



Building Skills for Health and Wellness

Learning Outcomes

Look for the skills icon  to practice health skills.

After studying this lesson, you will be able to

- 1.3-1 Use** the decision-making process to solve problems and make healthy choices.
- 1.3-2 Demonstrate** goal-setting skills by setting a SMART goal and developing an action plan to achieve it.
- 1.3-3 Describe** how refusal skills help people avoid unhealthy behaviors.
- 1.3-4 Identify** conflict management strategies.
- 1.3-5 Demonstrate** how to access and evaluate health information.
- 1.3-6 Explain** how to communicate about and advocate for health.

Essential Question

What skills do you need to promote your personal health and your community's health?



Reading and Notetaking Activity

Create a graphic organizer or mindmap for your notes that contains a section for each skill covered in this lesson. As you read the lesson, fill in the organizer with techniques for mastering these skills. Review your notes and highlight what you think are the most important points. Study your notes to make sure you understand each health and wellness skill.

Skills

Decision-making	Goal-setting	Refusal
Conflict resolution	Access/evaluate information	Communication

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Key Terms

decision-making

process process of making healthy and informed choices

goal desired result of something you plan to do

SMART acronym used to guide goal setting; stands for specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely

action plan detailed step-by-step method to reach a desired outcome; outlines what you are going to do, how you are going to do it, and when it will be done

refusal skills set of skills designed to help someone avoid taking part in unhealthy behaviors

conflict resolution skills methods for resolving disagreements in a positive, respectful way

mediation a method for resolving conflicts that involves the use of a person who is not involved in the conflict

health literacy person's ability to find, evaluate, apply, and communicate health information

medically accurate science-based, reviewed by scientists, and reliable

advocate support

Lesson image:
FG Trade/E+ via Getty Images

Introduction

What is the best way to set goals you will achieve? What can you do to resolve conflict in your life? How can you help a friend who is going through a crisis? How can you stand up against peer pressure? Do you know how you would find good, reliable answers to health questions? Health skills give you the power to promote your well-being.

Emma avoids making decisions and planning for her future. Instead, she likes to “go with the flow.” When she gets stressed, she avoids dealing with a problem.

Emma’s family will sometimes search online for answers to health problems. Emma does not know if they are using reliable sources. Jayden, on the other hand, knows where to find reliable resources if he needs help with a health problem. Jayden also sets specific goals for his future. He is sure that he will succeed if he works hard.

With the right skills, you can apply health knowledge and successfully take charge of your own health and wellness.

1.3-1 Making Healthy Decisions

Essential Idea



Decision-making skills help you make healthy choices.

As you grow up, you will make more of your own choices. Your decisions can affect the health of you and your family.

The best way to make healthy and informed decisions is to use the five steps of the **decision-making process** (Figure 1.3.1).

When making a decision, think about influences that can impact the decisions you make. Influences may include the following:

- **Needs.** You must have these to live. These include air, water, sleep, food, clothing, and housing.
- **Wants.** You desire or would like to have these.
- **Values.** These are important to you in life. These could include family, peers, culture, health, and happiness.
- **Priorities.** These are things you value the most.

