

# BEST PRACTICES FOR HEALTH PROMOTION MESSAGES



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Well

A guide for delivering health promotion messaging in a **respectful, effective,** and **unified** way.

# BEST PRACTICES FOR HEALTH PROMOTION MESSAGES



The practices outlined in this guide are intended to inform individuals of best practices for delivering health promotion messaging in a respectful, effective, and unified way. Health communication can inform and influence decisions and actions to improve health. Health promotion messages should accurately describe the importance of a healthy lifestyle and provide education and resources to integrate healthy behaviors into everyday life. This guide is intended to unify UCR in our health promotion messages, eliminate stigmatizing and shaming of individuals, to ensure that members of the UCR community are respected in the messaging, and that the messaging has a positive effect on health attitudes and behaviors.

## FIRST, ASK YOURSELF



### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Who is your audience?
- What is your objective/What is the desired behavior/attitude change?
- What challenges does your audience face in achieving the objective?
- What resources can you provide to help them overcome those challenges?

## GENERAL GUIDELINES



### ALWAYS

- Present information that is accurate, consistent, and science based.
- Clearly and accurately describe the health topic and why it is applicable to your audience.
- Describe the incentives and motivations for making desired behavior/attitude change.
- Explain how the desired behavior/attitude change will protect the audience's health.
- Frame your message in a meaningful way. We hope the rest of this guide provides you with approaches to do so.

# BEST PRACTICES FOR HEALTH PROMOTION MESSAGES

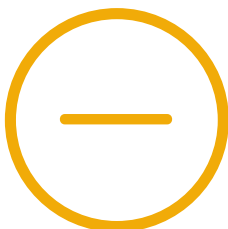


## GENERAL GUIDELINES



### FOCUS ON

- Health benefits
- Reinforcing positive behaviors
- Influencing social norms
- Increasing availability of support and needed services
- Empowering individuals to change or improve their health conditions
- Increasing risk perception
- Harm reduction
- Positive messages and statistics (social norming data)
- Diversity, and messages targeted to your specific audiences
  - Inclusive language
  - Materials and messages reflect the age, social and cultural diversity, language, and literacy skills of the intended audience
- Facts and accurate information
  - Give clear tips or steps to take
  - Appropriate terminology
- Acknowledging people's situations and barriers



### AVOID

- Making assumptions about your audience
- Presenting health problems as an individual's fault
- Stigmatizing, guilt, or shaming language
- Assigning a value judgment to choices (good vs. bad)
- Sacrificing necessary information for brevity
- Scare tactics (disturbing photos, negative statistics)
- Negative or loss-based messages
- Statistics that are not helpful or do not get your point across



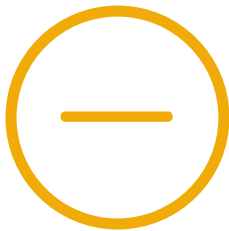
# EXAMPLES

## NUTRITION AND HYDRATION



### FOCUS ON

- Encouraging people to eat a balanced diet of whole foods, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein
- Emphasizing balance, variety, and moderation
- Acknowledging issues of food insecurity among all populations on campus and providing food resources
- Benefits of good nutrition (health, energy)
- Benefits of drinking water (health, energy, cost)
- Presenting tap water as a safe drinking supply



### AVOID

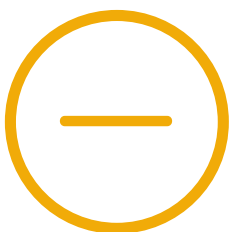
- Telling people what NOT to eat
- Focusing on weight, weight-loss and/or body image messaging
- Messages that encourage exercise to negate the calories consumed that day

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



### FOCUS ON

- The importance of regular movement throughout the day
- Types of physical activity people can participate in (aerobic, muscle-strengthening, bone-strengthening, balance, and flexibility activities)
- Benefits of physical activity (health, energy, longevity)
- Providing alternatives for those that are less mobile
- Importance of reducing sedentary activities



### AVOID

- Focusing on weight, weight-loss, and/or body image messaging
- Messages that encourage exercise to negate the calories consumed that day



