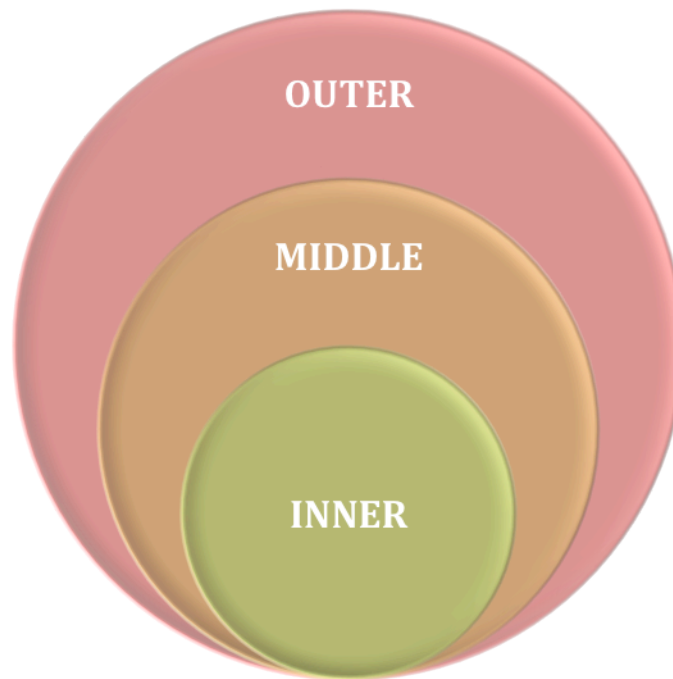


April 23rd, 2013

Ponderings on Prevention



Did you ever throw rocks into a lake as a kid? Instead of the rock skipping, did you get that big “kerplunk” from a good-sized rock hitting the water? You could see the rippling circles that expanded out from the center.

It’s those circles I want you to think about. Imagine the biggest of the circles on the outside, furthest from where the rock hit the water. This circle represents the entirety of our campus student population.

OUTER: The outer circle makes up our broadest outreach efforts. These are inclusive campaigns that teach foundational information and skills that are useful to any and all students on your campus. This is the most basic form of prevention and often includes elements such as passive advertisements (brochures in hallways, flyers, table tents in dining hall), campus-wide emails and website resources available for the entire community. Examples of prevention are broad and the focus is on the general student population. Programming is all-purpose and seeks to reach the widest possible audience. Participation is typically voluntary.

CENTER: The center circle is slightly smaller and made up of fewer students. Prevention is targeted to specific groups that have some history of concern or a responsibility to provide information to their peers. Data supports a higher incidence of at-risk behaviors within certain groups. Planning programming for new students helps to reduce problem behaviors as they transition to college life throughout the first semester.

Alternatively, there may be some students in this center circle who are in leadership positions. The hope is that exposing them to prevention information will put them in a better position to share it with fellow students. This center circle of prevention focuses on groups such as first-year students, fraternity and sorority members, student senate or SGA, resident advisors and athletes. Prevention messages are targeted with examples that speak more specifically to the group being addressed. Participation may or may not be required as part of their group mandate.

INNER: The inner circle of prevention programming is focused on reducing recidivism. This is offered to a relatively small group of students. Programming is often psycho-educational in nature and provided to a group of students who have already violated a campus policy. Participation is mandatory and may be part of a conduct or judicial sanction. Materials are offered in a more course-like setting and may require assignments, readings and tests. Successful completion of the programming may include attendance or passing a test with a certain score. Prevention messages are designed to give the students the skills they need to avoid future problems.

When approaching prevention, have an eye on the target audiences (whether outer, center or inner circle) to better estimate effort, cost, efficacy and impact. Understand which population will receive the information and you will be in a better position to ensure the prevention is effective in its application.

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