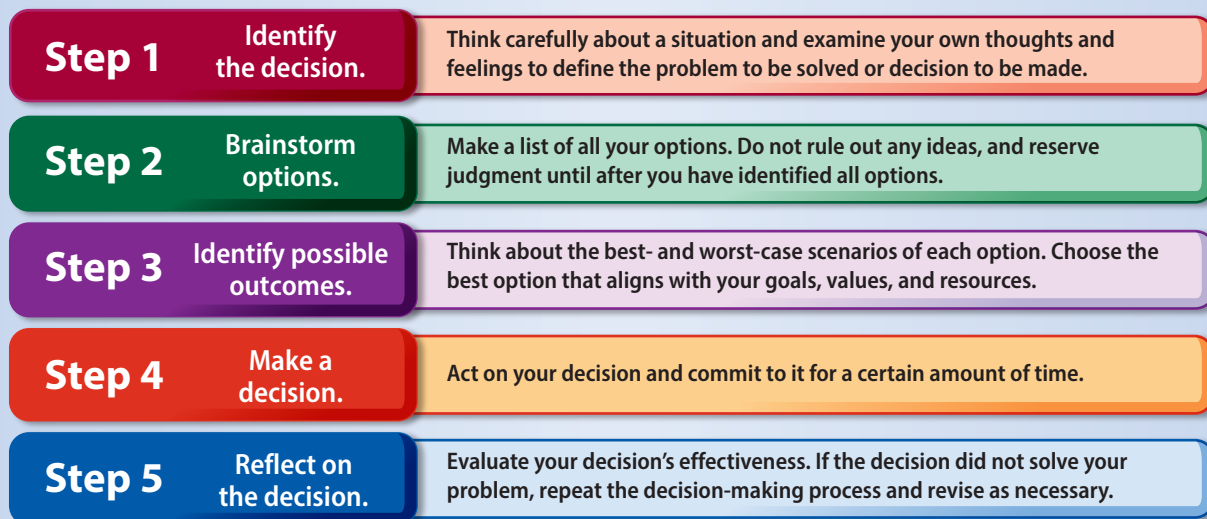
You may want to seek the advice of your family or friends when making some decisions. When you receive advice, keep in mind your values and priorities. In this way, you are more likely to make a good decision.



1.3-1 Reading Checkpoint

1. What are the five steps in the decision-making process?
2. Reflect on a time where you made a decision on your own and one where you needed advice from someone else. Share an example of each.

The Decision-Making Process



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Figure 1.3.1 Using the decision-making process can help you make healthy choices.

What should you do if your decision did not solve your problem?

1.3-2 Setting and Achieving Goals

Goals play a role in many parts of life. You can use skills for setting goals throughout your life. A **goal** is a desired result of something you plan to do. There are several benefits of setting goals.

- Goals motivate you.
- Goals keep you focused on what you need to accomplish.
- Setting goals can help you change current conditions.
- Reaching goals gives you a sense of satisfaction.
- Personal goals help you prevent health problems.

Two types of goals can work together. A *short-term goal* can be reached within days or weeks. On the other hand, a *long-term goal* requires months or years to reach. Reaching a long-term goal may involve reaching a few short-term goals.


When setting goals, think about your values and current conditions. To set and reach your goals, use the acronym **SMART**. SMART goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely (**Figure 1.3.2**).

An example of a SMART goal is to *eat 2½ cups of vegetables every day for one month*. This goal is more measurable, achievable, and timely than the goal to *eat more vegetables*.

To reach a goal you set, write an **action plan**. This is a step-by-step method to reach a desired outcome. An action plan includes the following:

- what you will do
- the steps you will take
- a schedule for taking these steps
- SMART short-term goals to help you reach your long-term goal
- a method for tracking your progress, such as a goal planner or journal

Essential Idea



Goal-setting skills help you achieve the desired result of something you plan to do.

Setting SMART Goals

S Specific	M Measurable	A Achievable	R Relevant	T Timely
Clearly states what you want to accomplish	Has results that can be clearly observed	Can be realistically reached	Relates to who you are and what you want	Is achievable within a reasonable period of time
What do I want to achieve? Why is this goal important?	How will I know when the goal is accomplished?	How can I accomplish this goal? Do I have the necessary resources?	Does this goal align with my values and priorities?	How long will it take me to accomplish my goal?

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Figure 1.3.2 Ask questions such as the ones in this figure to make sure you are setting SMART goals.

Which trait of a SMART goal involves aligning a goal to your values and priorities?

You might see obstacles that could prevent you from reaching your goal. Your plan can state how you will remove or work around these obstacles. When creating and reviewing your plan, it can help to get feedback and support from family and friends.

The next step is to follow your plan. Set time aside every month to track your progress. Evaluate whether your plan is working. You can adjust your plan along the way.

If you do not reach your goal, stay positive. Think of this as a learning experience. Ask yourself what went wrong and what you could do differently. Use what you learn as you set new goals.

Using goal-setting skills will help you grow. Over time, using these skills will help you improve yourself and your well-being.



