

Grade 8 Drug Education

Lesson 2: Impact of Self-Concept on Substance Use Decisions



This lesson, aligned with NL Health curriculum outcomes, contains necessary background information, substance snapshots, learning activities, scenarios, and discussion guides to support material delivery.

Health Curriculum Outcomes

Drug Education

1. To recognize the short- and long-term effects of alcohol and drugs on health and the risks associated with their use.
2. To be aware of the particular risks associated with substance use by teens.
3. To be aware of the dangers of combining alcohol and other drugs.
4. To understand social influences, including advertising, on decisions about substance use.
5. To consider personal, familial, and societal values related to substance use.
6. To identify and promote alternative activities not involving alcohol or other substances.
7. To identify sources of help and information for substance use.
8. To have an appreciation of the role of drugs in our society.
9. To understand some health-related implications of substance use.
10. To be aware of the part that decision-making plays in substance use.

Emotional And Social Well-Being

1. To appreciate how experiences affect self-concept.
2. To identify the effects of self-concept on behaviour.
3. To understand the importance of positive support and feedback on developing a positive self-concept.
4. To differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate ways of handling moods and feelings.
5. To use the decision-making process to choose alternate courses of action when dealing with feelings.

[Link](#) to Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) Curriculum Outcomes



Lesson 1: Substance Use and Decision-Making: Social Influences, Laws, and Health
Lesson 2: Impact of Self-Concept on Substance Use Decisions

Lesson Snapshot:

Lesson 2: Impact of Self-Concept on Decisions and Substance

- Norms & Expectations
- Learning Activity 1: Goal Setting and Self-Concept
- Learning Activity 2: The Impact of Self-Concept on Health and Wellness
- Learning Activity 3: Self-Concept and Decision Making

Background Information

Definition of Drugs

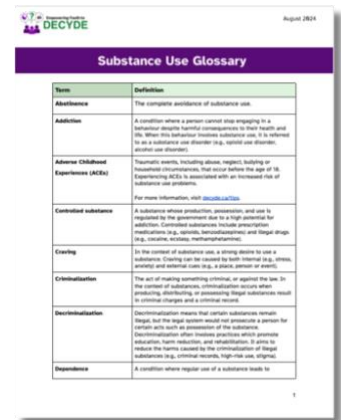
Drugs are substances or chemicals that affect the way our bodies and minds work. Some drugs are medications that help people feel better. They can be used to prevent, cure or alleviate symptoms. Drugs can also be used in unsafe ways. They can affect how the brain works and can have negative effects on the way our body develops and functions. Drugs used unsafely can change the way people feel, think, or behave.

Examples of drugs include:

- Alcohol (e.g., beer, coolers, vodka, whisky, wine)
- Caffeine (e.g., energy drinks, coffee, tea, soft drinks)
- Cannabis or Marijuana
- Hallucinogens (e.g., LSD, Mushrooms)
- Medications (e.g., puffers, epi-pens, fever medications, anti-nausea medications, anti-anxiety medications)
- Nicotine (e.g., tobacco, cigarettes, nicotine vapes)
- Opioids (e.g., codeine, morphine, fentanyl, heroin)
- Over-the-counter medications (e.g., cough syrup, pain medications)
- Stimulants (e.g., nicotine, amphetamines [e.g., Adderall, crystal meth], methylphenidate [e.g., Ritalin], cocaine)
- Vaccinations (e.g., flu, COVID-19, tetanus)

The [DECYDE Substance Use Glossary](#) provides a comprehensive collection of key terms and concepts related to substance use.

Designed to support educators and mentors, this glossary provides definitions to enhance understanding and communication around substance use topics that are relevant for DECYDE.



Term	Definition
Abstinence	The complete avoidance of substance use.
Addiction	A condition where a person's mind and behavior are so strongly impacted by a substance that they have trouble controlling their use, and they often use the substance because substance use is a response to a substance use disorder (e.g., opioid use disorder, alcohol use disorder).
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)	Traumatic events, including abuse, neglect, bullying or household dysfunction, that occur before the age of 18. Experiencing ACEs is associated with an increased risk of substance use problems. For more information, visit https://www.aceinquiry.org/ .
Controlled substance	A substance whose production, possession, and use is regulated by the government due to its high potential for addiction. Controlled substances include prescription medications (e.g., opioids, benzodiazepines) and illegal drugs (e.g., cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine).
Craving	In the context of substance use, a strong desire to use a substance. Craving can be caused by both internal (e.g., stress, anxiety) and external (e.g., a friend, person or event).
Crystallization	The act of making something concrete or applied the law. In the context of substance use, crystallization occurs when planning, distributing, or possessing illegal substances result in criminal charges and a criminal record.
Decriminalization	Decriminalization means that certain substances remain illegal, but the legal system would not prosecute a person for having and using a small amount of the substance. Decriminalization often involves penalties which provide education, harm reduction, and rehabilitation, in order to reduce the harms caused by the criminalization of illegal substances (e.g., criminal records, high-risk use, stigma).
Dependence	A condition where regular use of a substance leads to



[Substance Snapshots](#) aim to provide educators with information about the various drugs that are incorporated throughout the learning activities. Each snapshot summarizes how the drug is used, its effects, when to seek emergency help, and how to stay safe. The Substance Snapshots are intended to support educators in the delivery of drug education and are not for direct student use unless deemed appropriate.

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Key Considerations

An understanding of the following resources will assist educators as they implement the learning activities.



