

Prevention in Early Stage  
The Fourth R (4R): A universal  
School-based Program for  
Promoting Violence Prevention  
and Healthy Relationships

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13th September, 2007

# The Risk Triad

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- Dating violence:
  - Increases the odds 20-fold for alcohol and drug use.
- alcohol and drug use
  - A common denominator in unsafe sexual activity, smoking, abuse, and
  - drinking/driving
- Premature sex
  - Increased risk of teen pregnancy, smoking, drinking, and delinquency, and a decline in academic grades

# Pre-adolescence: Challenges and Opportunities

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- Intimacy and relationships – major developmental task
- Learning to relate: Peers and gender differences
  - Status vs. Connection
  - Early expressions of teasing/harassment
- Brain development

# Early-to mid-adolescence: A Key Battleground for Change

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- Autonomy / transition / experimentation
- Pressure to conform
- Gender-role rigidity returns (with a vengeance)
- Patrolling the borders: Gay-baiting and peer violence
- Signaling intimacy: Confusing abuse as signs of love and caring

# Peer and social influences

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- Peer group culture
- School connectedness and achievement
- Strivings for adult social roles (autonomy and self-identity)

# What is the Fourth R?

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- A relationship-based approach to prevent adolescent violence and related risk behaviors
  - Peer and dating violence
  - Substance use & abuse
  - Healthy growth and sexuality
- School-based comprehensive prevention approach

# Fourth R: Guiding Principles

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- Collaborative approach with educational partners
- Skills-based curriculum
- Developmentally appropriate
- Positive youth development /harm reduction philosophy
- Universal approach
- Comprehensive approach involving youth, educators, parents, and community partners
- Gender strategic

# Collaborative Effort

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- CAMH Centre for Prevention Science
- Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children
- Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System of the London Family Court Clinic
- The Thames Valley District School Board

# Grants

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- **Canadian Institutes of Health Research**  
([www.thefourthr.ca](http://www.thefourthr.ca))
- **Canadian Women's Foundation**
- **Ministry of Attorney General**
- **Ontario Mental Health Foundation**
- **Public Health Agency Canada**
- **US National Institutes of Health**

# History

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**The Fourth R Program started in London, Ontario in 2001. In 2005 it was implemented in selected schools in British Columbia and Saskatchewan and in 2006 schools in Alberta started the program. Expansion to other provinces is underway.**

# Qualifications required in using the 4R Kits

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## ■ In-Service Training

The strategies for Healthy Youth Relationships Team provides variety of workshops for teachers, administrators, and other school staff.

## ■ Additional Qualifications for Teachers: Safe Schools

Training is also provided at the Bachelor of Education and M. Ed levels for teachers.

# Best Practices for Youth Prevention Programs

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- **Comprehensive** and build resilience in youth
  - Target a range of behaviours
  - Recognize multiple contexts of teens' lives
- **Well-timed** to correspond with changes and needs
- **Multi-level:** Involve curriculum, peers, parents, teachers, schools and community
- **Focus** on skills, e.g., social competence, assertiveness, communication and problem-solving

# Best Practices for Youth Prevention Programs (con't)

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- **Adhere** to the importance of *relationships*
- **Provide** opportunities to develop assets and strengths
- **Increase** youth connection to schools
- **Emphasize** risk and harm reduction, and benefits of delay
- **Recognize** the gendered nature of adolescents' world and realities and match program accordingly
- **Attempt** to change the larger environment

# Best Practices for Youth Prevention Programs (con't)

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## Multi-step process

- **Advisory board**
- **Curriculum developer**
- **Development of resources**
- **Student consultants**
- **Pilots**

# The Fourth R Component

## Individual/Peer Component

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- Students are engaged through active learning, peer mentoring, and role modeling of appropriate behaviors.

# Objectives of Lessons

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- Helps teens clarify their values and boundaries on relationships, sexuality and substances.
- Provides information necessary for informed decision-making.
- Teaches communication, negotiation, delay and refusal skills to deal with issues of violence, sexuality, and substance use.
- Provides opportunities to practice these skills in role play activities.

# THE FOURTH R: CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

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**Unit 1: Personal Safety and Injury Prevention** (consists of seven 75-minute lessons)

## Lessons

- 1 Focus on Healthy Relationships (myths/facts about teen relationships, relationship rights & responsibilities)**
- 2 Barriers to healthy Relationships (active listening skills and ‘types of violence/abuse’)**
- 3 Contributors to Violence (group effects on violence, individual differences)**

# **THE FOURTH R: CURRICULUM OVERVIEW (con't)**

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- 4 Conflict & Conflict Resolution (communication styles: passive, assertive, aggressive; conflict scenarios)**
- 5 Media Violence (student presentations of examples of violence in the media)**
- 6 Conflict Resolution Skills (rights and responsibilities when ending a relationship)**
- 7 Action in the School and Community**

# **THE FOURTH R: CURRICULUM OVERVIEW (con't)**

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**Unit 2: Healthy Growth and Sexuality (consists of seven 75-minute lessons)**

