
TIP SHEET

BOTVIN LIFESKILLS MIDDLE SCHOOL IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Botvin *LifeSkills* Training (LST) is a research-validated substance abuse prevention program proven to reduce the risks of alcohol, tobacco, drug abuse, and violence by targeting the major social and psychological factors that promote the initiation of substance use and other risky behaviors. This comprehensive and exciting program provides adolescents and young teens with the confidence and skills necessary to successfully handle challenging situations.

Botvin *LifeSkills* Training Middle School Program is designed to be taught in sequence over three years in either middle school or junior high school. The first year of the program has 15 class sessions (plus three optional violence prevention sessions), the second year contains 10 sessions (plus two optional violence prevention sessions), and the third year consists of five sessions (plus four optional violence prevention sessions). Class sessions are each 30-45 minutes long.

MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The *LifeSkills* Training Middle School program is an integrated approach that helps to develop personal, interpersonal, and drug resistance skills. The curriculum is designed to strengthen student abilities in the following areas:

- ▶ **Personal Self-Management Skills.** Students develop skills that help them enhance self-esteem, develop problem-solving abilities, reduce stress and anxiety, and manage anger for better mental health.
- ▶ **General Social Skills.** Students gain skills to meet personal challenges such as overcoming shyness, communicating clearly, building relationships, and avoiding violence.
- ▶ **Drug Resistance Skills.** Students build effective defenses against pressures to use tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Botvin *LifeSkills* Training operates with the guiding belief that effective, skill-focused prevention programs require interactive teaching methods and activities that allow youth an opportunity to internalize the skills they learn in the program. The following tips will help maximize the success and interaction of the LST lessons.

Understand the Teacher's Role

Teachers have a dual role in conducting the Botvin *LifeSkills* Training program. Teachers are charged with facilitating discussion of the relevant topics in each of the various units and fostering the acquisition of life skills. Although some material(s) may lend itself to a more scripted presentation, teachers should serve as “facilitators” for the parts of the program involving class discussion and as

a “coach” for the sessions involving skills training. The best approach to skills training is to use a combination of instruction, demonstration, in-class practice, feedback, social reinforcement (praise), and behavioral “homework” assignments to foster practice outside the classroom.

Helpful Guidelines to Keep in Mind

- Enforce the Botvin *LifeSkills* Training ground rules.
- Stimulate active discussion among students.
- Direct the flow of conversation to ensure all the major points are covered and any misinformation is corrected.
- Use encouragement and positive reinforcement to support students in all the lessons and activities.
- Whenever possible, try to have the class deal with questions or problems raised by students.

Establish Ground Rules

It is generally a good idea to establish explicit ground rules for classes conducted as a part of the Botvin *LifeSkills* Training program in order to differentiate these classes from more traditional academic classes. While the following ground rules may not be appropriate for every class, they can be modified to suit your particular situation.

- Have students sit in a circle or rectangle.
- Everyone should be given an opportunity to participate.
- Only one person talks at a time (while some smaller groups might be able to allow students to speak up whenever they have something appropriate to contribute, it is sometimes necessary to have students in large classes raise their hands in order to avoid having students talking over one another).
- Everyone is free to express their opinions or participate in class activities without being subjected to criticism.
- No one should be forced to participate if he/she really does not want to, although everyone should be encouraged to do so.
- Anything discussed in the class remains confidential. A more in-depth explanation of confidentiality may need to be discussed with students.

Reinforce vocabulary words

At the end of each unit/lesson plan is a list of vocabulary words. These are words that have been included in the unit/lesson and may not be a part of the current vocabulary of students. This provides an opportunity to embed the teaching of these words and related concepts within the prevention curriculum.

Model Skills

Demonstrating skills to be imitated is an important teaching skill. Make sure to take the time to practice your demonstration of the skill before entering the classroom to ensure that your examples are genuine and practical.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more information about the Youth Prevention Education model programs approved by IDHS SUPR and the implementation conditions and parameters for each curricula, please refer to the [Youth Prevention Education Evidenced-Based Model Program Overview](#) on the [Prevention Strategy Resources](#) page on the Prevention First Website.

For more information about technical assistance or the services we offer, please contact providerservices@prevention.org or call 312-909-9768.

Botvin LifeSkills

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