Risk Mentor Tool

Overview

BEFORE YOU START

This tool is most effective when used as part of your organization's FailSafe plan. If you and your leader team haven't completed both the **Member Alcohol Profile** and the **Leader Awareness and Planning Tool**, please do so **before** using this tool.

It is helpful to watch FailSafe Module 3 "How Do You Like Me Now?" before starting this tool.

WHO IS THIS TOOL FOR?

This tool should be used by you (the leader of your student organization), the members of your leader team, and your general membership.

WHAT DOES THE TOOL HELP YOU DO?

The tool is designed to help your organization's members share their learnings about how to be successful at risk taking. The tool prepares you to lead some group activities during an hour-long group meeting. The goal of the activities is to create a culture of informal mentoring among the members of your group, especially between older members who have been around for a while and younger members who are newer to the organization. The activity is fun; you may want to use it with your group to explore other topics like study habits, dating/relationships, and internships. In this tool, the focus is on things that lead to risk success when using alcohol.

WHY DO YOU NEED THIS TOOL?

If your group is like most student organizations, you have plenty of members who have learned a few things along the way about how to enjoy using alcohol while achieving their academic goals and avoiding significant physical, personal, or legal harm. How do we know? Because those members are still here! Something they're doing is working well enough to keep them alive and on the path to finishing their degree. And their wisdom is just the thing that other members of your organization need to succeed.

We tend to be good at telling stories of wild adventures with alcohol, but not so good at telling each other how we survive or avoid harm. It's likely that most of the members of your organization who successfully manage the risks of alcohol use have never shared what they've learned with their peers, or used this knowledge to help a younger member of the group figure out how to survive and thrive in the college social scene.

Part of why we don't share what we know is that no one wants to appear a know-it-all, or pretend that they have it all figured out. We also don't want to tell people what to do. But you and others **do** know things that would be very helpful for others who **really** are trying to figure it out!

The key is to **not** have members tell other members "You should do this" but to have everyone share the wisdom they've acquired—their secrets to success.

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*You may have a few longer-term members who are barely hanging on whose use of alcohol causes a lot of problems. These are probably not the students you want to have mentor other group members. But they may be great candidates for "The Next Day" conversation in Module 6.

The funny thing is that we often don't get to hear the wisdom of our group's most respected members unless what we're doing boosts or diminishes their respect for us. Everyone wants to be respected by the other members of the group. This tool enables student organizations to have frank discussions where members—especially new ones—learn how they can gain the respect of the rest of the group.

HOW DOES THE TOOL WORK?

This tool has five sections. The first section (Pre-Meeting Leader Team Email) helps the leader team prepare to facilitate the hour-long group activity. The other parts, as indicated below, are the four segments of the group activity:

- Introducing the Session
- Secrets to Success: a discussion to identify ways to avoid risk failure
- Earning Respect: how newer group members can earn the respect of older group members in social situations involving alcohol
- Closing: a call-to-action for group members

WHAT DO YOU NEED BEFORE YOU GET STARTED?

- Determine how you will record ideas and share them with the group. You can do this by using a whiteboard or flip chart with markers or a laptop connected to an LCD projector and a blank wall.
- Designate a note-taker to record ideas as they are mentioned by group members.
- Decide whether your leader team wants to adapt the sample scripts included in each section of the tool or create your own scripts.
- Insert the group meeting date and location and your name in the "Pre-Meeting Leader Team Email" and send the email to your leader team a few days before the group meeting. This will encourage your group's leaders to think of strategies to share with the whole group. Or you can simply talk about the points raised in the email during a leader team meeting.
- If you decide to do the "Risk-Management Kit" activity in Secrets to Success, have the members of your leader team bring to the group meeting items that represent their strategies for successfully managing risk.
- If you decide to do the "On a Scale of . . . " activity in Secrets to Success, prepare the pictures or symbols you will use for the scale.

HOW DO YOU START?

Schedule a one-hour meeting for your entire organization. This may be a regularly scheduled meeting or a special meeting that you add to the calendar.

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Pre-Meeting Leader Team Email

Dear Team,

Thank you again for your hard work on the FailSafe program!

On insert date we are having a meeting with the whole organization, and I need your help. At this meeting we are going to focus on explaining to members what they can do to avoid risk failure when using alcohol, as well as ways to earn the respect of other group members when using alcohol. I know that each of you has some great thoughts and practices to share.

