



SCARE TACTICS IN PREVENTION:

DO THEY WORK?

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WHAT ARE SCARE TACTICS?

Scare people into behaving a certain way. (e.g., quit smoking, avoid drugs, stop speeding, exercise more).

Frequently use violent or shocking images.

Mock crashes, imagery of substance use related diseases or injuries, and moral appeals.

Can include survivor stories, recovery stories, etc.

1930's

Reefer Madness, showing exaggerated and terrifying effects of marijuana use.

Re-released in 1970s.

1970s

THE USE OF FEAR THROUGH THE YEARS



THROUGH THE YEARS...

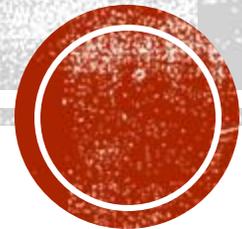
- 1980s - "This is your brain on drugs."
- This ad has been re-released in the 1990s, and again in the 2000s, as an extension of the original ad, with further expansion on the statement, "Any questions?"





**"YOUR BRAIN ON
DRUGS. ANY
QUESTIONS?"**

**2016 PARTNERSHIP
FOR A DRUG FREE
AMERICA**

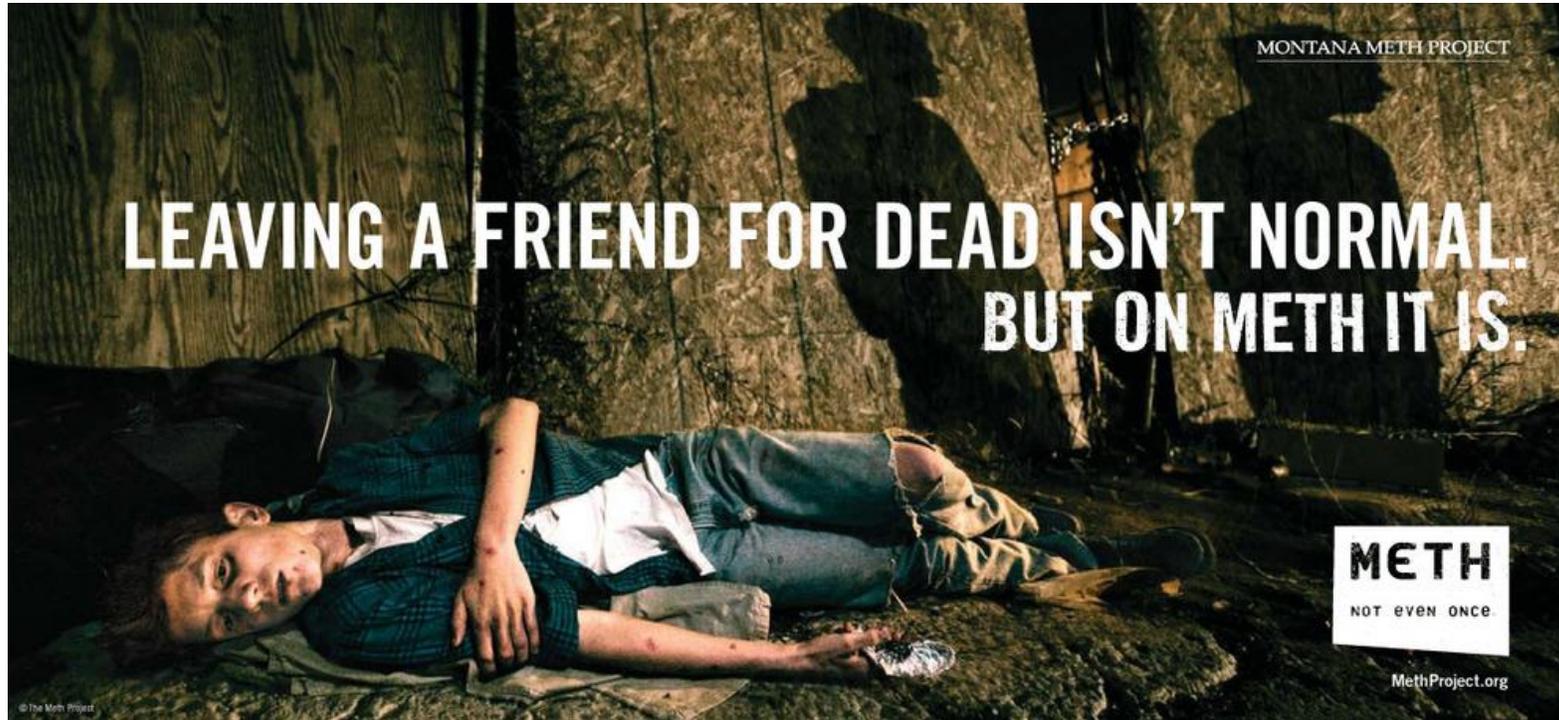


THROUGH THE YEARS...



