



# What is Injury Prevention?

**noregrets**

Parachute 

# Ian's Story

Ian Crowe of Kenora, Ont., knows life doesn't always offer second chances. In his final year of high school, the 18-year-old was on top of the world. Athletic, good in school and with a talent for making his friends laugh, Ian's football team had just won its division. "We were kings of the school," Ian recalls. "I felt invincible, life was great."

But during Christmas break in 2000, this novice snowboarder tried a jump that he now realizes was well beyond his abilities and experience.

He had borrowed a friend's snowboard that was for sale and had gone to the ski hill with another friend. He was trying out the board to see if he wanted to buy it and really take up the sport. Ian had only snowboarded a few times before – "I couldn't even make it down the hill without falling," he says. But that didn't stop him that day.

"We went down the hill a few times and figured that it was time to go hit a few jumps. We found a nice big jump, hit it once, wiped out, no big deal. So I figured, why not jump a little harder, get some BIG air. I went down the hill and just as I was hitting the jump, I jumped as hard as I could. Not a good idea if you're not very good at snowboarding. I ended up doing a backflip and landed on my head, shattering a vertebra in my neck, rendering me motionless. Instantly, my life changed."

Just four days after Christmas, a doctor told Ian he would never walk again.

"I was paralyzed from the chest down. I had surgery, where they fused my neck with a metal plate and I was sent off to rehab with a neck brace, where I would spend the next seven months. In the beginning, I couldn't even brush my teeth, comb my hair, get in and out of bed, feed myself, or even go to the bathroom on my own. I was totally dependent on other people to help me, even with the simplest tasks."

Ian happened to meet the No Regrets Live crew when they were in his hometown presenting. He was impressed with the show and trained to become a presenter himself.

Today, Ian is close to graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree. He plays competitive wheelchair basketball and wheelchair rugby and has joined the Canadian national rugby team.

Ian knows he is helping students realize it is possible to get hurt doing something like snowboarding. "I never thought about it when I was that age. I never thought I could get hurt. I want to put it in their minds that it can happen to them."

# The Issue of Injury

Injuries kill more young people than all other causes of death combined. Across Canada, injuries account for over 300,000 emergency room visits, 13,000 hospitalizations and 700 deaths each year among teenagers.

## **BUT I THOUGHT INJURIES WERE JUST ACCIDENTS...**

The word accident is defined as “an unavoidable act of fate.” Parachute believes that the vast majority of injuries are not accidents, but are predictable and preventable events. In other words, most injuries are a result of poor choices.

By helping your peers learn that injuries can be prevented and spreading the word to choose smart risks, you may save a life.

# Preventing Injuries and Managing Risk

## **WHAT IS INJURY PREVENTION?**

Preventing injuries is all about managing risks. The three main approaches to injury prevention involve education, engineering, and enforcement. The No Regrets program takes an educational approach to injury prevention. Designing pedestrian detection technology for cars is an engineering approach to injury prevention. Legislation, such as the Ontario law that enforces that all drivers 21 years of age and younger must have a zero blood alcohol level when they get behind the wheel is an example of the enforcement approach to injury prevention.

Experience has shown that a combination of approaches is best when trying to influence behaviour change.

## **TRADITIONAL SAFETY EDUCATION**

Traditional safety messaging focused specifically on rules is unappealing to many young people and likely won't result in students changing their behaviour and

managing risks more effectively. Rules can provide useful benchmarks but are often focused on negative consequences (e.g., don't text and drive or you will get hurt) and it is difficult to remember them all. Fear-based messaging can also have unintended, negative effects since fear can push people into denial, causing some students to think, "This will never happen to me."

## CHANGING BEHAVIOUR: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Parachute aims to affect youth behaviour change by using peer education, positive messaging, community mobilization/network building, and repeated exposure to ideas (such as our Five Key Messages and our Stupid Line concept).

### PEER EDUCATION

Recognizing the influence youth have on other youth, No Regrets uses a peer-to-peer model of education. Peer education involves members of a particular group educating others of the same group. For example, young people share information with each other, some acting as facilitators of discussions. It usually takes the form of an informal gathering of people who, with the help of the peer educator, (someone of a similar age or social group), discuss and learn about a particular topic together.

The advantages of this technique are numerous. Peer education can be successful in overcoming some of the problems faced by other outreach programs or services:

- Since the educator is a member of the **target group**, possible barriers to communication can be overcome.
- Peer educators can effectively **tailor their comments** to the target audience.
- A peer will usually have a **better understanding of the issue** as it affects the audience than someone from a different community or group.
- A peer will also be more easily **accepted** and listened to.