Use a Skills-Based Health Education (SBHE) Approach

SBHE is a learning approach that uses interactive learning methods. This approach is used throughout the learning activities so students can learn skills that will promote and protect their health and well-being. Refer to the [SBHE infographic](#) for more information on SBHE and examples of interactive teaching methods and evaluation.



Incorporate the FACE Decision-Making Model

Throughout all lessons the FACE decision-making model is used to guide discussions and activities. The questions associated with each step of the FACE decision-making model are intended for educator use to probe students during scenario-based learning activities. Refer to the [FACE infographics](#) for more information.



Consider Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and implement Trauma-Informed Practices (TIPs) that support harm reduction principles

ACEs are traumatic events that occur before the child reaches the age of 18. Students who experience ACEs have an increased susceptibility to try drugs. This may impact their ability to engage in learning about substances. The [ACEs infographic](#) highlights the types of ACEs that may impact youth and offers strategies for educators. Incorporating early drug education and [harm reduction](#) principles may encourage youth to make safe and informed choices and reduce potential negative consequences. Understanding the impact of trauma resulting from ACEs will better equip educators to support student learning. The [Trauma- Informed Practices \(TIPs\) infographic](#) provides information on this strengths-based approach for educators.



Support Students Emotional Wellbeing

Discussion about drug or substance use may provoke a range of feelings. Building a positive rapport is vital to effectively engage youth in learning conversations. Respect for students' comments, questions, and concerns surrounding drug use is important regardless of personal opinions. If needed, encourage students to speak with the school's guidance counsellor or another trusted adult. Additional supports are located on the [DECYDE website](#).



Use First-Person Language

Using first-person language that is non-stigmatizing can create an environment that encourages students to engage in conversations or seek help. For more information about stigma and tips for educators, refer to the [infographic on Stigma](#).

Lesson 1: Impact of Self-Concept on Substance Use Disorders



Learning Activities and Teacher Background Resources

Learning Activity 1: Goal Setting and Self-Concept

Learning Activity 2: The Impact of Self-Concept on Health and Wellness

Learning Activity 3: Self-Concept and Decision Making

Teacher Resources:

- Substance Snapshots: [Inhaled Cannabis](#), [Inhaled Nicotine](#), [Alcohol](#), [Methylphenidate](#), [Caffeine](#), [Mixing Drugs](#)
- Infographics: [Self-Concept](#), [Factors Influencing Decision Making](#), [Self-Care](#), [Health and Wellness](#), [Neurodiversity](#), [FACE \(Intermediate Student Version\)](#), [FACE \(Intermediate Teacher Version\)](#)



Norms and Expectations

While abstinence from drugs is the safest choice for youth to make, discussions about harm reduction are also important. Engaging in educational discussions about substance use can be a protective factor and can positively impact the decisions made by youth. These conversations may touch on sensitive topics for some students. Educators should consider the following: reasons why youth use substances; the harms of substance use; the age and cognitive development of youth; and the context of the school, community, and/or family situations. The sensitive nature of these discussions means teachers should place utmost importance on establishing a safe, supportive, and judgment-free environment. The teacher must promote positive and effective exchanges with students by co-establishing classroom norms that are revisited often.

During these discussions, all participants agree:

- The opinions of everyone are listened to and respected.
- Discussions about the content are factual, open and honest but do not use the names of individuals' experiences. (e.g., refer to "someone I know" rather than using names)
- Boundaries of individuals are recognized and respected.
- Discussions are free of judgemental language and challenge ideas, not individuals.
- Words matter. Avoid stigmatizing language. There should be an established understanding of the term [stigma](#). Teach and model respectful language used during discussions.
 - Important examples include using person-first language. For example, "a person who uses drugs or substances".

Learning Activity 1: Goal Setting and Self-Concept

Learning Activity Objectives:



By the end of this lesson, students will:

- Define and reflect on self-concept (Who am I) and self-esteem (How do I feel about who I am?).
- Recognize signs of healthy self-esteem, how it affects behaviour and its importance in decision-making, specifically around substance use.
- Identify their own interests, strengths, positive qualities and values.
- Identify SMART goals and apply strategies for building confidence in achieving future goals.
- Collaborate respectfully with peers, demonstrating positive communication strategies.

Resources:

- Introduction:
 - Classroom Norms and Expectations
 - [List of Character Traits](#) [Note: sticky notes or strips of paper will be required for this activity.]
 - [Self-Esteem Questionnaire](#)
- Pre-Activity: Confidence and Self-Esteem
 - Video: [Confidence and Self-Esteem](#)
 - Discussion Prompts
- Exploration: Making SMART Goals
 - Video: [Setting SMART Goals](#)
 - [Student Worksheet](#)
- Sharing and Reflection: [Personal Action Plan \(Student Worksheet\)](#)
- Infographics: [Self-Concept](#)

Introduction

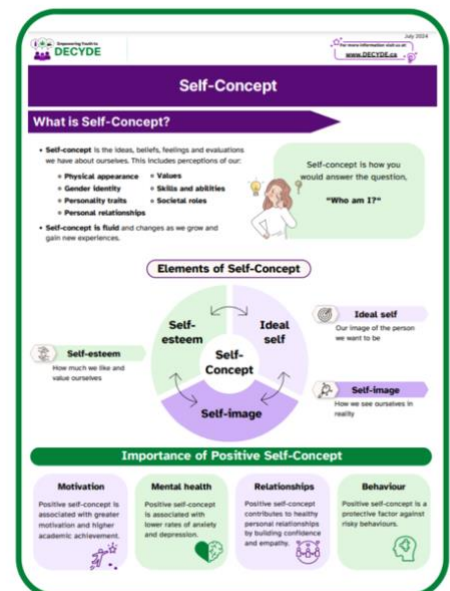
In this lesson, students will consider what it means to be **self-aware** and how their **self-concept influences the decisions they make**. Review the learning objectives with students. Emphasize that the focus of this learning activity will be on the **impact of self-concept and self-esteem on substance use decisions**.