- D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) - Implemented in schools across the country using police officers to present information in a fear-based way and giving students an up-close look at drug culture as a means of prevention.
- In recent years, the DARE program has been revamped to include more activities for students, but it is yet to be determined if this increases the program's efficacy.





THROUGH THE YEARS...

- Early 2000s – Meth Project PSAs using frightening or upsetting imagery in print and TV ads.





<https://opioids.thetruth.com/o/articles/chris>



The Truth Campaign has branched out from tobacco to opioids



A series of videos showing people committing violent, painful acts in order to gain access to opioid prescriptions



The belief remains that in order to prevent substance use, viewers must be scared.



This lies in direct contrast to what research has repeatedly shown.

PRESENT DAY OPIOID CAMPAIGNS





- 1975 – Netherlands
- 1,035 students aged 14-16 evaluated.
- Divided into four groups
 - Control group, Warning/Danger group, Fact-based group, Personal sharing group.
- Group allowed to share personal challenges and issues, with no drug messaging, showed the lowest usage rates over time.
- Became the basis for Botvin's Life Skills Curriculum

THEY ARE MORE
LIKE YOU
THAN YOU THINK



80 percent of the babies born to heroin-addicted mothers are born addicts. Like mommy, like baby. cleveland.com

12 Keys

A

**Worried
About *Your*
Teen's future?**



Stop supplying alcohol!

B

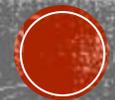
**Be the excuse
your child needs**



Tell your kids you don't want them using alcohol or drugs.

C

IS IT A SCARE TACTIC?



SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT PERSONAL STORIES

- There is a time and place for personal stories of recovery, trauma, etc.
- Personal stories of recovery can be extremely powerful in influencing policy change, legislation.
- In more adult-focused practices, personal stories can be effective.
- In prevention geared toward youth, personal stories can have a negative impact.
 - "That won't happen to me."
 - "They ended up okay."
 - "Some of those stories sounded like fun."



MORE ON PERSONAL STORIES...

- Is the speaker actually ready to tell the story?
 - As a general rule, the recovery speaker should have 5 years in recovery.
- Families who have suffered a loss are frequently used in conjunction with mock-crashes.
 - Will talking about their loss cause the speaker more harm?
 - Emotionally charged accounts can be considered moral or fear appeals, leaving the audience with feelings of pity, sadness, or guilt.
 - Effective prevention strategies focus on positive, proactive behaviors.



PREVENTION BEST PRACTICES

- Any type of personal stories must directly correlate with the prevention goal.
- Ask yourself **WHO** is your audience, and what type of message is best for them?
- **WHY** is your message important? Is there a call to action?
- **HOW** does your strategy fit into the bigger picture? Is it part of your comprehensive plan?



NIDA PREVENTION PRINCIPLES

Principle 1: Prevention programs should enhance protective factors and reverse or reduce risk factors.

Principle 5: Family-based prevention programs should enhance family bonding and relationships and include parenting skills; practice in developing, discussing, and enforcing family policies on substance abuse; and training in drug education and information.

Principle 15: Prevention programs are most effective when they employ interactive techniques, such as peer discussion groups and parent role-playing, that allow for active involvement in learning about drug abuse and reinforcing skills.



IN CONCLUSION...

- **Scare tactics:**
 - Can create an immediate reaction, but these are typically temporary and don't carry over to real-life situations.
 - Can have the opposite of the intended effect, especially with at-risk youth who may be seeking adventure or thrive on risky behavior.
 - Can create an air of mistrust when the message doesn't match up with real-life experiences.
 - Can imply that drug use is much more prevalent than it truly is.
 - Divert time, money, and energy from evidence-based prevention strategies.





THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

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