

# Teaching Risk Assessment to High School Aged Youth

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The human brain continues to develop well into the early twenties. During the late stages of development our brains continue to build upon the risk and reward system. The more developed our brains become, the better we are at calculating risk and deciding when a risk becomes too large.

Even with all this development happening behind the scenes, humans still manage to make bad decisions. Learning to analyze risk and weigh rewards is crucial to decreasing the amount of bad decisions one may make. High school can be a great time to learn the risk and benefits of situations and this is what Botvin Lifeskills program focuses heavily on.

This eight week program can be taught to students in the 4th -12th grades. Each year students learn new skills and build upon those previously learned. In the high school program, students are first taught to understand what good health and values are, then they practice finding the risks in situations and understanding how certain ones negate a healthy life and positive values. Decision making, media influence, and communication are also large pieces of the curriculum. When students are learning about risk through the Botvin program, they learn how to assess risk, what kind of risk taker they are, and why risks like substance use is much too large to take. The Botvin program asks students to find a public figure they look up to, and assess a risk they have taken. When students are asked to analyze a risk from someone they aspire to be it shows humility and educates them on the ability we all have to make bad decision. While education life the Botvin Lifeskills program cannot guarantee it will stop youth from making bad decisions, it does help build a foundation for good decision making to take place.

If you would like to see the Botvin Program implemented in your school, contact a member of our Prevention team.

To learn more about any of our programs or resource, please contact us at 970.522.4549 or [Prevention@CentennialMHC.org](mailto:Prevention@CentennialMHC.org).

If you or someone you know is in crisis or you're worried about someone's mental health or substance use call 844.493.TALK (8255) or call 970.522.4392.

Centennial Mental Health Center provides behavioral health services to individuals in Cheyenne, Elbert, Kit Carson, Lincoln, Logan, Morgan, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington and Yuma Counties. Services include a variety of behavioral health service programs, outpatient therapy, community support programs, crisis intervention, emergency response, substance use disorder treatment, and child, adult and family counseling.

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