1.3–2 Reading Checkpoint

1. What is a SMART goal?
2. After setting a SMART goal, how can a middle schooler achieve it?

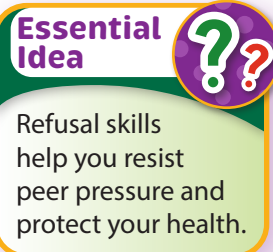
1.3-3 Using Refusal Skills

Refusal skills are a set of skills designed to help someone resist unhealthy behaviors. These skills can help you respond to peer pressures and other influences. Using refusal skills helps you protect your health. You can also stick with your own values and goals.

For example, you might be pressured to use drugs, tobacco, or alcohol. You could be pressured to engage in an activity that is illegal, inappropriate, or unhealthy. Pressure can come from your peers or the media you watch. You may think that all young people act this way. These pressures can make saying no difficult.

Practicing strong refusal skills will also help you avoid or reduce health risks. Behaviors such as smoking or drinking increase your risk of certain health issues. Refusing to engage in these behaviors helps you avoid the health risks associated with them.

Refusal skills help you make independent, informed decisions. The tips in **Figure 1.3.3** will help you apply refusal skills to resist pressure.



Tips for Resisting Pressure

- Watch your body language—stand up straight and make eye contact.
- Say how you feel—use a firm voice to say *no*.
- Be honest and do not make excuses—your friends should accept your response when you say, “No, I don’t want to.” Remember, you have the right not to give a reason.
- Suggest something else to do—if your friends do not want to do another activity, find another friend who does.
- Stick up for yourself—be prepared to walk away to get out of the situation.

LEARN
TO SAY

NO!

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Figure 1.3.3 Pressure from others can be difficult to resist. You always have a right to say “no” and walk away.



1.3-3 Reading Checkpoint

1. Which tip for resisting pressure from this lesson do you think is most effective? Defend your answer.
2. State at least one way this information can enhance your health or the health of others.

1.3-4 Resolving Conflicts

Essential Idea



Conflict resolution skills help you resolve disagreements.

Conflicts (disagreements) can occur when people have different opinions or priorities. Conflicts are a normal part of life. You may even have conflicts with your family or friends.

A healthy conflict lets you see another person's point of view. Healthy conflicts can even build your relationships. Unhealthy conflicts cause stress and put strain on relationships.

Conflict resolution skills help you resolve disagreements in a positive, respectful way. Conflict resolution can promote healthy relationships. Skills for conflict resolution are shown in **Figure 1.3.4**.

Sometimes people cannot resolve conflicts themselves. This is when a mediator can help. A *mediator* is a person who is not involved in the conflict.

Mediation is a method that involves a mediator to resolve a conflict. Mediation begins with both parties separately sharing their views with the mediator. The mediator then brings the two parties together. The mediator tries to help the people reach an agreement.

Conflict Resolution Skills

Step 1

Identify the cause of the conflict.

State what problem you think is causing the conflict and have the other person share this information too. Listen carefully to understand that person's perspective.

Step 2

Ask for solutions from both parties.

Find out what each person wants or needs as a desired outcome to the situation. Brainstorm ways to solve the conflict.

Step 3

Identify solutions both parties can support.

Calmly discuss the issue and possible solutions. Both parties should be open to suggestions and focus on finding a solution together.

Step 4

Agree on a solution.

Often, both sides agree to give in a little, or compromise. Through compromise, each side can reach a solution that is acceptable for all people involved.

Step 5

Carry out the solution.

Take action to apply the solution. Ensure that all parties know their designated roles in the solution. Make sure everyone follows through on the agreed-upon solution.

Step 6

Evaluate the solution and renegotiate, if necessary.

Review the outcome of the solution. If for some reason the solution is not working, identify which step in the process failed, go back to that step, and try again.

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Figure 1.3.4 When you are resolving a conflict, remember that each person is different. It is normal for people to have different opinions. Differences make people more interesting.

What is the first step in resolving a conflict?



1.3-4 Reading Checkpoint

1. Identify the steps in conflict resolution.
2. Think of conflict that occurs between middle school friends. Describe a situation. Include if it was a healthy conflict or not. What was the resolution?

