Assertiveness Skills

Some at-risk young people get into trouble because of their timidity and withdrawal responses to students, teachers and family members. Others express themselves in hostile, angry, aggressive ways that cause problems for people and themselves.
Many at-risk children and youth need training in general assertiveness and in specific ways to resist peer pressure.

Assertiveness training is a psycho-educational approach to helping individuals interact more effectively with others.
Training modules include:
      a. Expression of positive feedback
      b. Expression of negative feedback
      c. Ability to initiate, continue and terminate conversation.
Assertiveness training focuses on limit setting and self-initiation.

Nonverbal communication is a important aspect of training with:
      a. Loudness of voice
      b. Fluency of spoken words
      c. Facial expressions
      d. Body expressions
      e. Interpersonal distance
      f. Degree of eye contact
Looking people in the eye is a sign that one is sure of one's position, knowledge or attractiveness in mainstream United States culture. All assertiveness training programs should attend to students from cultural backgrounds in which eye contact is considered disrespectful or aggressive.

One school-based assertiveness training program has been reported to yield extremely positive results (M.J. Smith, 1986). The children had better school attendance records than their untrained counterparts, were ill less often, scored higher in reading and math, had better self-images. The trained student had achieved higher grades.
This social thinking and reasoning program, called STAR (Benn, 1981), provides techniques and methods to train children from grades 3 through 5 in how to respond more effectively in social conflict situations. Another program called PLUS, promoting learning and understanding of self (Benn, 1982), is an adaption of STAR for high school students.