To make this meeting a success, I'll need you to speak up at the beginning to get the conversation going. I need you to come prepared with a couple of things:

1. Some of your "secrets to success" related to drinking situations that have helped you avoid risk failure—things like having a cut-off point for drinking, adjusting your study schedule to accommodate parties, etc. Anything big or small that has helped you manage your risks related to alcohol use and stay out of trouble. No one expects you to be perfectly consistent, so you can be honest about when you don't follow your own secrets to success, and why. It's also great to hear about how you came by your secrets to success.

   (*For groups doing the Risk-Management Kit in Secrets to Success*: We'll also be doing a little demonstration to make things more fun. Bring in an item that represents one of your secrets to success. For example, if you've adjusted your study schedule, you could bring a book. You'll find out what these items are for at the meeting.)

2. Think about some things that a group member might do related to alcohol use that would earn your respect, as well as things they might do that would lower your respect for them. I'll start the conversation and hope you'll jump in. For example, some new members might think that getting really drunk at a party will earn your respect, when it really doesn't because you have to deal with them getting sick or causing problems. They might not think that studying hard for an exam before partying earns your respect, but it does. You are some of the most respected members of our organization, so I want other members to know how they can earn your respect in a healthy way.

That's it for now. I look forward to seeing you all insert date and time of group meeting at insert location. Send me an email or text if you have questions or won't be able to attend.

Thanks,

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Introducing the Session

Everybody Here?

Be sure to send all group members a reminder of the meeting time and place, and ask those who can't attend to let you know so you can follow up with them later.

Introduce the Session

- Remind the group that the organization is participating in the FailSafe program to improve the group's risk success related to using alcohol. Congratulate group members on the great work they've already done.

- Explain the purposes of this meeting:

  — We're going to share with each other what we do that enables us to successfully reduce risks when using alcohol. We'll take about 20 minutes to create a list of our "secrets for success."

  — We'll also create a list of things we do related to alcohol use that earn the respect of other members of this organization, and things we might do that lower group members' respect for us. That way, everyone will know what to do to feel respected by the rest of the group.

Ground Rules

- No one tells anyone what to do. Speak for yourself, openly and honestly. Make use of the wisdom that's shared or don't; it's up to you.

- This isn't a time to tell wild drinking stories. Keep it real, and keep focused on what you do that leads to success avoiding problems.

- No one is 100 percent consistent in everything they do, and everyone makes a mistake now and then. Admit when you are inconsistent, and give each other a break if you are aware of group members not following their own advice.

- The point is not to make anyone feel bad, but to be honest with each other about what makes you respect someone and what doesn't.

- Keep it general: no personal attacks. Most of the things that lower our respect for others are things we ourselves may have done.

- Additional ground rules from the group?

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Secrets to Success

After discussing the purpose of the session and the ground rules, the first activity is to generate a list of "secrets to success." The goal of this activity is for your group's successful risk takers to share with newer members strategies for managing risk and avoiding risk failure.

Have set up and visible to the group the approach you've chosen to record and share the group's ideas (e.g., a whiteboard or flip chart with markers or a laptop connected to an LCD projector and a blank wall). You can use the format of "Our Secrets to Success" (located later in this tool) for recording ideas.

Question 1: Secrets to Success While at a Party

Sample script: "We're going to begin by identifying some ways you can have fun at a party but not have it become a problem for yourself, our organization, or other people. To start things off, we'll hear a few strategies from our group's upperclassmen leader team. They've been with us longer and have had time to learn the dos and don'ts of partying. After they share their strategies, we'll open it up to the group to hear additional strategies."

(*Record strategies as the group leaders mention them.*) "Thank you. Just a reminder that we're all here to help. If you have questions about any of these strategies, feel free to reach out to the person who shared them. Now I'd like to open it up to the whole group. What are some of your secrets to success that haven't been mentioned?" (*Record the strategies mentioned by other group members. If you are concerned that a strategy that is named may be dangerous or incorrect, omit it.*)

> Optional approach to the group brainstorming: Instead of having group members call out answers, do the Risk-Management Kit activity or the On a Scale of . . . activity that follow.

