**Lesson 4: Influences and Decisions**

**Overview**: The lesson strengthens students’ decision-making by analyzing influences. Students will generate a list of influences and categorize them as positive or negative. The lesson will highlight the influence of rules/laws, peers, family, technology, and media.

National Health Education Standards

**Standard 1.** Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health.

**Standard 2.** Students will analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology and other factors on health behaviors.

Healthy Behavior Outcomes (HBOs):

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| **Alcohol and other drugs** | HBO 1: Avoid misuse and abuse of over-the-counter and prescription drugs. |
| HBO 2: Avoid experimentation with alcohol and other drugs. |
| HBO 3. Avoid the use of alcohol. |
| HBO 4: Avoid the use of illegal drugs. |
| **Tobacco** | HBO 1: Avoid using or experimenting with any form of tobacco. |
| HBO 2: Avoid secondhand smoke. |

Lesson Objectives – Students will be able to:

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| **Objective** | **Assessments** |
| 1. Describe influences on decision-making to prevent substance use. | Attachment 4.1 – Analyzing Influences Worksheet  Attachment 4.2a-c – Find the Influence |
| 1. Discern positive influences and negative influences. | Attachment 4.1 – Analyzing Influences Worksheet  Attachment 4.2a-c – Find the Influence |
| 1. Suggest an alternative to a negative influence. | Attachment 4.2a-c – Find the Influence |
| 1. List three positive influences on their decision-making to prevent substance use. | Attachment 4.1 – Analyzing Influences Worksheet |
| 1. Apply the substance use prevention principles to make a healthy choice. | Attachment 4.2a-c – Find the Influence |

Lesson Prerequisites or Assumptions:

* Students have completed the Stop, Think, Choose lessons.

Introduction

* What is an influence? Have you ever been influenced by someone or something?
  + An influence is something or someone that affects someone’s thoughts or behavior. If it is snowing outside, the weather influences my choice of clothes. Have you ever seen a commercial for food and immediately wanted to go buy that food? These are examples of being influenced. (Give students a chance to share ideas.)
* We’ve learned to use Stop, Think, Choose to make healthy choices that prevent substance use. In this lesson, we’ll learn about positive and negative influences.

Teaching Steps:

Activity 1: Stop, Think, Choose Review

* Display the substance use prevention principles.
* Know to NO!
  + Substances such as tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs have harmful consequences on our health and well-being.
  + Don’t touch, take, or taste. Ask a trusted adult for help.
  + Only take medicine as directed from a trusted adult.
  + Never take someone else’s medicine.
  + Properly store and dispose of medications.
* Provide a brief scenario: Examples: A middle school student tries tobacco for the first time. On the way home you find a half-full liquor bottle, so you pick it up and taste it. A friend offers you their medicine for your headache.
  + Is this a safe and healthy choice? What Know to NO! principle(s) apply to this situation?
  + What tool can we use to make healthy choices? (Stop, Think, Choose.) Review the steps:
    - Stop: Recognize the situation. Do I need help?
    - Think: What are my options? Who can help me make a safe and healthy choice?
    - Choose: Make the healthy and safe choice.
  + While it’s clear you know how to STOP, THINK, CHOOSE, did you know there are influences that could change your decision-making or make it more difficult? In this lesson, we are going to learn how our decisions can be influenced.

Activity 2: Positive or Negative Influence?

* Our decisions are being influenced all the time, sometimes in a positive way and sometimes in a negative way. Let’s investigate how our decision not to use substances can be influenced in either a positive or negative way.
* Display a T-chart using chart paper or a whiteboard. The title of the chart should read “Decision about substance use.” The left side of the T-chart should read “positive influences,” and the right side should read “negative influences.”
* Explain the difference between the two types of influences.
  + Positive influence: Something or someone that helps you to make a healthy decision. Examples: family and friends supporting you; involvement in a club or team; goals; laws/ rules.
  + Negative influence: Something or someone that pushes you to make an unhealthy decision. Examples: family or friends who do not support your decisions; being isolated/ feeling lonely; stressed, anxious feelings; a behavioral health condition.
    - We have strategies to overcome negative influences. We can avoid them, reduce them, or surround ourselves positive influences.
* Each student will be given two sticky notes. They will write down one positive influence for substance use prevention and one negative influence. When they have an example of each, they will go to the board or chart paper and stick each note in the correct category.
* Explain that the things that influence us usually fall into general themes. A theme is like a category; it is recurring idea.
* Read through each response and see if any bigger themes present themselves. The instructor can remind the students of what a theme is. For example, family can be a theme.
* Have students group the responses into bigger themes. This may take time with the positive influences but should go more quickly with the negative influences.
  + Positive influences can also be labeled as protective factors. Lesson 5 has additional information about protective factors. Protective factors reduce the risk of youth engaging in substance use. The more protective factors, the less likely students are to use substances. Examples of protective factors in middle school include commitment to school (including attendance); following rules; family rules that support substance use prevention; having friends and peers who make healthy choices; connection to trusted adult; and engagement in activities such as sports, band, etc. We can categorize protective factors around the individual, family, school, peers, and community.
  + Negative influences can be labeled as risk factors that increase the likelihood a person will be faced with decisions to use substances.
    - We have strategies for negative influences. We can avoid them, reduce them, or surround ourselves with positive influences.
* Complete Attachment 4.1 to identify influences.
  + Support students to identify at least two influences for each category
  + Discuss the three positive influences to make healthy choices about substance use.

