

BEST PRACTICES FOR HEALTH PROMOTION MESSAGES



the
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

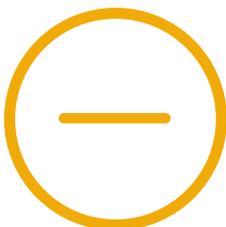


GENERAL GUIDELINES



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



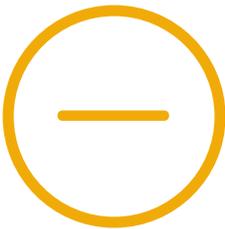
EXAMPLES

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

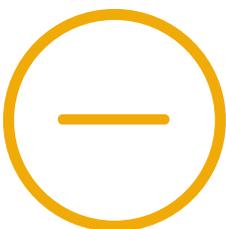
- Telling people what NOT to eat
- Focusing on weight, weight-loss and/or body image messaging
- Messages that encourage exercise to negate the calories consumed that day

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



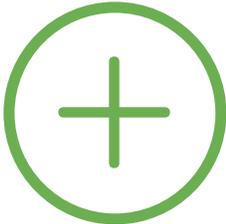
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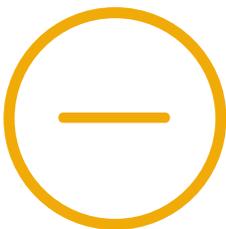
EXAMPLES

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.



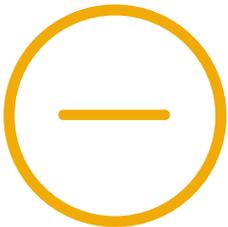
EXAMPLES

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

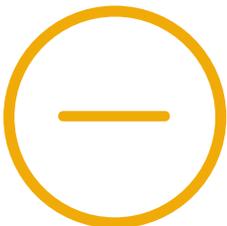
- Scare tactics and negative statistics without providing helpful information as well
- Stigmatizing or shaming tobacco use and vaping

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

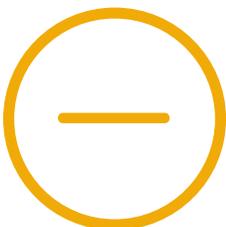
- Scare tactics and negative statistics
- Messages that imply complete abstinence from Alcohol and other Drugs ("Just Say No")
- Making assumptions about the audience
- Blaming people who suffer from addiction for becoming addicted
- Using the term "substance abuse," and instead use "substance misuse"

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
- Recreation
Phone: (951) 827-5731
Email: recinfo@ucr.edu
recreation.ucr.edu
- Student Affairs Case Management
Phone: (951) 827-5000
Email: casemanager@ucr.edu
casemanagement.ucr.edu
- Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC)
Phone: (951) 827-3861
Email: sdr@ucr.edu
sdr.ucr.edu
- Student Health Services (SHS)
Phone: (951) 827-3031
24/7 Nurse Line: (877) 351-3457
Email: health@ucr.edu
studenthealth.ucr.edu
- The Well
Phone: (951) 827-9355
Email: thewell@ucr.edu
well.ucr.edu
- R'Pantry
Phone: (951) 827-9355
Email: rpantry@ucr.edu basicneeds@ucr.edu
rpantry.ucr.edu basicneeds.ucr.edu



FOR FACULTY AND STAFF

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



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

REFERENCES

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- CDC Evaluating Theory in the Evaluation of Communication Campaigns
cdc.gov/nccdphp/dch/programs/healthycommunitiesprogram/tools/pdf/apply_theory.pdf
- CDC Health Communication Basics
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
- HHS Preventative Care
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
- WHO Promoting Mental Health
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.