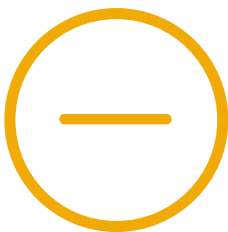
# EXAMPLES

## MENTAL HEALTH



### FOCUS ON

- Explaining that mental health is key to holistic health
- Explaining that difficulties or struggles with mental health are not an individual's fault. Many factors contribute to mental health distress.
- Benefits of balanced mental health (feelings of happiness, resilience, positive relationships, positive physical health outcomes, etc.)
- Respecting cultural values concerning mental health
- Resources to help people struggling with mental health distress
- Resources and tips for bystanders who may notice a mental health problem in others
- Resources and tips for people who support others with mental health problems
- Using authentic, honest language and emphasizing that they are not alone
- Acknowledging the reality of stressors/pain while providing hope and resources
- Explaining that people living with mental illnesses can still flourish and experience positive mental health



### AVOID

- Using the term "mental health" as a substitute/interchangeably with "mental illness"
- Making self-care look pretty all the time (self-care doesn't have to always look like bubble baths and yoga - sometimes it's going to that dentist appointment, etc.)
- Stigmatizing or shaming mental illness
- Associating mental illness or those in mental health distress with violence or other crimes
- Making promises to keep information shared a secret or confidential. Be honest that information may need to be shared to support someone in distress.
- Being overly positive (e.g. a cheerleader). Being honest and genuine is more effective.



# EXAMPLES

## TOBACCO USE AND VAPING



### FOCUS ON

- Benefits of avoiding smoking (long- and short-term health)
- Policy awareness
- Providing resources for those who are looking to quit, or are in recovery
- Resources and tips for those who may interact with those who use tobacco or vape products
- Preparing people to stand up to peer pressure
- Tobacco company's control over media and how they influence behaviors



### AVOID

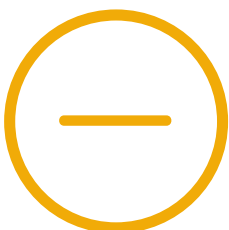
- Scare tactics and negative statistics without providing helpful information as well
- Stigmatizing or shaming tobacco use and vaping

## PREVENTATIVE HEALTH



### FOCUS ON

- General benefits such as living longer
- Benefits of a healthy lifestyle (getting enough sleep, eating well, getting regular physical activity, etc.)
- The importance of regular health screening
- Benefits of early detection
- The importance and safety of vaccines
- Mental health counseling as a type of preventative health
- Navigating the healthcare and health insurance system



### AVOID

- Shaming or stigmatizing people who do not participate in preventative health practices
- Assuming people who are sick or in bad health did not participate in preventative health practices



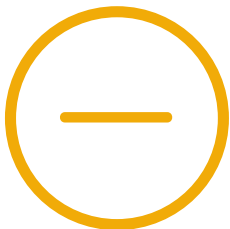
# EXAMPLES

## SUBSTANCE USE/ ADDICTION



### FOCUS ON

- Resources for those who are looking to quit, or are in recovery
- Harm reduction tips and ways to use substances as safely as possible
- Resources and tips for bystanders who may notice a substance use problem in others
- Resources and tips for people who support others with substance misuse, addiction, or recovery.
- Policy awareness



### AVOID

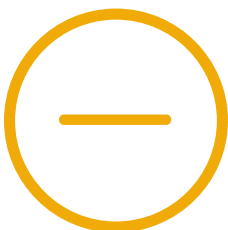
- Scare tactics and negative statistics
- Messages that imply complete abstinence from Alcohol and other Drugs ("Just Say No")
- Making assumptions about the audience
- Blaming people who suffer from addiction for becoming addicted
- Using the term "substance abuse," and instead use "substance misuse"

## SEXUAL HEALTH



### FOCUS ON

- Harm reduction tips for safer sex
- Providing resources (access to contraceptives, STI testing and treatment, counseling, etc.)
- Importance of informed consent
- Respecting people of all sexualities



### AVOID

- Abstinence-only messaging
- Scare tactics in the form of graphic STI (sexually transmitted infection) photos or statistics
- Blaming victims of sexual assault for the assault



