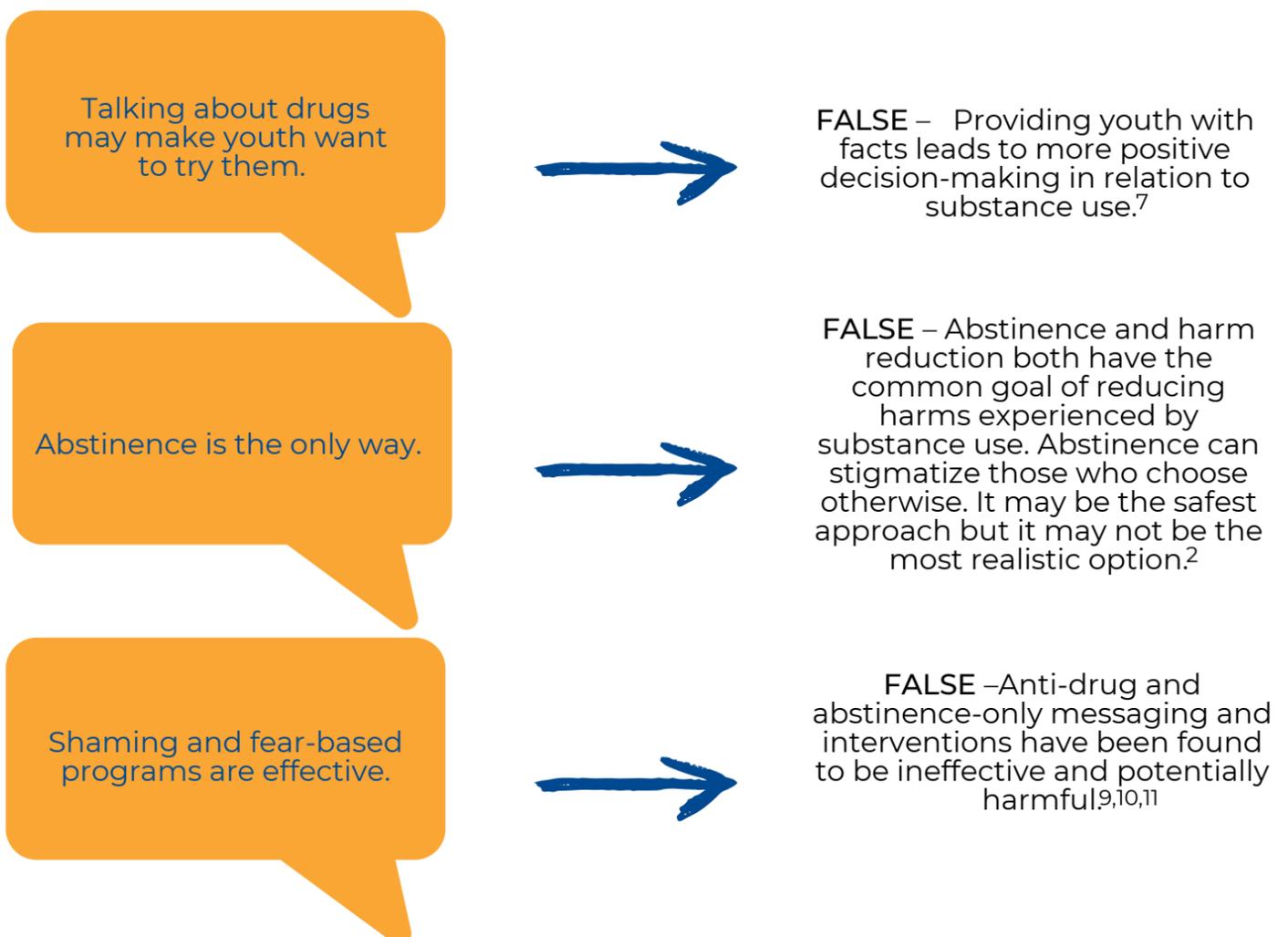
Looking Beyond "Just Say No"

Why "Just Say No" Doesn't Work

Usually scare tactics including the "just say no" approach demonstrate the worst dangers of drugs. Scare tactics use fear, anxiety and dramatized messaging in hopes of motivating behaviour change. These approaches ignore "non-problematic" patterns of use, and fail to take into consideration environmental and social risk factors affecting a person's decisions to use a substance. These tactics can cause feelings of shame in youth using substances, making them less inclined to seek support.²



Myths and Misconceptions



An Inclusive Alternative That Works: Harm Reduction

By providing youth the tools to make informed choices, a harm reduction approach leads to more positive decision making with regards to substance use. Drug prevention programs adopting a harm reduction approach to cannabis use which provide information on knowledge of cannabis-use trends, behaviours, and risks, as well as practice developing social skills and competencies to navigate complex social situations in which cannabis may be present are most effective at engaging youth and providing beneficial outcomes related to cannabis use.^{9,10,11}



Looking Beyond "Just Say No"

The Key Messages of Harm Reduction Include:

- Acknowledging people where they are at; non-judgmental acceptance of people and their choices
- Using empirical data and facts as a foundation for education and treatment
- Providing risk reduction strategies and alternatives to traditional abstinence-based drug education

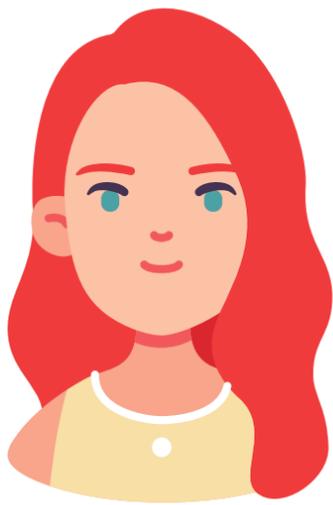
The benefits of this approach? It's inclusive, respectful and realistic.

Some Harm Reduction Messages Related to Cannabis



"Understand the risks associated with different methods of cannabis consumption."⁸

"Wait until you are in your mid-20s to use cannabis. Your brain is still developing, and frequent cannabis use can impact your brain, specifically in the areas of learning and memory."⁸



"Start low, go slow. Wait to see your response before taking more of a product."⁸



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