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- **Co-establish important norms** with students and discuss the reason for and importance of these norms.
- **Rank Their Traits:** Open the lesson by handing out 5 or 6 sticky notes. Ask students to think about what makes a good friend. Have them write the characteristics of a good friend on the provided sticky notes, identifying **one trait on each sticky note**. This could include **personality traits, skills, values, and goals**. After students have listed several traits, ask them to rank these traits, moving sticky notes in order of what they believe are the most valuable traits. Remind students that there should be many examples. The teacher may provide their own examples or display a [list of traits](#) for students to view.
- **Categorize Their Traits:** Ask students to review the traits they indicated and to categorize them according to **personality, skills, values, and goals**.
- **Introduce the idea of Self-Concept.** Explain that self-concept has 3 components:
 1. Our image of the person we want to be (ideal self)
 2. How we see ourselves in reality (self-image)
 3. How much we like or value ourselves (self-esteem or confidence)

Introduce students to the [Self-Concept Infographic](#). They may access this online, or the teacher can print it off and hand it out to each student.

Highlight the connection between a strong self-concept and making healthy decisions: When we know and value who we are, we're less likely to engage in behaviors that could harm us, like using substances.



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Learning Activity 1

Student Name: _____

Self-Esteem Questionnaire

I think... I feel that way...

	Never	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
1. I am smart				
2. I am good at schoolwork				
3. I am good at not giving up				
4. I can do hard things				
5. I am good at sports				
6. I am a good friend				
7. I am friendly to others				
8. I am helpful				
9. I am funny				
10. I am happy and cheerful				
11. I am kind and considerate				
12. I am good at asking for help				
13. I am a good communicator				
14. I am good at standing up for myself				
15. I am good at standing up for others				
16. I am good at giving my best effort				
17. I am a good listener				
18. I make good choices				
19. I am trustworthy				
20. I am a good person				

Have students complete the [Self-Concept Questionnaire](#) (available as a [Google Doc or PDF](#)).

After completing the questionnaire, ask students to consider how they view themselves. Do they think they have a positive concept of themselves?

Ask the students to work in pairs or small groups. Get them to discuss the question: **How do you think having a strong or weak self-concept might influence your choices? (The teacher should make sure students understand that they do not have to share their questionnaire responses.)**

After the students finish the small group discussion, ask the groups to share their ideas. Encourage students to bring out the benefits of a positive self-concept, including how it affects motivation, relationships, mental health, and behaviours. Discuss the link between substance use and self-concept, including using substances to cope with anxiety or low mood or using substances to fit in with peers. Ongoing use of substances can become part of a person's self-concept. **Highlight the connection between a strong self-concept and making healthy decisions: When we know and value who we are, we're less likely to engage in behaviours that could harm us, like using substances.**

Read the following scenario to the students:

Imagine a situation where your friends are pressuring you to try vaping or alcohol. How might your self-concept affect the choice you make in this situation?
 What might someone with a strong self-concept say or do in this situation? What about someone with a weaker self-concept?

Tie It Together:

- After discussion, teachers should emphasize how having a positive self-concept can help you make better decisions, especially concerning your health and well-being

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Pre-Activity: Confidence and Self-Esteem

Have students view the video [Confidence and Self-Esteem](#).

After watching the video, **the teacher will gauge the students' understanding and views by engaging them in a discussion about how to improve their confidence** based on the following tips from the video:

**Tips to Improve Your Confidence:**

1. Reevaluate your goals
2. Don't give up
3. Turn the volume down on that negative self-talk.
4. Be constructive, not destructive.
5. Believe in yourself and celebrate your differences.

The teacher may use the following prompts to help guide the discussion:

**Discussion Prompts:**Confidence:

- What does confidence mean to you?
- What makes you feel confident?

Goals:

- How can setting realistic goals increase confidence?
- Can you share a goal you've achieved that made you feel more confident?

Don't Give Up:

- What should you do if you realize a goal you set isn't working for you?
- Can you think of a time when you didn't give up even though you wanted to?
- What or who inspires you to keep going when you want to give up?

Self-Talk:

- How does your self-talk impact your confidence?
- What are some examples of negative self-talk? How would you respond to these examples?

Be Constructive:

- What is an example of constructive criticism?
- Can you think of a time when someone gave you constructive advice that helped you improve?

Believe in Yourself and Celebrate your Differences:

- Why is it important to believe in yourself, even if others don't?
- Can you think of a time when you celebrated someone else's differences? How did that make you feel?

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Exploration: Making SMART Goals

The following activity will teach students how to make SMART goals, which is an important part of building confidence. Together, students will watch a [video](#) and then practice revising a past goal they made into a SMART goal.

They will then answer a series of questions about how they can be more confident in achieving their goals based on the tips for improving confidence discussed in the Pre-Activity.




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Learning 8.1.1-8

Student Name: _____

Exploration: Making SMART Goals



Making SMART goals is an important part of building confidence. Making Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound goals can help you stay focused and feel more in control of your success. SMART goals make it easier to break big dreams into small, achievable steps!

