Decisions and Your Health

As you grow up, you take on more responsibility for yourself. One of the keys to being responsible is good decision making, the process of making a choice or solving a problem.

The choices and decisions you make can affect each part of your health triangle. For example, when you get enough sleep, you improve your physical health by having the energy for your activities. You affect your mental health by being able to focus on your schoolwork. And you affect your social health by being able to have more fun with your friends.

Some decisions may help you avoid harmful behaviors. Deciding never to use tobacco can have a lasting, positive effect on your health. Look at Figure 2.1 on the next page. Use the list to help you understand some of the consequences of health-related decisions.

Good decision making comes from learning to analyze the validity of health information. If you take the time to analyze your decisions, you are less likely to make impulsive choices. It is also understanding the role that family, community, and cultural attitudes play when people make health-related decisions.
THINKING ABOUT CONSEQUENCES

You can make wiser choices if you first understand the consequences of a health-related decision. What are two consequences of getting enough sleep?

How will this decision affect my health?
Will it affect the health of others? If so, how?
Is the behavior I might choose harmful or illegal?
How will my family feel about my decision?
Does this decision fit with my values?
How will this decision affect my goals?

Decisions and Values

Your decisions show what’s important to you. That’s why it is important for your choices to be based on values, the beliefs that guide the way a person lives. Your values include your beliefs about what is right and wrong and what is most important to you.

Some values are generally shared by a group of people. These are known as core ethical values. Ethical means choosing to take the right action. Being honest and showing respect for others are examples of core ethical values. These values help you make decisions about right and wrong. They also help you maintain healthy relationships.

You also have personal values, which help you make decisions about what is important to you. For example, if you believe that it’s important to keep parks clean, you might decide to spend time each week picking up trash in your local park.

Your values come from different sources. When you are young, you get most of them from your parents or guardians and other family members. They provide you with the moral foundation for the rest of your life. See Figure 2.2 on the next page for more examples of how your values are formed.

Reading Check Describe How are core ethical values different from personal values?
**FIGURE 2.2**

**Some Sources of Values**

You learn values from many sources. What are some values that might influence the decisions that you make?

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**Evaluating Your Choices**

Your values help you evaluate your choices. Tyler's classmate Christopher told Tyler that he had a copy of the answers to a test. Tyler knew that he could easily get an A if he used the answers. He also knew that doing this would be dishonest. Tyler believed in honesty. He wasn't sure what to do and he didn't want to make an impulsive decision.

Values provide **criteria, standards on which to base decisions**. Criteria can help you evaluate the possible outcomes of your decision. Tyler used the H.E.L.P. criteria to decide what to do:

- **H** (Healthful). What are the risks of cheating?
- **E** (Ethical). Is cheating right, according to core ethical values?
- **L** (Legal). Are there school rules against cheating on a test?
- **P** (Parental Approval). Would my parents approve of cheating?

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**Reading Check**

Describe **How are criteria used in decision making?**
Health Skills Activity

Decision Making

Is It Always Right to Help a Friend?
LaDonna had recently moved to a new school and was having a hard time making friends. Then she met Jason, who introduced her to many people at school. Thanks to him, LaDonna soon had many new friends.

Jason sat behind LaDonna in science class. One day, he asked LaDonna to let him copy answers from her test. LaDonna felt that she “owed” Jason for helping her. However, she also knew that cheating on a test is wrong. What should LaDonna do?

What Would You Do?
Apply the six steps of decision making to LaDonna’s problem.
1. State the situation.
2. List the options.
3. Weigh the possible outcomes.
4. Consider your values.
5. Make a decision and act.
6. Evaluate the decision.

With a Partner
Role-play a scene in which LaDonna applies the steps of the decision-making process to keep from making an impulsive decision.

After using the H.E.L.P. criteria, Tyler saw that there were many negative consequences to cheating on the test. Cheating went against school rules and was not ethical. Tyler’s parents would not approve of his cheating on a test. Tyler decided not to use the answers. He got an A and was proud that he earned his grade honestly. Tyler’s values helped influence his decision not to cheat on the test.

Influences on Decisions
Sometimes you make decisions based on factual information. Other times, you make decisions because something else influences you. Your parents, friends, peers, and the media can also influence your decisions. For example, the other day

△ These teens are tempted to take a swim even though a sign warns against it. How would they use the H.E.L.P. criteria to make a responsible decision?
THE SIX STEPS OF DECISION MAKING

When you apply the decision-making steps, you can make responsible decisions. Why is it important to make a decision based on core ethical values?

Emily has soccer practice at 3:30 P.M. Her friends want her to hang out with them instead. Emily loves soccer but also loves to spend time with her friends. Note how the six steps of the decision-making process can help her make a choice.

1. **State the Situation.** What decision does Emily have to make? How much time does she have to make the decision? Emily has to decide whether to go to soccer practice or spend time with friends. She needs to make her decision by 3:30.

2. **List the Options.** What are Emily’s choices? Emily can go to practice today or she can skip practice and hang out with her friends.

3. **Weigh the Possible Outcomes.** What are the consequences of each option? If Emily goes to practice today, she will be keeping her commitment to attend every practice. If Emily sees her friends today, her teammates and her coach will be disappointed, but her friends will be happy to see her.

4. **Consider Your Values.** How does each option relate to Emily’s values? Keeping commitments is important to Emily. She values her friends, but she committed to attending every soccer practice.

5. **Make a Decision and Act.** What choice will Emily make? How will she follow through with her decision? Emily decides to attend practice because she made a commitment to her team and her coach. Emily explains her decision to her friends.

6. **Evaluate the Decision.** What were the actual consequences of Emily’s decision? Is she satisfied with the results? Emily is happy with her choice because she kept her commitment to her team and her coach. She practices for the upcoming game. Her friends are excited to spend time with her tomorrow.
Sue saw a TV ad that said a certain fruit drink gave you energy. She saw teens in the ad sipping the drink and then running energetically. Sue wanted to have more energy, so she added the name of the drink to her mom’s grocery list.

The decision-making process can be broken down into six steps. These steps are shown in Figure 2.3 on page 40. Applying these six steps can guide you through any decision that you need to make about an issue or problem. They can also help you avoid making impulsive decisions, or act without thinking.

At the store, Sue read the nutrition label on the bottle. She saw that the drink contained only 10 percent fruit juice. The rest was mainly sugar and water. Sue realized that the commercial did not give accurate information about the drink or its health benefits. The pictures of teens having fun influenced Sue’s decision to try the drink.

**Reading Check** Analyze What influences can affect your decisions?

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**Lesson 1 Review**

**After You Read**

Review this lesson for new terms, major headings, and Reading Checks.

**What I Learned**

1. **Vocabulary** Define criteria. Write a sentence that shows how criteria are important in decision making.

2. **Give Examples** Name three sources of values.

3. **Explain** What do the letters H.E.L.P. stand for?

4. **List** Name three possible influences on decisions.

5. **Identify** What are the six steps of decision making?

**Thinking Critically**

6. **Apply** Think back to a decision you made recently. What values influenced that decision?

7. **Analyze** Reread the story of Tyler on pages 38–39. Write a short paragraph explaining how he could have applied the steps of the decision-making process to help him make his choice.

**Applying Health Skills**

8. **Analyzing Influences** Suppose you have to make a health-related decision. Describe the decision you have to make. Then list three possible influences on that decision.