Question 2: Secrets to Success Outside of Parties

Sample script: "The next area we'll cover is what group members do in non-party, drinking situations to avoid risk failure. We'll start again with strategies from our leader team, followed by strategies from the whole group."

(*Record strategies as the group leaders mention them.*) "Thank you. Let's open it up to the rest of the group. What are some of your secrets to success in non-party drinking situations that haven't been mentioned?" (*Record the strategies mentioned by other group members.*)

Optional Activities for Group Brainstorming

Risk-Management Kit

In this activity you tap into the creativity of the group. Prior to this meeting ask each member of your leader team to bring at least one item that represents their secrets to success. For example:

- **Bottle of water:** Staying hydrated
- **Alarm clock:** Stopping drinking at a certain time
- **Book:** Spending extra time at the library
- **Package of noodles:** Eating before and after the party
- **Shot glass:** Only doing a certain number of shots
- **Cup:** Measuring how much wine/beer to have
- **Bottle caps:** Keeping the cap of each drink you consume in your pocket to tally how many you've had in an evening
- **Seltzer water:** Telling others you're having a vodka and soda, but it's really just seltzer water

Call on each member of your leader team to bring their item to the front of the room, describe what the item represents, and how they use that strategy to manage risk successfully. Once the leader team has shared its strategies, ask group members to share additional strategies. Record all the strategies that are mentioned using the format of Our Secrets to Success.

On a Scale of . . .

Another way to get members talking about their secrets to success is to use a 1 to 5 scale. In this scale, one signifies good, three is middle of the road, five is bad. You can use things like emojis, images, or memes to represent the five points on the scale. For example:

Start by pointing to the grinning face emoji (on the far left). Ask members of your leader team, "What do you do to wake up the day after a party feeling like this?" A group leader might say that they stick to one or two beers at a party to wake up feeling like the grinning face emoji. Then choose the next item on the scale and ask the same question. A group leader might say that the second face on the emoji scale (the slightly smiling face) represents a night where they drank a lot early in the evening, and cut themselves off at midnight.

Focus on the first three points on the scale, since these are the ones that indicate risk success. The last two points on the scale depict bad hangovers, which indicate risk failure. Remember to record members' strategies using Our Secrets to Success.

You can also use a 1 to 5 scale to encourage members to talk about strategies related to issues such as how in control/out of control group members act at a party.

Our Secrets to Success

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Earning Respect

Now that you have discussed ways to avoid risk failure, it is time to identify ways members can gain social standing in your group. People who experience risk failure are often just trying to impress others, especially older group members. Just think back to when you joined the group and wanted to be accepted by the other members.

For this activity, you will repeat the process you followed for "Secrets to Success." You can use the format of "You Gain My Respect When You . . . " (on the next page) for recording answers to Question 1, and "You Lose My Respect When You . . . " to record answers to Question 2.

Question 1: Earning the Respect of the Group

Sample script: "We have a good list of our group's collective wisdom about how to avoid risk failure at parties and other situations that involve alcohol. These are great suggestions for how to have fun but not become a problem for yourself or other people."

"We also want to talk about the issue of earning respect. I don't know about you, but I really want the other members of this organization to respect me. Some of the things people do when they're drinking earn our respect, but other things don't. So next we'll talk about the things people do when they drink that earn our respect. I'll begin with our organization's leader team. What are some ways members of this group earn your respect when they drink?"

(Record strategies as the group leaders mention them.) "Thank you. Now let's open it up to the whole group. What are some things group members do when they're drinking that earn your respect?" (*Record the strategies mentioned by other group members.*)

Question 2: Losing the Respect of the Group

Sample script: "Now let's talk about things group members might do when drinking that cause your respect for them to decrease. We'll start again with our leader team." (*Record strategies as group leaders mention them. Then ask the rest of the group to share their ideas while you record them.*)

You Gain My Respect When You . . .

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You Lose My Respect When You . . .

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Closing

Sample script: "The leader team and I really appreciate everyone's participation in these activities. The ideas we shared today are really important strategies for helping our organization become even stronger and more successful."

"We're going to save the three lists we generated today and share them with everyone in our organization. So think about what you learned here today and how you can begin to apply it. When we work together to support and mentor each other, we can achieve our goals, have fun, and avoid significant physical, personal, and legal harm."