Example: Turn a Past Goal into a SMART Goal

Past Goal: "I want to speak up in class more often!"

Let's turn it into a SMART goal!

Specific: I will speak up more in my science class.

Measurable: I will contribute two comments every week during my science classes.

Achievable: This is an achievable goal because I have science class every day and the teacher gives many opportunities in each class for students to participate.

Relevant: This goal will help improve my confidence in speaking up.

Time-bound: I will do this for one month, at which point I will reassess my goals for the next month.

SMART Goal: "I will contribute at least two comments or questions every week during science class discussion to improve my participation and confidence by the end of the month."

This activity will help train your brain to be more confident. Now it's your turn!

This activity is available for students as a [PDF](#) or [Google Doc](#).

The worksheet contains an example for the students, but it is suggested for the teacher to also model their own example with the students before they complete the worksheet.

The steps for the activity are as follows:

1. Have students reflect and pick a goal that they made in the past. Get the students to write down this goal as they will revisit it after the video.
2. Show the video [Setting SMART Goals](#) to teach about SMART goal setting. Teach students how to make SMART goals. Any goals that they make should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound.

Following the video, discuss some possible SMART goals with the students. **Here are some examples:**

- **Get a good grade:** "I will get at least 75% in my math course by the end of the semester by completing all assignments on time and asking the teacher for extra practice questions before each test."
- **Read a book in a month:** "I will finish reading my 300 page novel by reading 10 pages every evening, aiming to finish it by the end of the month."

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- **Spend less time on social media:** “I will limit my social media usage by changing my notifications settings so I don’t get notified all the time. I will also put my phone outside of my room on school nights so I don’t stay up too late scrolling.”

3. Have students rewrite their original goal on their worksheet. There is an example of writing a SMART goal provided on the student worksheet.
4. Students will then answer the following questions on the worksheet about how they can be more confident in achieving their goals based on the tips for improving confidence discussed in the Pre-Activity:
 - a) What did you do to help you work towards your goal? What did you do if you were not able to achieve your goal the first time?
 - b) What did you do when you doubted yourself? Give examples of positive thoughts you could tell yourself.
 - c) What kinds of feedback did you receive from others? State if this was constructive or destructive feedback.
 - d) How did your differences enable you to work towards your goal? What strengths do you have that make you unique?

Sharing and Reflection: Personal Action Plan

Students will create a **Personal Action Plan**. Explain that the purpose of the **Personal Action Plan** is for students to reflect on their positive qualities and create a goal to help them take actionable steps toward building their self-confidence.



This activity is available as a [PDF or Google Doc](#).

The teacher will begin with **Modeling the Process**.

You can pick a personal example to share, or use this example:

Identify three things you like about yourself: I like that I’m a good listener, creative, and work hard in school.

List one of your strengths you want to develop further. One strength I want to develop further is public speaking.

Write down one SMART goal you will set to improve your self-confidence: I will practice public speaking by giving a short presentation to my family once a week for the next month.

The worksheet is titled "Sharing and Reflection: Create a Personal Action Plan" and includes a student name line. It contains the following text and instructions:

Develop a **Personal Action Plan** to improve your **self-confidence**. The purpose of the **Personal Action Plan** is to reflect on your **positive qualities** and **create a goal** to help you take **actionable steps** toward building your **self-confidence**.

1. Identify three things you like about yourself.
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)
2. List one of your strengths you want to develop further.
 -

Learning Activity 2: The Impact of Self-Concept on Health and Wellness

Learning Objectives:



By the end of this lesson, students will:

- Identify how self-concept and self-care influence decision-making.
- Define social wellness.
- Discuss the effects of substances on a person's health and wellness.
- Identify alternative activities not involving substances.
- Identify reliable sources of help and information about substance use.
- Discuss how social wellness and self-care can impact health and wellness.
- Collaborate respectively with peers and demonstrate positive communication strategies.

Resources:

- Introduction:
 - Video: [Teens: My Self-Care](#)
 - Discussion Prompts
- Pre-Activity: Look and Listen: Social Wellness
 - Video: [Social Wellness: Overall Health](#)
 - [Student Worksheet](#)
- Exploration: Self-Concept Scenarios
 - Scenario 1: Alex: Will I Lose Weight? – Smoking Cigarettes [Student Version](#)
 - Scenario 2: Taylor: A New School – Smoking and Cannabis [Student Version](#)
 - Scenario 3: Hunter: Mixing Substances Won't Hurt, Will It? [Student Version](#)
 - Scenario 4: Parker: Vaping Nicotine to Stay Focused [Student Version](#)
 - [Teacher Discussion Guide \(Scenarios 1-4\)](#)
- Sharing and Reflection: [Who am I? \(Student Worksheet\)](#)
- Substance Snapshots: [Nicotine \(Inhaled\)](#), [Cannabis \(Inhaled\)](#), [Alcohol](#)
- Infographics: [Self-Concept](#), [Factors Influencing Decision Making](#), [Self-Care](#), [Health and Wellness](#), [Neurodiversity](#)

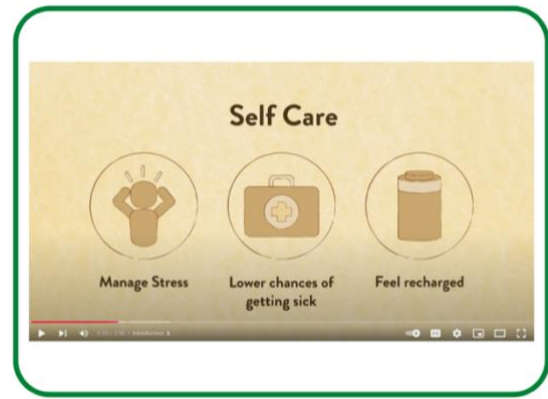
Introduction

In Learning Activity 2, students will continue to expand their knowledge of **health and wellness** and **self-concept**, with a focus on **social wellness and self-care**. The exploration activity will allow students to apply their knowledge to different scenarios by discussing how self-concept and self-care can play a role in making challenging decisions.

