**Lesson 3: Refusal Skills**

**Overview:** Students will learn the key elements of delivering an effective refusal message and strategies to implement a healthy choice. Learning activities will model the skill, practice formulating statements, and practice delivering the message.

National Health Education Standards

**Standard 1:** Students comprehend functional health knowledge to enhance health.

**Standard 4:** Students demonstrate effective interpersonal communication skills to enhance health.

Healthy Behavior Outcome (HBO)

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| Students will use refusal skills to prevent substance use. |

Lesson Objective — Students will be able to:

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| **Objective** | **Assessments** |
| 1. List the elements of verbal and nonverbal communication for a refusal skill. | Attachment 3.1 – Saying No checklist |
| 1. Create a message that communicates a healthy choice and refuses substance use. | Attachment 3.1 – Saying No checklist |
| 1. Identify an effective strategy within the refusal message to avoid substance use. | Attachment 3.1 – Saying No checklist |
| 1. Demonstrate the elements of a refusal messages in a role-play scenario. | Attachment 3.1 – Saying No checklist |
| 1. Identify alternatives to substance use as part of a refusal message. | Attachment 3.1 – Saying No checklist |

Introduction

* When have you had to say no? It sounds so easy to say, yet it can be a challenge. It can be even more difficult when it is an important decision or if you have to say no to a friend or someone you care about. Today we’ll practice crafting a refusal message and using strategies to prevent substance use. Students will learn, practice, and gain confidence in refusal skills and strategies to support their drug-free decisions.

Teaching Steps:

Activity 1: Student Discussion

* Have students discuss the following questions with a partner:
* Why are refusal skills important?
  + Possible student answers — helps to stay safe; builds confidence; helps to maintain personal goals
* What makes a refusal message strong and effective?
  + Possible student answers — strong verbal (tone of voice) and nonverbal (eye contact; strong body language) communication; clear message
* Why is it difficult to say no?
  + Possible student answers — pressure from peers or influence from friends, family, society, or environment
* Have the student pairs share what they discussed with the class.
* The teacher will reinforce that refusal skills are important to help maintain healthy behavior choices.
* Introduce Attachment 3.1: Characteristics of a Strong Refusal Skill
* Review these steps using the presentation slide, then model the skills. You can use a scenario where you were offered alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.
  + Say **NO**
  + Use the word. Say it in a firm voice.
    - You can include a reason for saying **NO**, such as, *I want to keep a clear head; I could get kicked off the team;* or *I don’t use substances.*
  + Use actions and body language that support a NO message.
    - Your body language must match your words. Make eye contact, stand up tall, and use a firm voice. Make sure there are no mixed messages. Be firm, not wishy-washy. Don 't look at the ground, glance away, speak softly, or show you are nervous.
  + Repeat and give a reason. You may need to say **NO** more than once.
    - Suggest an alternative or use a strategy. If this is someone you still want to be friends with, offer something that’s safe to do instead.
    - If you can’t find an alternative, then walk away.
  + Be sure your words and actions are real for the situation and would work with the people you know.
* After you model the skill, check for understanding that students can identify each step. Then have students practice the skill as a class. Select the scenarios that best fit your students’ needs.

Activity 2: Ways to Say No

* Introduce Attachment 3.2: Ways to Say No; review as a class.
  + Delay the decision.
  + No thanks, not today.
  + Blame your parents.
  + No way, my parents would kill me.
  + Recruit a friend.
  + Find someone else who doesn’t use drugs.
  + Give it back.
  + No thanks; this is not for me.
  + Use humor.
  + I don’t need any; I’m goofy enough already.
  + Make an excuse.
  + No thanks, I’m in training.
  + No thanks, I’m allergic to smoke.
  + Change the subject.
  + Did you hear about …
  + Respect our friendship.
  + You’re a friend; don’t ask me to do this.
  + Use personal experience.
  + No thanks, I see what vaping has done to my cousin.
  + Highlight disadvantages.
  + No thanks, I don’t want to make a fool of myself.
  + Declare your decision.
  + No thanks, I don’t vape.
  + Be a broken record.
  + No! No! No! No!
* Check in with students’ confidence using each strategy; ask students to give a thumbs up for *very confident*; thumbs sideways for *somewhat confident*; and a thumbs down for *not confident*.
* If needed, discuss why some strategies are useful (realistic, meaningful, direct, and effective).

Activity 3:

* The teacher will now model effective and ineffective refusal skills using one of the situations from Attachment 3.44. Have the students explain why the refusal skill was effective or ineffective. For example, if the message was ineffective, students may say, *There was no eye contact; your voice was quiet; it was not direct; body language was not strong; tone of voice was wavering; no clear message given etc.*

Activity 4:

* Students will now put the refusal skills into practice in small groups. Small groups are more comfortable for students to practice these skills, and the teacher can give feedback. If a student does not want to participate in the small-group role plays, have them write out the dialogue of how they would work through the situation to end with a positive outcome; nonverbal cues can also be added to their document.
* Small-group role play activity
  + **Roles:** Pressure Person 1, Pressure Person 2, Refuser, Observer (provide a check sheet)
  + **Scenarios:** The group or the refuser selects one of the situations from Attachment 3.4, and then the group begins the role play. The observer gives feedback to the refuser at the end of the two-minute role play; five or six small groups will be role playing at the same time depending on the size of the class.
  + Use task cards to place the students in groups by color. There can be letters A, B, C, D, and blank cards for bigger classes to help organize students into groups.
  + The **Observer** (letter D for the first round) will grab the *Role Play Feedback Form* (Attachment #3) for the group to use throughout all of the role plays.
  + Have students pick a scenario from Attachment 4).
    - All the small groups begin role playing at the same time. Give them two minutes to role play. Give an additional two minutes for the observer to share their feedback with the refuser.
    - Students will rotate to their next role, pick a different scenario, and begin role plays. Continue this process until all rotations have been completed.
      * **ROTATION:**
      * Round 1: A – Pressure 1 (P1), B – Pressure 2 (P2), C – Refuser (R), D – Observer (O)
      * Round 2: D – P1, A – P2, B – R, C – O
      * Round 3: C – P1, D – P2, A – R, B – O
      * Round 4: B – P1, C – P2, D – R, A – O
      * *Note: If there is a large number of students in the class, have students share a card and rotate together.*
* The teacher provides feedback as they observe each group. At the end of the activity, the teacher leads a discussion about the positive refusal skills observed during the activity.
* *Note: Having students role play all at the same time takes the pressure off students who do not like to present in front of the entire class. It is a more comfortable setting for the students.*

Closure:

* Have students share a refusal skill they feel confident using. This can be done verbally or written on a sticky note to be displayed in the classroom.

Lesson Resources:

* <https://www.mcmillenhealth.org/tamtalks/refusal-skills>
* <https://www.poehealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/RefusalSkills_WEBPDF-1.pdf>

Attachment 3.1: Saying No Checklist

Directions: As you watch the role plays, check off the effective ways to say NO and the other criteria you see in each one.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Roleplay | | | | | | |
| Critical elements of saying NO | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Said NO |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Used a firm tone of voice |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Body language supported the NO |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Suggested an alternative |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Words and actions |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Were real for the situation |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Would work with people you know |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Additional strategies (list) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
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| Self-Check | |
|  | I feel confident I can use the skills I’m learning to resist pressure to use substances like alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. |
|  | These are the critical elements I need to work on: |
|  | These are the critical elements and strategies I did well: |

Attachment 3.2: Ways to Say No Strategies

* Delay the decision.
* No thanks, not today.
* Blame your parents.
* No way, my parents would kill me.
* Recruit a friend.
* Find someone else who doesn’t use drugs.
* Give it back.
* No thanks; this is not for me.
* Use humor.
* I don’t need any; I’m goofy enough already.
* Make an excuse.
* No thanks, I’m in training.
* No thanks, I’m allergic to smoke.
* Change the subject.
* Did you hear about …
* Respect our friendship.
* You’re a friend; don’t ask me to do this.
* Use personal experience.
* No thanks, I see what vaping has done to my cousin.
* Highlight disadvantages.
* No thanks, I don’t want to make a fool of myself.
* Declare your decision.
* No thanks, I don’t vape.
* Be a broken record.
* No! No! No! No!

\*How do you say NO to substance use? Give an example below:

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Attachment 3.3: Ways to Say No Strategies

**Saying NO**

1. Say NO in a firm tone of voice.

2. Use actions and body language that support the NO message.

3. Repeat. You may need to say NO more than once.

4. Suggest an alternative. If this is someone you still want to be friends with, offer something that is safe to do instead.

5. Be sure your words and actions are real for the situation and would work with people you know.

Attachment 3.4: Refusal Skill Scenarios

**Scenario 1:**

Shelly, Becky, and Heather have a test to study for, but Shelly is very tired and falling asleep. Heather and Becky offer Shelly a drug called *speed* to help her stay awake. What will Shelly say to refuse taking the substance?

**Scenario 2:**

Trey, Jim, and Paul have been working out in the weight room for four weeks. Trey is disappointed that it is taking so long to get the results he wants. Paul and Jim offer Trey steroids to help him achieve the muscle he wants faster. What will Trey say to refuse taking the substance?

**Scenario 3:**

Steve has been dealing with a lot of stress at home and school. He shares how he is feeling with his friends, and a couple of them offer him a dab pen to help him relax. What will Steve say to refuse taking the substance?

**Scenario 4:**

Adyson, Janel, and Lizzie go to a party and see many people drinking alcohol. Lizzie and Janel want to stay at the party. What will Adyson say to refuse staying at the party?

**Scenario 5:**

Terrence and Tim consumed alcohol and took a few hits off a dab pen, and Jaren does not have a driver’s license and also had a beer. It is getting close to curfew, so Terrence and Tim yell out to Jaren that it’s time to go. What will Jaren say to refuse getting in the car with them?

**Scenario 6:**

Leo is hanging out with his friends Noah and Patsy and starts to complain that he is still in pain from having his wisdom teeth removed. Noah says that his parents have prescription pain relievers in their medicine cabinet, and he can get him some. Patsy also encourages Leo to take the pain relievers so he will feel better. What will Leo say to refuse taking the substance?