1.3-5 Accessing and Evaluating Health Information and Services

The ability to find, evaluate, apply, and communicate health information is **health literacy**. Your health literacy builds on basic facts and concepts you learn at home and in school. Health literacy skills enable you to

- learn about health and well-being throughout life
- find and evaluate health information
- analyze health claims and advertisements
- evaluate health products and services
- communicate health information to others
- promote the health of family, friends, and community

You can find lots of information about health online. Health information on the internet might not be accurate or true. Health literacy can help you evaluate the information you find. You can also figure out if products really do promote health (**Figure 1.3.5**).

Essential Idea



Health literacy helps you find, evaluate, apply, and communicate health information.



Figure 1.3.5 Health literacy helps you to analyze advertisements, such as this one.

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Accessing Valid Information

As a young person, you are learning that the health issues of adolescents are different from the issues of children and adults. Your health depends on your ability to find **medically accurate** information about adolescent health. **Figure 1.3.6** shows some characteristics of information that is medically accurate and useful for young people.

This section will help you learn skills for finding medically accurate information about adolescent health. These skills will help you tell if information is based on science. You can avoid information based on rumors, opinions, and ideas not based in science.

Science is a body of knowledge regarding the natural world. Science is based on observations and experiments. Science asks questions and proposes explanations about the natural world. This includes the human body, behaviors, health, and diseases.

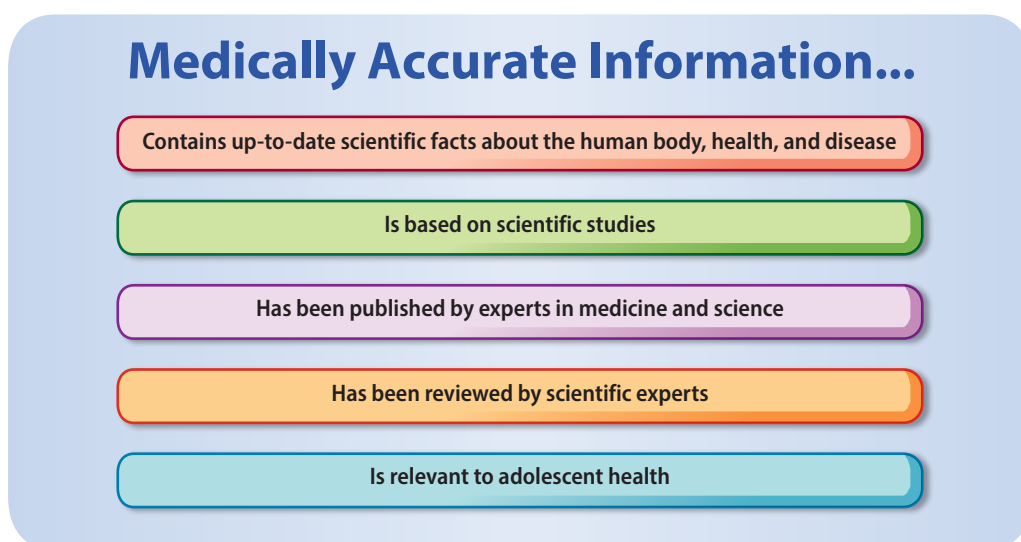
Scientists test these explanations many times. This helps to prove or disprove them as factual. This is how scientific facts differ from opinions and ideas that are not based in science.

When using the internet to answer questions about health, you will see many websites. Which sources should you trust? Groups that focus on education, research, or providing healthcare are reliable. These groups include the following:

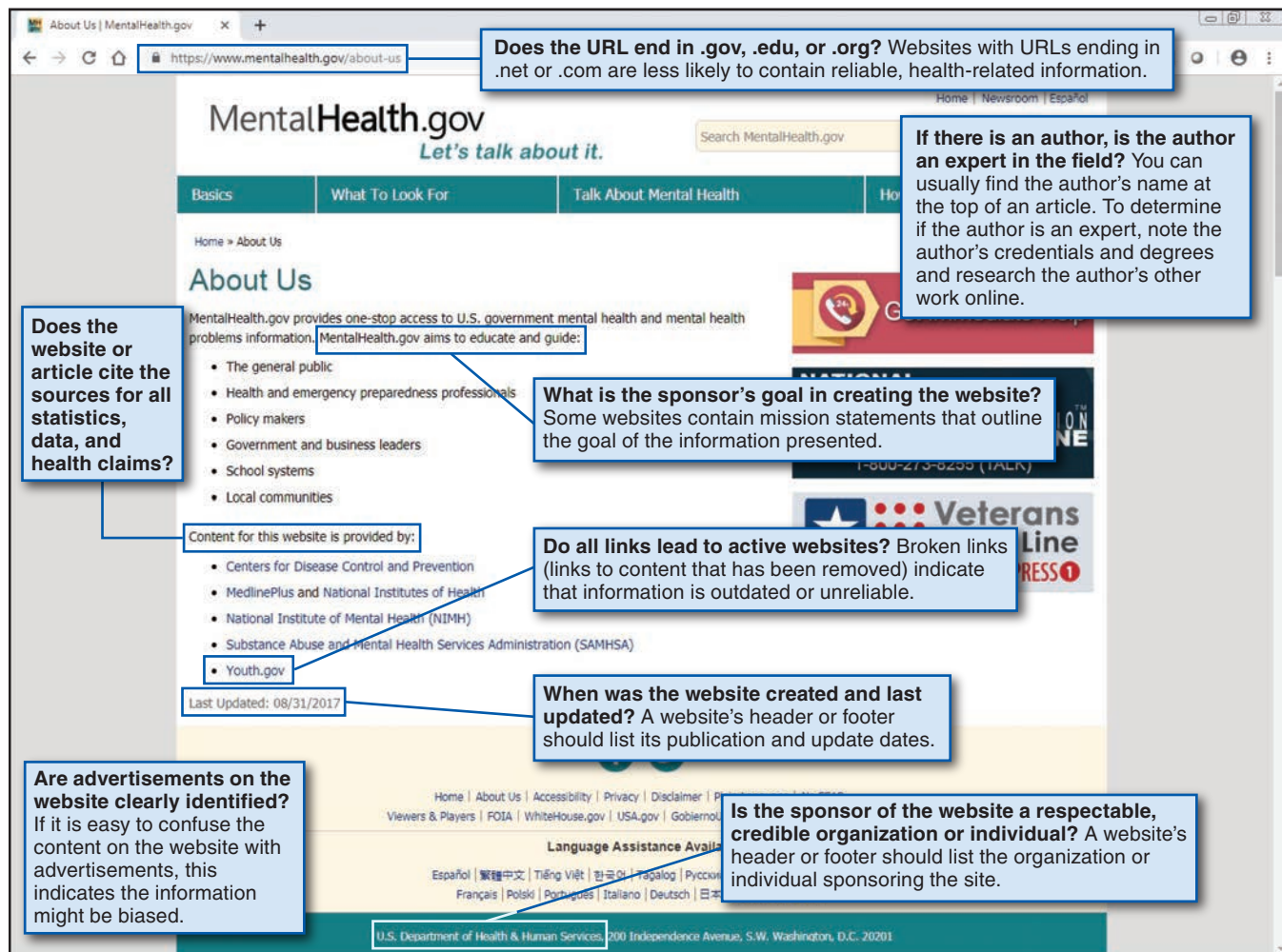
- government agencies
- medical schools
- large professional medical organizations
- nonprofit educational institutions
- websites with URL stems including *.gov*, *.edu*, and *.org*

When visiting a website, ask questions before you trust the information you find there. You should ask questions such as the ones in **Figure 1.3.7**.

Figure 1.3.6 Seeking out medically accurate information can help young people protect their health.



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Courtesy of mentalhealth.gov

Figure 1.3.7 These tips can help you access valid information online.

Who is this website's sponsor?

Avoid websites of businesses or organizations promoting a certain cause. The main goal of a business is to earn profits. They sell products and services. A business may play up the benefits of the product or service. They will play down negative aspects. Groups promoting a cause often only share information that supports its cause.