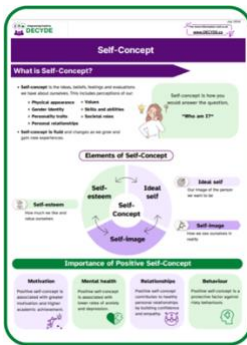
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In this **introductory activity**, teachers will:

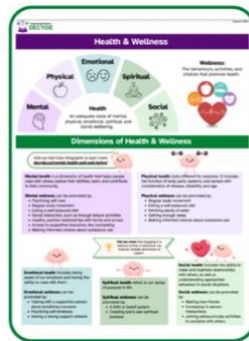
1. Lead a review of self-care, health and wellness, factors influencing decision-making, and self-concept.
2. Share the following [video on self-care](#), and
3. Guide class discussion using the following infographics and discussion prompts.



The **infographics** can be displayed or copied and handed out:



[Self-Concept](#)



[Health and Wellness](#)



[Self-Care](#)



[Factors Influencing Decision-Making](#)

The teacher may use the following prompts to help guide the discussion:



Discussion Prompts:

Self-Care:

- What does self-care mean to you, and why is it important?
- Can you name a self-care activity that works for you?
- How does practicing self-care impact your ability to make decisions?
- Why does practicing self-care act as a protective factor against problematic substance use?

Health and Wellness

- Why is it important to balance all areas of health (mental, physical, emotional, spiritual, and social?)
- Which area do you tend to focus on the most?
- What are some small changes you can make to improve health and wellness in one or more of these areas?

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Support:

- Why is seeking help and support from others so important for self-care?
- Who do you turn to when you need support?
- Can you think of a time where self-esteem played a role in a choice you made?
- How does practicing self-care impact your ability to make decisions?

Self-Concept:

- How does self-care and health and wellness influence your self-concept? Can you think of examples? (Ex. Playing sports gives you a sense of belonging, increasing self-esteem)

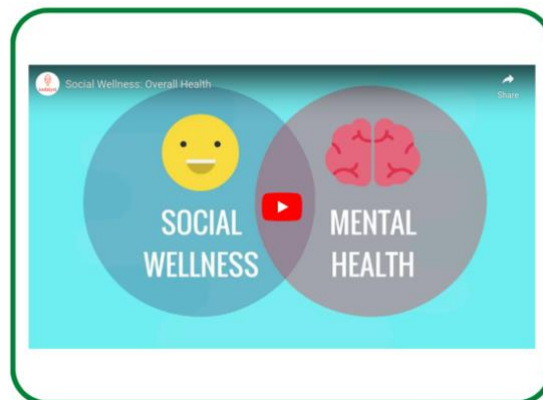
Social Interactions:

- How do peer groups influence your decisions?
- How does wanting to fit in with peers influence self-concept?
- Can you think of a time when a social interaction improved your well-being?
- How do your relationships with friends and family shape the way you see yourself?

Pre-Activity: Look and Listen: Social Wellness

This activity will expand on the discussion on **health and wellness**.

As a class, watch the video [Social Wellness: Overall Health](#) and give time for the students to respond to questions in small groups or individually.

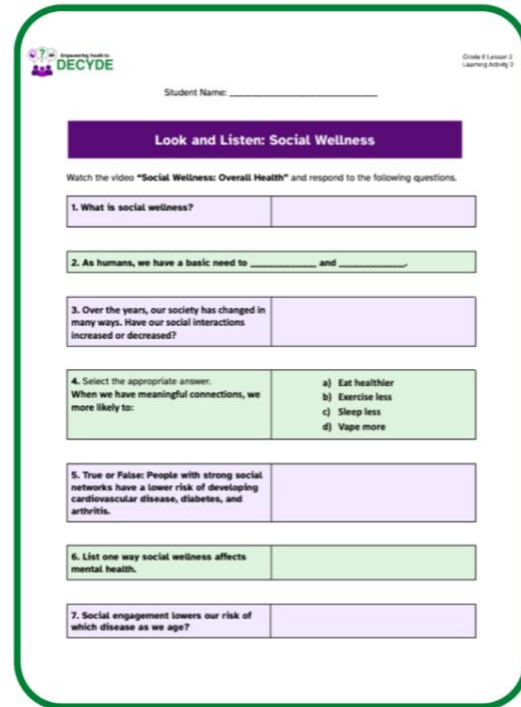


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Students will complete the activity in their [Student Worksheet](#), which is available as a PDF or Google Doc.

