



# Reconnecting Youth Class

## Program Description

Reconnecting Youth (RY) is a school-based selective/indicated prevention program that targets young people in grades 9–12 who show signs of poor school achievement, potential for school dropout, and other at-risk behaviors including suicide-risk behaviors. RY teaches skills to build resiliency with respect to risk factors and to moderate early signs of substance abuse, and depression/aggression. The program incorporates social support and life skills training with the following components:

- The RY class is a semester-long (~ 80-90 days) class that is divided into the following five modules: (1) getting started, (2) self-esteem enhancement, (3) decision making, (4) personal control, and (5) interpersonal communication. Forty-one class sessions and 23 booster/review sessions are included in the curriculum; this leaves 16 class sessions for the social activities/school bonding components. The class integrates small-group work and life-skills training models to enhance personal and social protective factors of high-risk youth;
- Social activities and school bonding for establishing drug-free social activities and friendships, healthy pleasant activities for abating depression, as well as improving a teen's relationship to school;
- School system crisis response plan that addresses important school-wide suicide prevention and intervention approaches; and,
- Parent involvement that includes active parental consent for student participation and at-home support of RY goals for their youth.

The RY program has been recognized by numerous governmental agencies as an effective, model program for reducing substance abuse and similar at-risk behaviors in youth. It was evaluated by EBPP for its effect on risk and protective factors related to suicide risk.

## Evaluation Design and Outcomes

A three-group, repeated measures design was used to examine program effects. One-hundred-six at-risk students in grades 9 to 12 were randomly assigned to one of two treatment conditions or a control group. Analysis supported the program's central hypothesis that teacher and peer group support, facilitated through the RY class, increased personal control, which in turn decreased behaviors associated with suicide risk. In addition, RY appears to contribute to decreased drug involvement and depression, risk factors associated with suicide, and increased school achievement.

## SPRC Classification

Promising

<b>Program Characteristics</b>
Domain <b>School-Based</b>
Target Age <b>14-18</b>
Gender <b>Female &amp; Male</b>
Ethnicity <b>Multiple</b>
IOM Category <b>Universal Selective Indicated</b>

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## Generalizability

While the RY program was studied in six urban schools, it has been implemented in a variety of schools in both urban and suburban settings representing a cross section of ethnic enrollments.

## Implementation Essentials

- Identifying, recruiting and inviting RY students according to the RY design
- Small class size (1:10 teacher-to-student ratio), class taken for credit as a regular course in the student's school schedule, providing at least 4,000 minutes of instruction and implemented as designed; no "rolling" admission into RY—i.e., no changes in enrollment after the first 1-2 wks.
- Teacher recruitment, selection and supervision/support as designed in the RY model
- RY training for teachers, program coordinators and school/community administrators
- Implementing the RY class and social activities/school bonding components with fidelity
- Follow-up consultation visits at 6-month periods (optional).

## Targeted Protective and Risk Factors

The RY program impacts the following risk and protective factors that have been targeted by the *National Strategy for Suicide Prevention* for the reduction of suicide in the United States.

### Increased Protective Factors

Strong connections to family and community support  
Skills in problem solving, conflict resolution, and nonviolent handling of disputes

### Decreased Risk Factors

Alcohol and substance abuse disorders  
Mental disorders, particularly mood disorders, schizophrenia, anxiety disorders and certain personality disorders  
Impulsive and/or aggressive tendencies  
Relational or Social Loss

## Program Costs

Curriculum Guide (2 <sup>nd</sup> Edition).....	\$299.95 (plus shipping & handling)
Student Workbook (set of 10) .....	\$211.95
Budget for Activities component/Transportation .....	~ \$450.00/RY Class
Classroom supplies/copying costs/miscellaneous expenses .....	varies
Four days of RY teacher/program coordinator training (8 participants/trainer) .....	\$4,800.00
Additional one-day administrator/program coordinator training .....	\$1,200.00
Trainer travel and expenses .....	Varies

Additional expenses include: (1) RY teacher salary, (2) substitute salary, (3) supplemental salary for participation in RY training and ongoing supervision.

## Program Contact Information

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## References & Support Materials

Eggert, L.L., Thompson, E.A., Herting, J.R., & Randell, B.P. (2001). Reconnecting youth to prevent drug abuse, school dropout, and suicidal behaviors among high-risk youth. In E. Wagner & H.B. Waldron (Eds.), *Innovations in Adolescent Substance Abuse Intervention* (pp. 51-84). Oxford: Elsevier Science.

Eggert, L.L., Thompson, E.A., Herting, J.R., & Nicholas, L.J. (1995). Reducing suicide potential among high-risk youth: Tests of a school-based prevention program. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 25(2), 276-296.

Eggert, L.L. & Nicholas, L.J. (2004). *Reconnecting Youth: A Peer Group Approach to Building Life Skills* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

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