Be cautious about using information you find on social media. Information may not be accurate even if you know the person who posted it. Do not share a post when you cannot tell if it contains accurate information.

To find accurate information, begin with a reliable, general source. Try one of the groups or websites in **Figure 1.3.8**. If not sure, ask your school librarian or doctor. They can refer you to a reliable source. Librarians specialize in finding and evaluating sources. This means you can rely on their advice if you have questions.

Figure 1.3.8 These websites from respected institutions are a great place to start your search for accurate health information.

Which URL stem does the website for the American Red Cross use?

Health and Safety Information	
Sources of Information	URLs
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics	www.eatright.org
American Academy of Pediatrics	www.aap.org
American Cancer Society	www.cancer.org
American Heart Association	www.heart.org
American Red Cross	www.redcross.org
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)	www.cdc.gov
Mayo Clinic	www.mayoclinic.org
MedlinePlus® (U.S. National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health)	www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration	www.nhtsa.gov
National Institute of Mental Health	www.nimh.nih.gov
National Institute on Drug Abuse	www.drugabuse.gov
Office of the Surgeon General	www.surgeongeneral.gov
Tufts University Health & Nutrition Letter	www.nutritionletter.tufts.edu
United States Consumer Products Safety Commission	www.cpsc.gov
United States Department of Agriculture	www.choosemyplate.gov
United States Department of Health and Human Services	www.healthfinder.gov
United States Food and Drug Administration	www.fda.gov
World Health Organization	www.who.int

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Evaluating Health Claims

"Get six-pack abs in two weeks!"

"You will catch a cold if you go outside with wet hair."

"The bumps on your skull reveal your character."

"Cell phones cause brain cancer."

"Caffeinated energy drinks will make you perform better on exams."

These are examples of the thousands of health claims in the media. Claims such as these are not supported by science. If you act on these claims, you could waste money and time. You could even harm your health. Answering the following questions can help you evaluate if a health claim is accurate:

- Is the source reliable?
- Is the information current?
- Does the health claim relate to my life stage and situation?
- Is the source making money from the health claim?
- Does the health claim refer to research published by medical scientists?
- Does the health claim give the names of the researchers? Does it name the journal that published the research?
- Can you find other reliable sources that support the claims?



1.3-5 Reading Checkpoint

1. What are the characteristics of a valid source of information?
2. What is an example of a health claim? Why is it important to evaluate if health claims are accurate?

1.3-6 Communicating Health Information

You can use reliable health information to help other people. This means you can **advocate** for, or support, the health of other people in your life. This is called *health promotion*.

For example, if your mother smokes, you can encourage her to quit. Research the health risks of smoking. Present the information to your mother. If your mother decides to quit smoking, support her effort.

Help your family find health information. For example, you could research and translate health topics on the internet for any family members who do not speak English. You can ask a school counselor how to help a friend who takes part in unhealthy behaviors.

Community health describes the overall physical and mental health of a community. A *community* is a group of people who live in the same area and interact with one another (Figure 1.3.9).

Essential Idea



Advocacy skills help you support the health of yourself and others.



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Figure 1.3.9 Some communities are healthier than others. A community can have poor health, excellent health, or health that is somewhere in the middle

A healthy community depends on the actions of its members. These include health organizations, businesses, governments, and each person. These should work well together to promote health.

You can advocate for community health. You might ask members of your community to help create health awareness posters. Working with others can help you get health information to more people.

Suppose your state has a high rate of obesity. Begin by learning about any public health services. Write to your elected officials. Ask them to support a healthy eating program. On a local level, start a fitness club at school. Attend

BUILDING

YOUR SKILLS

Community Connections

Your School Environment

Your school environment can have a positive or a negative impact on your health. Violence, bullying, and drug use can make students feel unsafe. School counseling services can help students with their mental and emotional health.

Your school environment can be affected by people advocating for changes such as banning weapons or building speed bumps in the parking lot. Your voice or a group of voices has power. Your voices can have a positive impact on the school environment. Speaking up is a way to advocate for health in your community.