Peer education works well because it is participatory and involves young people in discussion and activities. As you know, people learn more by doing than just receiving information. It is our hope that peer education strategies will empower young people to take smart risks and become aware of their own Stupid Line.

## **POSITIVE MESSAGING**

Parachute takes a positive approach to injury prevention. Instead of emphasizing the negative consequences of making bad choices when faced with risks, Parachute encourages No Regrets teams to focus on the benefits of taking smart risks (e.g., staying injury free allows you to take risks again and again). Think of how the positive approach allows you to manage risks. Would you have learned to ride a bike or swim without having taken any risk? Risk taking is an important part of living a full and rewarding life and what makes life fun and exciting. By communicating these messages to your peers, you will likely be more effective at reducing injuries and saving lives.

## **COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION AND NETWORK BUILDING**

Changing behavioural norms takes time; it doesn't happen overnight. The No Regrets peer leadership program is based on the idea that changing young people's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour toward risks is an ongoing process and involves a number of players including teachers, peers, parents, and other influencers in their communities.

Efforts to try to influence behavioural change at an individual and a community level must be approached with a long-term strategy that involves community mobilization and network building. No Regrets teams are encouraged to involve networks of students and professionals. Working with community members, Emergency Medical Service professionals, teachers, student groups, and local businesses can only make your impact stronger and more successful. Don't work in isolation!

## **REPEATED EXPOSURE TO IDEAS**

There are lots of programs out there that are focused on stand alone and one-day events. These are great starting places for change, but in order to change behaviour at an individual or community level, people must be engaged with regular and mutually reinforcing messages from a variety of sources over a sustained period of time. Repeated exposure to ideas from a variety of sources can significantly influence perception and affect behaviour.

As part of the No Regrets program we encourage No Regrets teams to expose youth to our five key messages: Buckle Up, Look First, Wear the Gear, Get Trained, Drive Sober.

We encourage students to use the Parachute philosophies to discuss and apply their Stupid Line to smart risk taking in their own lives.

## The Five Key Messages

**BUCKLE UP** – Buckling up your seatbelt may save your life but it is important to remember that buckles are not only designed to protect you in cars. Make sure to buckle your lifejacket, helmet, and climbing harness too.

**LOOK FIRST** – Looking first means stopping, thinking, and checking out a situation before acting. Plan your route, check for obstacles and act only when you know what you're getting into.

**WEAR THE GEAR** – Wearing the gear helps protect your body while you enjoy an activity. People who take their sport or job seriously know to wear protective equipment, including helmets, kneepads, lifejackets, or goggles.

**GET TRAINED** – Getting trained includes job training, driver training, and training for a new sport. All of these can help you see where the risks lie and help you manage those risks. Learn from the experts!

**DRIVE SOBER** – Driving sober means focusing on the task at hand without the influence of alcohol or drugs. Driving sober also means being 100% attentive when driving a car, snowmobile, ATV, etc., free of such distractions as cellphones, loud music, and lack of sleep.

## The Stupid Line

The Stupid Line is the line of choice or continuum that separates a smart risk from a stupid risk. We each have a stupid line. Where we draw it is different for each person and changes depending on current conditions, experience and the environment.

Sometimes you can cross your stupid line and someone else gets hurt. Like the drunk driver who hits and kills someone. Or the person who pressures people into doing things that put them at increased risk. Where do you draw your stupid line?

# Know the Facts

Before you can get out there and make a difference in your community, you need to know the facts about injury prevention and risk management. Make sure that new and old members alike are comfortable and confident when speaking about injury prevention, the different No Regrets concepts, and the purpose of your No Regrets team.

## Risk Management and Injury Prevention Quiz

Try to answer the following questions on your own. To check your answers, go through different sections of the toolkit.

1. What are the Five Key Messages?
2. How can you apply the Five Key Messages to riding a bike?
3. Explain the Stupid Line concept.
4. Why do No Regrets team members not use the word “accident”?
5. Imagine you are in an elevator wearing a No Regrets T-shirt, and someone you have never met before asks you what your shirt means. How would you explain the program to them before you arrive at your floor (you have about 30 seconds)?

## Fill in the Blanks

1. Across Canada, injuries in youth account for over \_\_\_\_\_ emergency room visits, \_\_\_\_\_ hospitalizations and \_\_\_\_\_ deaths each year.
2. When drivers take their eyes off the road for more than \_\_\_\_\_ seconds, their risk of crashing doubles.
3. The human skull is only \_\_\_\_\_ cm thick.
4. A fall from \_\_\_\_\_ can cause serious brain damage.