When students have completed the worksheet, discuss the students' responses as a group using the **Teacher Discussion Guide** below:

1. What is social wellness? *Social wellness is a measure of how we interact with others and create meaningful relationships.*
2. As humans, we have a basic need to *belong and connect.*
3. Over the years, our society has changed in many ways. Have our social interactions increased or decreased?
Decreased
4. When we have meaningful connections, we are more likely to:
 - a. *Eat healthier – when people have meaningful connections, they tend to eat healthier, exercise more, and are less likely to smoke.*
 - b. Exercise less
 - c. Sleep less
 - d. Vape more
5. True or False: People with strong social networks have a lower risk of developing cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and arthritis. *True*
6. List one way social wellness affects mental health.
 - *Meaningful relationships: greater happiness*
 - *Isolation: increased risk for depression, anxiety, and suicide*
7. Social engagement lowers our risk of which disease as we age? *Social engagement puts people at lower risk of developing dementia or Alzheimer's Disease*



Grade 8 Lesson 2
Learning Activity 2

Student Name: _____

Look and Listen: Social Wellness

Watch the video "Social Wellness: Overall Health" and respond to the following questions.

1. What is social wellness?
2. As humans, we have a basic need to _____ and _____.
3. Over the years, our society has changed in many ways. Have our social interactions increased or decreased?
4. Select the appropriate answer:
When we have meaningful connections, we more likely to:
 - a) Eat healthier
 - b) Exercise less
 - c) Sleep less
 - d) Vape more
5. True or False: People with strong social networks have a lower risk of developing cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and arthritis.
6. List one way social wellness affects mental health.
7. Social engagement lowers our risk of which disease as we age?

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Exploration: Self-Concept Scenarios



Teachers may refer to the [alcohol](#), [nicotine \(inhaled\)](#) and [cannabis \(inhaled\)](#) Substance Snapshots to help inform the discussions.

In this Exploration activity, students will assess different scenarios with youth who find themselves in challenging situations. During discussions, students will examine **factors influencing decision-making and the role of self-concept, confidence, and self-care in making difficult decisions.**

Scenario 1: Alex: Will I Lose Weight? – Smoking Cigarettes

Scenario 2: Taylor: A New School- Smoking and Cannabis

Scenario 3: Hunter: Mixing Substances Won't Hurt, Will It?

Scenario 4: Parker: Vaping Nicotine to Stay Focused

All scenarios are available as [PDFs and Google Docs](#) on the DECYDE website. Students may work on these individually, in pairs, or small groups.

The Teacher Discussion Guide is available as a [PDF](#). **The teacher may choose to model the first scenario with the class.**



Scenario 1 (Example): Alex: Will I Lose Weight? – Smoking Cigarettes

Alex is in Grade 8 and attends dance class every evening after school. They love dancing and consistently receive positive feedback at competitions. Lately, Alex has been feeling insecure about their body. They often compare what they look like to the other students at dance and the dancers they follow on social media. Alex thinks they would feel more confident and even become a better dancer if they lost weight. Alex decides to start smoking cigarettes because they heard online that the nicotine in cigarettes can help with weight loss by reducing appetite. At first, Alex experiences a change in their eating habits and notices they're losing weight, which boosts their confidence. However, after a while, they notice that they get tired easily and have trouble keeping up in practice. Alex has been hiding their smoking from friends, family, and dance teachers because they are concerned about getting in trouble. Alex wants to quit smoking but is worried about gaining weight back. They feel stuck and don't know what to do.

1. What may have influenced Alex to decide to start smoking cigarettes? (Consider factors from the Factors Influencing Decision Making Infographic)

- *Media: They follow other dancers on social media and often compare their body to others online*
- *Peer groups: Alex compares their looks to other students in dance class*
- *Knowledge and Experiences: They also heard online that cigarettes might help them lose weight by reducing their appetite*
- *Self-concept: Alex feels insecure about their body, which influences their decision to start smoking to lose weight*
- *Family: Parents/caregivers' relationships with body image/weight may impact their own feelings*

2. How might Alex's view of who they are shape their decisions? What are some strategies Alex could use to build confidence?

- *Alex is struggling with their self-image and self-esteem, leading them to look for solutions to change the way their body looks*
- *Building Confidence: Alex could try: challenging negative thoughts, practicing positive self-talk, seek out support, and practicing self-care*

3. What are the harms of nicotine use that Alex should be aware of?

- *Short term: dizziness, headaches, nausea, feelings of faintness leading to anxiety*
- *Long term: lung damage, breathlessness, persistent cough, increased risk of heart disease and COPD, increased risk of infections like pneumonia*

4. How has smoking cigarettes affected Alex? Do you think this was the effect Alex expected?

- *Initially boosted confidence as weight loss goal was achieved*
- *Now they are feeling tired and having a hard time keeping up in practice*
- *Concerned about health impacts and how that can impede dance performance, worried about getting in trouble*
- *They expected (or hoped) to lose weight, but did not expect it to impact their dance performance or the stress of hiding it from friends and family*

5. What are some other things Alex could do to improve their health and wellness? (Consider all relevant components of self-care).

- *Seeking Support: talk to a doctor about concerns around weight/body image. talk to close friends at dance, or coach or family about their struggles, speak with a mental health professional if thoughts of weight loss, desire to be thin is constant, not consuming enough calories and nutrients, could be early signs of eating disorder*
- *Technology: limit time on social media or take a break all together, unfollow accounts that make them feel bad about themselves*

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- *Healthy Eating: making sure they are eating nutritious foods to support their activity levels, including drinking lots of water, and having fruits, vegetables, grains and protein-rich foods*

6. As a friend, what could you say or do to help Alex?

- *Remind them that they are a really good dancer already and that they look great the way they are*
- *Highlight Alex's talents/strengths that are not related to physical appearance/performance*
- *Remind them social media is a highlight reel - people use filters and take pictures at angles to make themselves look a certain way*




Sharing and Reflection: Who Am I?