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Practice Your Skills

Advocate for Health

Create an advocacy project for a new health initiative. This can be a club, school rule, or information campaign. To create your project, complete the following steps:

1. In small groups, discuss your school environment. List the current actions being taken to encourage healthy students.
2. Next, discuss the health needs that are not being met at your school. List any new actions that could address these unmet health needs.
3. Select one of these actions to improve the health of students. Identify who can accomplish this
- action: you or your classmates, your teachers or school administrators, parents or other trusted adults, or other people.
4. Create a plan to raise student awareness of this health problem and inspire support for making this change.
5. Create a product to help raise awareness for your health program. Possible formats for this product include posters, flyers, social media posts, and petitions.
6. With teacher permission, advocate for your health initiative.

community meetings. You could speak about health issues that concern you. Use your problem-solving and decision-making skills. You can promote solutions to health issues faced by people in the community.

Community health depends on the actions of businesses, organizations, and each person in the community. This means you can promote the health of your community in the following ways:

- **Use community resources.** *Community resources* are services and programs that help people within a community (**Figure 1.3.10**).
- **Volunteer for community service.** *Community service* is work done without pay to help people in the community. Many organizations depend on volunteers. These include nursing homes, food pantries, community gardens, shelters, or community outreach centers.

Examples of Community Resources

City and county healthcare facilities
Community centers
Crisis hotlines



Department of human services
Financial assistance organizations
Food pantries
Homeless shelters
Hospitals
Mental health centers
Nursing homes
Public health departments
Rescue missions
Soup kitchens
Support groups

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Figure 1.3.10

Knowing how to find and use community resources can help you promote the health of yourself and others.



1.3–6 Reading Checkpoint

1. Provide an example of how a middle schooler could use reliable health information to help someone else.
2. How do you think a middle schooler could positively impact community health? Provide an example.

Reading Summary

- 1.3–1** The decision-making process allows you to make an informed, healthy choice. When making a decision, consider your needs, wants, values, and priorities.
- 1.3–2** Effective goals are SMART—specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely.
- 1.3–3** Peers, family members, or the media might pressure you to take part in unhealthy behaviors. Refusal skills can help you respond and stick to your goals, values, or health.
- 1.3–4** Conflict resolution skills help you resolve arguments in a respectful way.
- 1.3–5** The ability to find, interpret, apply, and communicate information about your health is called health literacy. Accurate health information can be found on the websites of groups that focus on education, research, or providing healthcare.
- 1.3–6** You can take charge of your health and wellness by being an advocate for your health. You can also play an active role in promoting health in your family and community.

Critical Thinking

- 1. Discuss.** In your opinion, does a young person have the power to positively impact family or community health? Explain and defend your opinion.
- 2. Explain.** Young people can be targeted for inaccurate health claims. Why is this concerning?
- 3. Summarize.** In general, do middle schoolers make informed healthy decisions regarding their health? Defend your opinion.



Develop Your Skills

- 1. Access Information.** With a partner, research resources in your community that can help you maintain or improve the health of yourself and others. Make a list of at least five community resources. For each resource, include the name of the resource, the service(s) provided, the age group(s) served, and other relevant information. Consider options to volunteer at these facilities to serve others.
- 2. Set Goals.** Write a short reflection on a goal you have set for yourself in the past. Did you achieve your goal? Why or why not? What helped you or prevented you from achieving your goal? In addition, outline ways this goal was or was not SMART. If it was not SMART in one or more ways, identify how this goal could have been modified to be more SMART. If you cannot think of one of your own goals, reflect on the goal of someone you know.
- 3. Communicate with Others.** Practicing refusal skills can help you respond to negative peer pressure. Both your words and body language should communicate “no.” With a partner, read the following pressure lines and practice refusing the request.
 - A.** A classmate states, “I have no idea how to do this assignment. When you are done, share your document with me so I don’t fail this class.”
 - B.** A friend asks, “I’m having a hard time getting cigarettes. Can you take a few from your father and bring them to school tomorrow for me?”
 - C.** While walking around a store, a friend states, “Put this shirt in your backpack. I love it but don’t have the money to pay for it. You won’t get caught. No one is even looking.”
 - D.** A friend pulls out a vape pen and states, “Try it. It tastes good and your parents will never find out.”