Activity 3 – Can you spot the influence? (Attachment 4.2a, 4.2b, or 4.2c)

* Select a scenario(s) that best fits your students’ needs.
  + Attachment 4.2a is medication safety
  + Attachment 4.2b is alcohol
  + Attachment 4.2c is tobacco
* Students will read the scenarios to spot the influence, then label it as a positive or negative influence on making a healthy choice.

Closure:

* We are constantly being influenced. We can make healthy and safe choices with the help of positive influences. Surround yourself with positive influences and be aware of negative influences as you make healthy and safe choices.
* Debrief questions:
  + What is an influence?
  + Why is it important to be aware of influences?
  + What can you do to be sure you make healthy and safe choices that prevent substance use?

Attachment 4.1: Analyzing Influences on Your Decisions

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|  | **Analyzing Influences on Your Decisions** |  |
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| **PART 1:** Consider some of the factors that influence your decisions about your health.  1. Fill in the following chart. For each factor, record two influences on your own health. Check the “+” column if the influence is positive or the “-” column if it is negative. Explain why the influence is either positive or negative.   |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Category | Influence | + | - | Why is this influence positive or negative? | | Family |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | | Personal values and beliefs |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | | Media and technology |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | | Friendships and peers |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | | School |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | | Laws and rules |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | | Community |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  |   **PART 2**: Reflect on your influences.  1. Looking at the list of influences, what do you think are three positive influences on your decision-making to prevent substance use?  #1 -  #2 -  #3 –  2. Describe what you would do if you recognized a negative influence? | | |

Attachment 4.2a: Find the Influence (Medication Safety)

**Directions:** Read the paragraph. Circle the influences you recognize. List the influence and label it as positive or negative.

Maya’s substance use disorder started when she was prescribed a pain medication after a sports injury in middle school. Maya’s parents divorced recently, and she struggles with her new family dynamics. She misuses her pain medication to cope with her emotional pain and escape from her problems. The doctor told her to only take the correct number of pills every four hours. Over time, she develops a dependency and takes more pain medication. She takes extra medication out of the medicine cabinet and asks friends to give her pills from their homes.

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| **Influence** | **Positive (+)** | **Negative (-)** |
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Circle the substance use prevention principle(s) that apply to this situation.

1. Substances such as tobacco, alcohol, and drugs have harmful consequences on our health and well-being.
2. Don’t touch, take, or taste. Ask a trusted adult for help.
3. Only take medicine from a trusted adult.
4. Never take someone else’s medicine.
5. Properly store and dispose of medications.

Describe two positive influences you would add to the story to help make healthy choices to prevent substance use.

Attachment 4.2b: Find the Influence (Alcohol)

**Directions:** Read the paragraph. Circle the influences you recognize. List the influence and label it as positive or negative.

Brayden started to use alcohol when he was in middle school. One night, Brayden was hanging out with high school kids who pressured him into trying a drink. It didn’t taste good, but he wanted to fit in. Now he sees lots of advertisements that make it seem cool to drink, but he also knows it is unhealthy and unsafe because of what he learned in health class. His friends also remind him that he could get in trouble and that it’s unhealthy and unsafe.

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| **Influence** | **Positive (+)** | **Negative (-)** |
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Circle the substance use prevention principle(s) that apply to this situation.

1. Substances such as tobacco, alcohol, and drugs have harmful consequences on our health and well-being.
2. Don’t touch, take, or taste. Ask a trusted adult for help.
3. Only take medicine from a trusted adult.
4. Never take someone else’s medicine.
5. Properly store and dispose of medications.

Describe **two** positive influences you would add to the story to help make healthy choices to prevent substance use.

Attachment 4.2c: Find the Influence (Tobacco)

**Directions:** Read the paragraph. Circle the influences you recognize. List the influence and label it as positive or negative.

Jules started vaping in middle school one day when she was stressed out and anxious. A classmate who vapes suggested she try vaping. Jules knows it is unhealthy and unsafe. She knows the school and community have rules about vaping because it is unhealthy, but she also feels like lots of people do it anyway. She’s also nervous to try it because it could hurt her health and playing soccer. A friend asks Jules if she’s feeling OK and suggests she go and talk to a counselor about her stress levels.

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| **Influence** | **Positive (+)** | **Negative (-)** |
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Circle the substance use prevention principle(s) that apply to this situation.

1. Substances such as tobacco, alcohol, and drugs have harmful consequences on our health and well-being.
2. Don’t touch, take, or taste. Ask a trusted adult for help.
3. Only take medicine from a trusted adult.
4. Never take someone else’s medicine.
5. Properly store and dispose of medications.

Describe **two** positive influences you would add to the story to help make healthy choices to prevent substance use.