This activity will be used to wrap up and conclude Learning Activity 2. It includes two parts; one to reflect on specific substances and **how it can affect self-concept**; and one to provide students an opportunity to **reflect on their own self-concept**.

Part A: Students will pick one substance and explain how it may affect a person's self-concept.


Part B: Students will create a "Who am I" self-collage, compiling text and images representing your hobbies, interests, goals, and important people.

This activity is available as a [PDF or Google Doc](#).


Grade 8 Lesson 2
Learning Activity 2

Student Name: _____

Sharing and Reflection: Who Am I?



Part A: Pick one substance, and explain how it may affect a person's self-concept.
What can a person do if they think the substance is negatively affecting their self-concept?

Part B:
Create a "Who am I" self-collage. Compile text and images representing your hobbies, interests, goals, and important people. Include the following elements in the collage:

- The person I think I am.
- The person others think I am.
- How self-care can help improve my self-concept

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Learning Activity 3: Self-Concept and Decision Making

Learning Objectives:



- Recognize signs of healthy self-esteem and its importance in decision making
- Recognize how self-esteem may affect how one feels and acts
- Examine how self-concept influences decision making
- Use critical thinking skills to make decisions and to problem solve.
- Collaborate respectfully with peers and demonstrate positive communication strategies.

Resources:

- Classroom Norms and Expectations
- FACE Decision-Making Scenarios
 - Scenario 1: Riley: Hitting the Pen – Will I feel Better? [Student Version](#)
 - Scenario 2: Brady: Is Alcohol the Answer? [Student Version](#)
 - Scenario 3: Casey: Perfecting the Latest Video Game – Non-prescription Methylphenidate [Student Version](#)
 - [FACE Scenarios Teacher Discussion Guide](#)
- Sharing and Reflection: Self-Care and Wellness to Help Make Better Choices
 - [Student Worksheet](#)
- Substance Snapshots: [Inhaled Cannabis](#), [Alcohol](#), [Methylphenidate](#), [Caffeine](#)
- Infographics: [Self-Concept](#), [Self-Care](#), [Health and Wellness](#), [Neurodiversity](#), [FACE \(Intermediate Student Version\)](#), [FACE \(Intermediate Teacher Version\)](#)

Introduction

Revisit and review classroom norms. Emphasize their importance and, if necessary, adapt by changing or adding new norms.

During **Learning Activity 3**, students will have the opportunity to explore and assess how choices and decisions can affect one's **well-being** and why **careful decision-making** is important. Students will learn the [FACE Decision-Making Model](#) and how to apply it to their own life decisions. They will examine situations with youth who find themselves in challenging situations. During discussions, students will examine themes of **health and wellness**, and **self-esteem**. The teacher will also lead the group to consider how these themes are important in decision making.

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Present and discuss the [FACE Decision-Making Model](#) with students. **The first scenario can be used to present and model with students.** The students will then work through all scenarios. They will use the **FACE Decision-Making Model** to explore how youth may:

- FEEL about the situation
- ASSESS the situation
- CHOOSE the safest option
- EVALUATE the decision



Teachers may refer to the [alcohol](#), [cannabis \(inhaled\)](#), [methylphenidate](#), and [caffeine](#) Substance Snapshots to help inform



FACE Decision-Making Scenarios:

Scenario 1: Riley: Hitting the Pen – Will I feel Better?

Scenario 2: Brady: Is Alcohol the Answer?

Scenario 3: Casey: Perfecting the Latest Video Game – Non-prescription Methylphenidate

All scenarios are available as [PDFs and Google Docs](#) on the DECYDE website. Students may work on these individually, in pairs, or small groups.

The Teacher Discussion Guide is available as a [PDF](#). **The teacher may choose to model the first scenario with the class:**

Scenario 1 (Example): Riley: Hitting the Pen - Will I Feel Better?

Riley is a Grade 8 student who loves watching movies and playing sports with their close friends. Riley's friends have recently started hanging out with a new, larger group. This has made socializing feel more stressful and overwhelming instead of enjoyable. Riley has been feeling pressure to fit in with the bigger group and went looking for ways to help with stress. While exploring social media, Riley hears an influencer explain that cannabis can help with stress, so they decide to give it a try. They managed to get a cannabis vape pen and found that it helped reduce their feelings of anxiety in social settings. Now they are using cannabis regularly and have started to lose interest in hanging out with friends at all. Riley's friends are wondering what is going on and why Riley rarely wants to hang out anymore. Riley worries their friends are disappointed and feels guilty about vaping, but they're afraid to talk about it. What should Riley do?

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Feel

How do you think Riley was feeling before they started vaping cannabis? How are they feeling now?

- *Before: They enjoyed hanging out with their friends but were feeling stressed and overwhelmed now that new kids had joined the group*
- *After: Since they've started vaping cannabis, they feel less interested in hanging out with friends, feels guilty and worried they're disappointing their friends*

Who else might have feelings about Riley's situation?

- *Riley's friends may be concerned that something is wrong, worried about Riley as this behaviour is out of character for them*
- *They may be frustrated or mad that Riley is not hanging out with them and won't talk about why*
- *Riley's parent(s) might be wondering why Riley is not out with their friends like they normally would be*

Assess

What are Riley's choices?

- *Talk to their friends about how they're feeling*
- *Talk to a trusted adult (e.g., guardian, teacher, coach, guidance counsellor) about how they're feeling*
- *Not tell anyone and continue to vape withdraw/isolate themselves from friends*
- *Stop vaping*
- *Reduce the amount they are vaping (less frequently)*
- *Try hanging out with friends in smaller groups without vaping and see how they feel*
- *They can call the Kids Help Phone or Lifewise Peer Support to talk to someone anonymously*

How could Riley's choices affect them or others?

