

American Academy of Health Behavior

2005 Research Laureate, Steven Y. Sussman

Cheryl L. Perry, PhD, FAAHB

It is my distinct pleasure this evening to introduce to you the Research Laureate for the American Academy of Health Behavior for 2005, Dr Steven Yale Sussman. Dr Sussman has already had a long, sustained, and distinguished career in health behavior research, and, given his relative youthfulness, should give us more of his important work, insights, and teachings in the years ahead.

Dr Sussman was born in Chicago in 1955, and went to high school in Skokie Illinois where he graduated in 1973. Highlights of his childhood and adolescence include a close and supportive family, including his parents; his brother, who currently is a philosopher and an important influence on Dr Sussman's thinking and life; and his cousins. At age 13, he celebrated his Bar Mitzvah in 1968 at the B'nai Emunah Synagogue in Skokie. During high school, in addition to academics, He was on a cross-country team that went on to become the city champions in 1972. Later, in 1973, he placed 16th in the 2-mile run at the State of Illinois Annual High School Track Meet.

After high school, Dr Sussman went to the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana and then the University of Illinois at Chicago, where he graduated with his PhD in clinical social psychology in 1984. Since 1984, Dr Sussman has been at the University of Southern California at the esteemed Institute for Prevention Research, where he has worked with a group of prevention scientists to establish one

of the leading centers for research for tobacco use prevention in the world.

Dr Sussman is currently a professor of preventive medicine and psychology at the University of Southern California. He conducts research in the prediction, prevention, and cessation of tobacco and other drug abuse and in the utility of empirical program development methods. He has over 220 articles, book chapters, and other publications in the literature concerning this primary area of research interest. In addition he has had over 25 major grants to support his research since the mid-1980s.

Dr Sussman is first author on the book *Developing School-Based Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation Programs*, published in 1995 and based on his previous and extensive research in the design, development, and evaluation of smoking programs. He is also the editor of *Handbook of Program Development for Health Behavior Research and Practice*, published in 2001, and he is the lead author (with Susan L. Ames) on the text, *The Social Psychology of Drug Abuse*, published in 2001.

Dr Sussman was the principal investigator of Project Towards No Tobacco Use, a tobacco-use prevention and cessation project among young teens that was disseminated nationally by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as a "Program That Works" (1997-2002) and now is by the Centers for Substance Abuse Prevention disseminated nationally. It is recognized as a model program by the U.S. Department of Education, Sociometrics Inc, National Cancer Institute, and the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

His other projects include Project EX, a successful adolescent tobacco-use cessation program that was tested through use of a large, true field experimental design, and Project Towards No Drug Abuse (TND), which is a drug abuse prevention project for older teens. Project EX and Project TND

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are also considered model programs by the Centers for Substance Abuse Prevention. In addition, Project TND is considered a model program by Health Canada, Sociometrics Inc, the U.S. Department of Education, Colorado Blueprints for Violence Prevention, Maryland Blueprints, the U.S. Department of Defense, and the National Institute on Drug Abuse. Clearly, Dr Sussman has been a prolific writer of journals, books, and actual school and community program materials in this important area of prevention and health behavior research.

Dr Sussman's primary research interest, then, is in drug abuse prevention and cessation. He has 20 years' experience in school-based adolescent alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse prevention and cessation research and has investigated the psychosocial predictors of drug use devel-

opment, cessation, and relapse prevention. He is also interested in empirically based program development and in differentiating the effects of condition credibility versus information content for eliciting successful program effects.

Dr Sussman has clearly become a star in this important field, and he has already provided us with research that will guide future prevention efforts for many years. We are honored that he is our research laureate this year.

Dr Sussman is also blessed with a very supportive family including his mother, his wife Rotchana, 3 beautiful children – Evelyn at 14, Evan at 13, and Max, at 4 – and their cat Woody.

And it is with blessings and thanks that I introduce Dr Steve Sussman as the 2005 Research Laureate as he presents his talk for us this morning. ■