



Making Healthy Choices: Feelings and Tricky Situations

GRADES 2–3

45 MINUTES

Lesson Overview

This lesson introduces how to recognize emotions about substance use, respond to peer pressure and take actionable steps that lead to healthy choices. Students discuss strategies for seeking help from trusted adults and practice decision-making in realistic scenarios.

Essential Questions

- How can I recognize my feelings about substance use?
- What steps can I take to make safe choices about substance use?
- Who are my trusted adults, and how can they help me if I need support?

Student Learning Goals

- I can tell the difference between harmful and helpful ways to use medicine.
- I can recognize my feelings and emotions about substance use.
- I can identify steps to take when offered substances.
- I can name a trusted adult to help me make healthy choices.

Related Standards

Health Standards

3.SUB.3 Discuss how to recognize social pressures, peer influences, and internal feelings and emotions around substance use.

2.SUB.4 List steps to take when offered substances

Transformative SEL Standards

Standard 1 Self-awareness and Identity

Identify and reflect upon one's thoughts, emotions, behaviors, intersectional identity, and capabilities across situations and environments.

Standard 2 Self-management and Agency

Use management strategies to build personal and collective agency that lead to achieving goals and aspirations.

Standard 3 Social Awareness and Belonging

Develop social awareness that fosters a sense of belonging and leads to constructing equitable, thriving communities in a vibrant society.

Standard 4 Relationship Skills and

Collaborative Problem-solving Establish and maintain healthy, supportive relationships and effectively navigate diverse settings in order to collaboratively solve problems.

Standard 5 Responsible Decision-making

and Curiosity Demonstrate curiosity and awareness of oneself and society in order to make caring choices that impact personal, social, and collective well-being across situations and environments.

Lesson Materials

- Slide deck
- “Guide to Tricky Situations” handout

Lesson Plan

Preparation

This lesson allows students to engage collaboratively with their peers on challenging issues. Specifically, students reflect on tricky situations they may or may not have experienced. It is important to recognize that people in the school, class and community are affected by substance use and acknowledge that students are not alone. Establish norms and expectations to support students safely engaging in these conversations and activities. Before the lesson, revisit the norms and expectations to ground the conversations and provide safety for all students.

Learning Sequence

Activity 1. Warm-Up: Feelings Chart | 5 Minutes

1. Welcome students and share the essential questions (Slide 2) and learning goals (Slide 3).
2. Share the feelings chart (Slide 4).
3. Ask students the following questions:
 - What feelings do you see on the chart?
 - When do you have those feelings?
4. Ask students to turn to their partner and share how they are feeling right now. Is that different than how you felt earlier today or last night?

Activity 2. Set the Scene | 10 Minutes

1. Ask students to think about a time they felt pressured to do something. Model some ideas like being pressured by peers to jump off a really high swing or let someone copy your homework.
2. Ask students to turn to their partner and share a time when they felt unsure or confused (Slide 5).
3. Transition to the learning goals about thinking about feelings and substance use. Introduce the vignette to students by saying, “I’m going to read you a short story about

a tricky situation. Pay attention to how the character is feeling. They have a difficult choice to make. This story also includes a character drinking alcohol. If this brings up some difficult feelings, you can talk to me after the story.”

4. Share the image on Slide 6 as you read the vignette aloud.

David was excited about the big family picnic at the park. He loved picnics—there were always fun games, lots of yummy food and plenty of cousins and friends to play with. As soon as his family set down their blanket, David ran off to play soccer with his cousins.

After a while, David got thirsty and headed to the picnic table for a drink. His older cousin Jake was already there, holding a can of something fizzy. “Hey, David,” Jake said with a grin. “You should try this! It looks like regular soda, but it’s actually a special drink my friend brought. It makes you feel more grown-up.”

David reached for the can but paused. The label looked different from the drinks at home. He wasn’t sure what to do.

5. Use the prompts on Slide 7 and invite students to discuss with a partner or ask for volunteers to share with the class.

Activity 3. Write to Learn | 20 Minutes

1. Ask students to turn to their partner and discuss a time they felt unsure about what to do (Slide 8). Ask them to use the emotions from the chart. While this can be a time to talk about substances, model other possible examples, such as, “I remember a time when I was in 2nd grade and I was playing at recess. I saw two of my friends arguing. I wasn’t sure if I should step in or stay out of it. I felt **confused** because I didn’t know what the right choice was, and I felt **nervous** that if I said something, my friends might get mad at me.”
2. Students partner and share a time when they felt pressure to do something they weren’t sure about and had a hard time knowing what to do. Provide support to students as needed.
3. Explain that students will create a guide to help other kids make safe choices if they are ever in a tricky situation like David or need to say no to something.
4. Introduce some steps that students can use in their guide (Slide 9). These are called refusal skills.
5. Share the guide handout and the information on Slide 10. Tell students they can add their strategies. For example, you might want to take a deep breath first.
6. Invite students to share some strategies.
7. Ask students to think about what they could do if saying no is hard. Help them generate other possible responses (Slide 11).
 - I don’t think that is a good idea.
 - I’m not allowed to do that.

- I'm going to do something else.
 - Shake your head and walk away.
8. Ask students to think about how to walk away or remove yourself: pretend to need the bathroom or offer other ideas like playing tag.
 9. Invite students to think about trusted adults in their lives who can help.
 10. Allow time for students to write and draw their guide.

Activity 4. Review Key Lesson Takeaways | 5 Minutes

1. Review the essential questions (Slide 12) and learning goals (Slide 13) with students.
2. Ask students to turn to a partner and share one strategy they can use in a tricky situation (Slide 14).

Formative Assessment Opportunities

Listen and Look For

1. Listen for student responses. During student turn and talk opportunities and classroom discussion, listen for existing knowledge and areas for growth and provide any necessary clarification.
2. Review student responses on the guide.