- *Riley's friends might be upset at first but come around eventually*
- *Their friends might be understanding and relieved that the issue wasn't more serious/concerning*
- *Riley's guardians may be upset and discipline Riley for vaping cannabis*
- *Others might praise Riley for talking to them about what they're feeling and trying to find a healthier solution*
- *Riley may feel relieved that they are getting help*

What are some ways that cannabis may be impacting Riley's health and wellbeing? What are some possible long-term effects if they continue to vape?

- *Short-term: worsening mental health, making them feel withdrawn, losing interest*
- *Long-term: impacts brain development (especially since they're less than 25 years old), interferes with memory and learning, heart and lung problems, dependence*

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Choose

What are some possible next steps Riley could make?

- *Talk to one of their closest friends*
- *Speak to a trusted adult*
- *Reach out for help (e.g., supports, guidance counsellor, Kids Help Phone, Lifewise Peer Support)*
- *Try to reduce or stop vaping cannabis*
- *Try to engage in healthier activities*

What are some suggestions you could make to help Riley reduce their stress and anxiety in a healthier way?

- *Talk to their doctor or other healthcare professional*
- *See a counselor*
- *Tell a family member or other trusted adult*
- *Talk to a friend*
- *Participate in healthy activities, such as going for a walk/exercise to help calm anxious thinking, participating in sports or arts-based activities*
- *Get good sleep, reduce social media use, eat healthy*
- *Speak to Kids Help Phone at 1-800-668-6868 or text CONNECT to 686868, consult Bridge the Gapp for resources for youth about anxiety, or call Lifewise Peer Support at their Warmline (10AM-12AM Daily): (EN) 1-855-753-2560 (FR) 1-833-753-5460*

Evaluate

What do you think Riley could learn from the choices they made?

- *There are people that can help, such as close friends, adults, and other supports.*
- *Friends can be supportive, or potentially not*
- *Cannabis may have been affecting Riley (withdrawn, worsening stress)*

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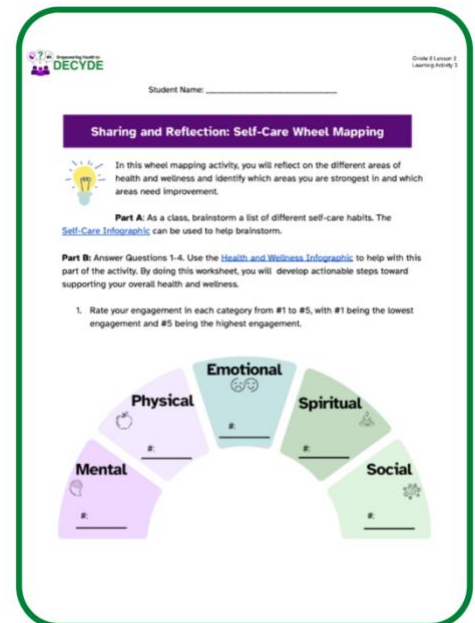



Sharing and Reflection: Self-Care and Wellness to Help Make Better Choices

Before starting this activity, teachers and students will come up with a list of different **self-care habits**. The [Self-Care Infographic](#) can be used to help brainstorm. For example: take a hot bath or shower, go for a walk, watch a favourite movie, read a book to a sibling, etc.

Then, students will engage in the following reflection activity, **available as a PDF or Google Doc**. They will reflect on the different areas of health and wellness and identify which areas they are strongest in, and which areas need improvement. Then, using the list generated earlier or picking their own, they will pick 3 self-care habits they already do to support their highest rated category, and 3 habits they can start doing to improve their lowest rated category.

By doing this worksheet, students will develop **actionable steps** toward supporting their **overall health and wellness**.




Grade 8 Lesson 2
Learning Activity 2

Student Name: _____

Sharing and Reflection: Self-Care Wheel Mapping

In this wheel mapping activity, you will reflect on the different areas of health and wellness and identify which areas you are strongest in and which areas need improvement.

Part A: As a class, brainstorm a list of different self-care habits. The [Self-Care Infographic](#) can be used to help brainstorm.

Part B: Answer Questions 1-4. Use the [Health and Wellness Infographic](#) to help with this part of the activity. By doing this worksheet, you will develop actionable steps toward supporting your overall health and wellness.

1. Rate your engagement in each category from #1 to #5, with #1 being the lowest engagement and #5 being the highest engagement.

Emotional
 Physical
 Spiritual
 Social
 Mental



Grade 8 Lesson 2

Content Created by the Cannabis Health Evaluation and Research Partnership (CHERP) Team at Memorial University

DECYDE stands for Drug Education Centred on Youth Decision Empowerment. Through this project, our Cannabis Health Evaluation and Research Partnership (CHERP) team of pharmacists, educators, researchers, and students at Memorial University who wish to support substance use education for youth. We further collaborate with a diverse panel of youth in Newfoundland and Labrador who collaborate with the team on creating the DECYDE content.

The key goals of our project are to:

- Provide substance use education that emphasizes harm reduction principles.
- Provide youth with information and support the development of decision-making skills about substance use.
- Provide youth with the knowledge and skills to make safe and informed decisions surrounding substance use.
- Provide educators with accessible and easy-to-follow lesson plans that contain valid and reliable information.

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