

Making Smart Decisions

Purposes of Activity:

1. To help youth understand that they do have the ability to make certain choices about their lives
2. To help them be more aware of the steps involved in making those choices (decisions)
3. To encourage youth to set personal goals for maintaining good health

Materials Needed:

- White board or large piece of paper
- Markers

Instructions:

1. Remind participants about some of the healthy behaviors they've discussed in previous chapters. Mention the most important ones if no one else says them.
2. Write the word "decision" on the board or a large piece of paper.
3. Ask if anyone can define it (*making up your mind about something; making a choice to do or not do something*).
4. Explain that each decision we make leads to a result. Write the word on the board and ask if anyone can define it (*it's what happens after you have done something*).
5. Discuss how some choices/decisions lead to good results. Other choices/decisions lead to bad results. Give a few examples (see list below). Point out that sometimes making no decision at all can just as easily lead to bad results as making a bad decision. So, if you want something in particular to happen, you have a better chance of getting it if you make a decision about it, instead of ignoring it.
6. Generate an interactive group discussion.

Suggested Decisions and Results:

- Not finishing your homework can lead to a bad grade.
- Going to the Boys & Girls Club can keep you out of trouble after school.
- Being active every day can lead to a strong, healthy body.
- Not wearing a hat and coat in cold weather can lead to being cold and sick.
- Washing your hands before you eat can keep you from getting sick.
- Practicing a sport every day can lead to making the school team.
- Helping others can make you feel good about yourself

Suggested Group Discussion:

1. What are examples of things in life you don't get to decide? (*who your parents are, whether it rains or snows, how tall you are, etc.*)
2. What are examples of things you do get to decide for yourself? (*who to sit next to at lunch, whether to like basketball or not, what clothes to wear, whether to behave or act up, etc.*)
3. Do you always make good decisions?

Goal Setting:

1. Give each participant a piece of paper. Ask youth to divide their papers into four squares. In each square, they should write a decision that could affect their health. Two of the decisions should be ones that are likely to have a positive effect on their health; the other two should be ones that would probably have a negative effect on their health. Ask for volunteers to share some of the things they wrote down.
2. Write the word "goal" on the white board. Ask if anyone can define it (something you want to accomplish). Explain that setting goals is an excellent way to get positive results from your decisions. That's because setting goals makes you think about what you want and plan ahead so you can get it. Making a snap decision at the last minute might not get you the result you want.
3. Ask youth to look at the four decisions they wrote on their papers a few minutes ago. Have them now write two personal health goals based on what they wrote. Have volunteers read their personal goal statements. Discuss why those are good healthy goals to pursue.
4. Have everyone keep the personal health goals they've just identified.