# RESOURCES

## FOR STUDENTS

- Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)  
Phone: (951) 827-5531  
24/7 phone consultation: (951) UCR-TALK (951) 827-8255 2-TALK from campus phones  
[counseling.ucr.edu](http://counseling.ucr.edu)
- Recreation  
Phone: (951) 827-5731  
Email: [recinfo@ucr.edu](mailto:recinfo@ucr.edu)  
[recreation.ucr.edu](http://recreation.ucr.edu)
- Student Affairs Case Management  
Phone: (951) 827-5000  
Email: [casemanager@ucr.edu](mailto:casemanager@ucr.edu)  
[casemanagement.ucr.edu](http://casemanagement.ucr.edu)
- Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC)  
Phone: (951) 827-3861  
Email: [sdrc@ucr.edu](mailto:sdrc@ucr.edu)  
[sdrc.ucr.edu](http://sdrc.ucr.edu)
- Student Health Services (SHS)  
Phone: (951) 827-3031  
24/7 Nurse Line: (877) 351-3457  
Email: [health@ucr.edu](mailto:health@ucr.edu)  
[studenthealth.ucr.edu](http://studenthealth.ucr.edu)
- The Well  
Phone: (951) 827-9355  
Email: [thewell@ucr.edu](mailto:thewell@ucr.edu)  
[well.ucr.edu](http://well.ucr.edu)
- R'Pantry  
Phone: (951) 827-9355  
Email: [rpantry@ucr.edu](mailto:rpantry@ucr.edu) [basicneeds@ucr.edu](mailto:basicneeds@ucr.edu)  
[rpantry.ucr.edu](http://rpantry.ucr.edu) [basicneeds.ucr.edu](http://basicneeds.ucr.edu)



## FOR FACULTY AND STAFF

- Healthy Campus  
[healthycampus.ucr.edu](http://healthycampus.ucr.edu)
- Workplace Health and Wellness Program  
[wellness.ucr.edu](http://wellness.ucr.edu)
- Faculty and Staff Assistance Program (FSAP)  
[hr.ucr.edu/employee-resources](http://hr.ucr.edu/employee-resources)





# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## REFERENCES

- APHA Media Advocacy Manual  
[nyspha.roundtablelive.org/Resources/Documents/2013%20APHA%20Affiliate%20Mtg/Policy%20Framework%20and%20Tools/APHA%20Media%20Advocacy%20Manual.pdf](https://nyspha.roundtablelive.org/Resources/Documents/2013%20APHA%20Affiliate%20Mtg/Policy%20Framework%20and%20Tools/APHA%20Media%20Advocacy%20Manual.pdf)
- CDC Evaluating Theory in the Evaluation of Communication Campaigns  
[cdc.gov/nccdphp/dch/programs/healthycommunitiesprogram/tools/pdf/apply\\_theory.pdf](https://cdc.gov/nccdphp/dch/programs/healthycommunitiesprogram/tools/pdf/apply_theory.pdf)
- CDC Health Communication Basics  
[cdc.gov/healthcommunication/healthbasics/WhatsHC.html](https://cdc.gov/healthcommunication/healthbasics/WhatsHC.html)
- HHS Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans (2nd edition)  
[health.gov/paguidelines/second-edition/pdf/Physical\\_Activity\\_Guidelines\\_2nd\\_edition.pdf](https://health.gov/paguidelines/second-edition/pdf/Physical_Activity_Guidelines_2nd_edition.pdf)
- HHS Preventative Care  
[hhs.gov/healthcare/about-the-aca/preventive-care/index.html](https://hhs.gov/healthcare/about-the-aca/preventive-care/index.html)
- RHI Hub Rural Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Toolkit  
[ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/health-promotion/2/strategies/health-communication](https://ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/health-promotion/2/strategies/health-communication)
- WHO Promoting Mental Health  
[who.int/mental\\_health/evidence/en/promoting\\_mhh.pdf](https://who.int/mental_health/evidence/en/promoting_mhh.pdf)



This guide was created by The Well and Healthy Campus/Faculty and Staff Wellness Program. Contributors: Julie Chobdee, Karlee Labrador, Sage Overoye, Devon Sakamoto, and Marisol Torres.