## **Lessons**

- 1 Focus on Healthy Sexuality (question box initiated, review of sexuality, myths clarified)**
- 2 Sexuality in the Media (media and peer pressure to have a partner/sex)**
- 3 Responsible Sexuality (communication with your partner, healthy relationships)**

# **THE FOURTH R: CURRICULUM OVERVIEW (con't)**

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- 4 Preventing Pregnancies**
- 5 Assertiveness Skills to Deal with Pressure in Relationships (negotiation, delay & refusal skills)**
- 6 Sexuality: Responsibilities and Consequences (sexual abuse, dating violence, decision-making)**
- 7 Sexual Decision-Making/Community Resources (scenarios & discussion, research community resources)**

# **THE FOURTH R: CURRICULUM OVERVIEW (con't)**

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**Unit 3: Substance Use and Abuse (consists of seven  
75-minute lessons)**

## **Lessons**

- 1 Myths and Facts/Definitions (interactive game to get students to examine their opinions/values)**
- 2 Effects of Substance Use and Abuse (discussion of physical and non-physical effects)**
- 3 Making Informed Choices About Smoking (discussion:why teens may smoke, health/\$ costs)**

# **THE FOURTH R: CURRICULUM OVERVIEW (con't)**

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- 4 Factors Influencing Decisions About Drug Use (discussion of media, culture, peer pressure)**
- 5 Building Skills to Avoid Pressures to Use Substances (negotiation, delay and refusal skills)**
- 6 Practicing Skills/Community Resources (role plays: using skills & decision-making model)**
- 7 Coping/Making the Connection between Drug Use, Sex, and Violence**

# References

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## Video productions

- **Active Listening Skills;**
- **Skills for Effective Relationships**
- **Name the Violence**
- **Student Feedback**

# References (con't)

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- **Teaching Curriculum on youth's risk behaviors such as dating violence, alcohol and drug use, smoking, premature sex, teen pregnancy, delinquency and decline in academic grades.**
- **Youth Safe Schools Committee Manual**
- **Parent Newsletter**
- **Media Campaign records**

# School Component

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- 1. Teachers are engaged through the delivery of the programme.**
- 2. Youth Safe Schools Committee consists of students who support and encourage healthy-living choices among teens. The goals of the YSSC are to reduce violence, establish community liaisons, provide leadership and support, and increase education while fostering empowerment within their school community.**

# Youth Action Committees

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- Teacher facilitated group of 6-10 students per school
- Focus on healthy relationships and the prevention of risk behaviours
- Coordinate media campaigns, leadership events, and speakers, drama presentations within the school and community
- Older students may assist with role play demonstrations
- Annual conference to motivate students and provide leadership training

# Parent Component

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- Provided with general program information at parents' night
- Four newsletter during year with:
  - Information about the program
  - Information about developmental changes during adolescence
  - Suggested parenting strategies
  - Community resources for parents with teens
- Student-generated newsletters

# Community Component

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- Increased links between community, agencies and students
- Activities are organized by Youth Action Committees, and may include:
  - guest speakers
  - field trips
  - an agency “open house” at the school to learn about community resources
- Encourage volunteerism at related agencies
- Community agency sponsored awards night

# Evaluation

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- **The program has been implemented in twelve schools in the grade nine physical education program and eleven other schools are serving as comparison schools.**
- **Data were collected from students, parents, teachers, principals, and through a role-play paradigm to assess changes in attitudes, skills, and behavior.**

# Testing

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- **A sub-sample of 200 students (100 who had participated in the Fourth R and 100 from comparison schools) participated in a role-play analog with older student actors who applied a series of pressure tactics to encourage students to agree to engage in high risk behaviors at a party.**

# Year one RCT findings

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- Design: 24 schools randomly assigned to Fourth R or control (N=1850)
- Compared to students in control schools, Fourth R students:
  - Learned more than their counterparts in all areas
  - Had healthier attitudes about relationships and abuse/violence
  - Enjoyed health class more and found it more useful
  - Reported experiencing less relationship aggression (both as perpetrators and victims)
  - Acquired more appropriate skills, as assessed through peer pressure scenarios

# Results

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**Blind raters coded the students' behavior and demonstration of particular skills:-**

- **Students who had participated in the Fourth R program were more than twice as likely to use negotiation, and girls were five times as likely to use delay tactics**
- **4R students showed fewer yielding behaviors and would make safe choices in a real life situation than students who had not participated in the program.**
- **4R students outperformed comparison students on every metric rated by teachers.**

# Is it possible to apply 4R in HK?

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- Needs of our Youth (short-long term)
- Collaboration among the sectors  
(EDB/Schools/PTAs/Student Unions/Community Leaders/.....)
- Resources (development and operational costs)
- Curriculum development/modification  
(psychologist, social worker, teacher, parent and student etc.)
- Compartmentalization of funding agencies
- Monitoring system
- Evaluation

# Prevention Summary

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- Working with youth provides incredible prevention opportunities
- Strength-based empowerment programming is more attractive to youth than deficit-based programming
- Engaging youth requires planning and resources
- Benefits for youth involved as leaders as well as those involved in programs

# **Presentation End**

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## **Q & A**

**For more information or order of manual  
please visit [www.thefourthr.ca](http://www.thefourthr.ca)**