

Choosing What Matters

Practicing Refusal Skills

Grades 9-12

Length 45-90 minutes

Summary

While not every student will be faced with the decision to drink alcohol underage, recognizing one's own values, goals, and trusted relationships can help support a young person's decision to say "no" when faced with underage drinking and other risky behaviors. In this lesson, through guided discussion, students will examine the influences that shape decision-making, including peer pressure, personal values, goals, and trusted relationships. The lesson helps students identify protective factors in their own lives and apply them to personalized refusal strategies.

Learning Objectives

- Examine what influences a person's decision to drink or not drink alcohol.
- Identify the values, goals, and trusted relationships that help develop reasons for choosing not to drink underage and/or engage in other risky behaviors.
- Create a personalized list of refusal strategies for situations involving alcohol and other substances.
- Practice refusal strategies that can be used in real situations involving peer pressure.

Vocabulary

- Digital pressure
- Direct pressure
- Indirect pressure
- Impair
- Influences
- Peer pressure
- Trusted relationships
- Values

Guiding Question

How can your values, goals, and trusted relationships support healthy decision making?

Standards

National Health Education Standards:

- 5.12.6 Develop a plan of action to implement a health-related decision.
- 5.12.7 Evaluate the impact of supports and barriers that affect decision making at individual, interpersonal, community, societal, and environmental levels.

Common Core Standards:

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Materials

- [Google Doc: Vocabulary List](#)
- [Google Doc: Analyzing Peer Pressure Handout](#)
- [Google Doc: Making Your Own Choices Activity](#)
- [Google Doc: Refusal Skills Handout](#)

Preparation

Before class, ensure students can access handouts and activities by printing copies, uploading materials to online learning management systems, or allowing access to Google Docs. Identify any needed lesson modifications based on time limitations, student accommodations, or other factors. Review content in the Analyzing Peer Pressure, Making Your Own Choices, and/or Practicing Refusal Skills handouts as well as the vocabulary list to better answer any potential questions students might have.

1. Warm-up

10 MINUTES ⌚

- A. Begin class by having students complete the following written prompt independently:
 - i. *Who or what do you think is the biggest influence on people's decision to engage in dangerous behaviors like underage drinking or using illegal substances? Why is this the biggest influence?*
 - ii. *What do you think is the biggest influence on people's decision to NOT engage in dangerous behaviors like underage drinking or using illegal substances? Why is this the biggest influence?*
- B. Have students share their answers with the class. List student answers for the class to view. Answers might include: parents' expectations, team rules, friends, romantic partners, etc..
- C. Using the list of influences students shared, guide the class in grouping similar ideas into broader categories. For example, students might sort influences into categories such as peer pressure, personal factors, family influences, media and social media, and environmental factors.
- D. Summarize the various influences on healthy decision making by stating, "As we just discussed, there are many influences, both positive and potentially negative on our decisions pertaining to alcohol and illegal substances. This lesson will allow you to explore potential influences on your personal decisions."

2. Analyzing peer pressure

5-10 MINUTES ⌚

- A. Introduce the different types of peer pressure if it was not previously discussed. Refer to the **Analyzing Peer Pressure handout** to provide an overview of definitions for internal peer pressure, direct peer pressure, indirect peer pressure, and digital pressure.
- B. Either individually or using a think-pair-share approach, have students use the handout to answer the following questions about the different forms of peer pressure and discuss as a class:
 - i. *What is an example of a situation where a teen might be pressured to engage in dangerous behaviors like underage drinking or illegal substance use?*
 - ii. *Why might a teen feel pressured by this?*
 - iii. *What strategies or skills can help someone deal with this form of pressure?*
- C. Review responses and discuss the importance of developing personalized strategies and skills to resist negative peer pressure.

LESSON

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3. Making your own choices

15-20 MINUTES ⌚

- A. Introduce the concepts of values, goals, and trusted relationships, and explain how each can support healthy decision-making. Then have students revisit the influences identified during the warm-up and decide which ones fit under each concept. Guide students in discussing how these factors can shape the choices they make.
- B. Have students complete the **Making Your Choices activity** to explore their values, goals, and trusted relationships. Students can also brainstorm lists of their values, goals, and trusted relationships, as well as explain how each of these support their ability to make healthy and responsible decisions.
- C. Model examples from your own experiences or use the examples below.
 - i. *Value example: I value my health. I want to make sure I make decisions that help me stay fit and active.*
 - ii. *Goal example: My long-term goal is to get into college. This helps me make responsible decisions so I stay focused on my schoolwork.*
 - iii. *Trusted relationship example: I have a trusted relationship with my younger sister. I don't want to disappoint her by drinking underage.*
- D. After students complete the first three sections on the **Making Your Choices handout**, have them create a list of personalized refusal strategies. Students should use their lists of values, goals, and trusted relationships to make a list of five specific responses that they could use if they are faced with decisions regarding dangerous situations like underage drinking or illegal substance use. Encourage students to work independently and emphasize that this resource is for them to use and will not be shared with others.
- E. Conclude the activity by summarizing how values, goals, and trusted relationships can provide support for saying "no" in situations.



For more information about the dangers of underage drinking, visit

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PROCEDURES

4. Practicing refusal skills

10-20 MINUTES ⌚

- A. Provide students with the **Refusal Skills handout**. Explain that they will be given the opportunity to practice their refusal strategies. Before students practice, model a scenario with one volunteer.
- B. Decide how many scenarios students should complete and create pairings between students for roleplaying. For classes with limited time, reduce the number of situations each pair does or assign one or two situations to each pair. Within pairings, have students take turns roleplaying situations using their refusal strategies from the **Making Your Own Choices handout**. As students roleplay, circulate throughout the room to assess student practice.
- C. Have students discuss the following questions:
 - i. *What form of peer pressure was this?*
 - ii. *How did your response reflect your values, goals, or trusted relationships?*
 - iii. *How effective was your refusal response in this situation? How would you do it differently?*
- D. Using the **Refusal Skills handout** have each student assess their responses using the self-assessment rubric.

5. Reflecting on refusal strategies

5-15 MINUTES ⌚

- A. After completing the activity, have students reflect on the following questions either as a class discussion or a written assignment.
 - i. *How did the different forms of peer pressure (direct, indirect, and digital) affect how both people responded?*
 - ii. *How did your values, goals, or trusted relationships help you make a decision that feels right for you?*
 - iii. *What refusal strategies would work well in specific situations?*
 - iv. *What refusal strategies will you plan to use in the future if you are ever in a risky situation? Why might this be effective for you?*

6. Closing

5-15 MINUTES ⌚

- A. Have students address the following prompt to summarize what they have learned by completing an exit ticket or think-pair-share discussion.
 - i. *How can you ensure that your decisions support your values, goals, and trusted relationships?*
- B. Review student answers and identify any topics that need to be readdressed later.



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Assessments

Formative:

- Completion of Google Doc: Analyzing Peer Pressure Handout.
- Completion of Google Doc: Making Your Own Choices Activity.
- Completion of refusal skills rubric during roleplaying activity.
- Exit ticket on decision making.

Possible Modifications

Throughout the lesson:

- Provide students with a list of vocabulary words and definitions used within the lesson.
- Provide students with copies of the Google Slide presentation to review.

Making Your Own Choices:

Use sentence starters to help students begin.

- "My value/goal/trusted relationship is..."
- "This can support healthy decisions by..."

Have students complete this assignment at home to enable students to reflect on their goals, values, and trusted relationships.

Practicing Refusal Skills:

- Limit the number of situations each pair does.

Expanding the lesson for a 90-minute extended block:

- This lesson can be extended to a 90-minute block by having all students roleplay each refusal scenario and encouraging more in-depth discussions by having students provide written responses before class discussions.

Extension/School-to-home

Connection Options

Practice with a trusted adult

- Have students identify a trusted adult in their lives (i.e. family member, coach, community leader, etc.) to practice their refusal strategies with for different situations. Students can discuss what works best in specific situations and what situations might need adult support with this trusted adult.

Create scenarios

- Have students develop scenarios that might occur in their own lives to practice in this roleplaying activity.

Additional discussion/writing prompts:

- What do you think are the biggest influences on a teen's decision to drink or not drink? Why do you think that is?
- What role does media play in influencing attitudes about underage drinking?
- How can peer pressure be used to promote healthy decision making?
- Why might some teens pressure others to drink?



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