

Addresses Social Pressures and Influences

Description: An effective curriculum provides opportunities for students to analyze personal and social pressures to engage in risky behaviors.¹ These pressures include media influences, peer pressure, and social and structural barriers. Pressure from media sources may include television commercials encouraging alcohol and drug use, social media content exposing and perpetuating messages about “idealized” body types, or bullying and harassment. Peer pressure to engage in risky health behaviors may include friends or peers pressuring one another to vape or use marijuana, have unprotected sex, or bully others. Social and structural barriers that increase the likelihood of adolescents engaging in or experiencing risky behaviors include poverty, racism, financial and gender inequality, lack of access to health services, stigma related to HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, and homophobic and transphobic viewpoints. This characteristic is aligned with National Health Education Standard 2: Students will analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology, and other factors on health behaviors.²

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool* (Atlanta, GA: CDC, 2021).

² The Joint Committee on National Health Education Standards, *National Health Education Standards: Achieving Excellence*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta, GA: American Cancer Society; 2007), https://cairnguidance.com/wp-content/uploads/NHES_FINAL.pdf.



Grades K–2 Examples

Example 1

For this example, the lesson that is being taught is influences on bullying, and the Healthy Behavior Outcome (HBO) for this lesson is *V-3: Avoid bullying or being a bystander to bullying, or being a victim of bullying* (HECAT Appendix 3).

1. For this activity, the students have already learned functional health information to identify bullying and why it is wrong to bully others. The students have also learned to identify trusted adults at home, at school, or in their community whom they can ask for help when bullied. They have already learned how to ask trusted adults for help when bullied.
2. The focus for this activity is on identifying school influences including classmates, teachers, and other trusted adults who can help prevent or deal with bullying.
3. The teacher starts the lesson by showing the students the video *The Playground Is for Everyone*.³
4. The teacher asks the students the following questions:
 - a. What happened when Ty and JoJo wanted to play on the climbing bars? (Lance and Alexa told them they had called dibs on the climbing bars and that no one else could play on the climbing bars.)
 - b. Were Lance and Alexa bullying Ty and JoJo? (Yes)
 - c. How do we know that Lance and Alexa were bullying Ty and JoJo? (Lance and Alexa were being mean and not letting them play on the climbing bars.)
 - d. How did Ty and JoJo feel when they were bullied by Lance and Alexa? (Ty and JoJo felt sad and defeated.)
5. The teacher explains that the students can be positive and helpful influences on the feelings and behaviors of classmates when the students are kind and allow classmates to play with them. The teacher also explains that it is a negative and unhelpful influence on classmates when students bully their peers by being mean and not allowing classmates to play with them.
6. The teacher asks the students the following questions:
 - a. Was the bullying by Lance and Alexa a positive or negative influence on Ty and JoJo's feelings? (It was a negative influence.)
 - b. What happened when Zack saw Ty and JoJo walk away from the climbing bars? (Zack told Ty and JoJo that they could play on the climbing bars and told them to follow him to the climbing bars.)



³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *The Playground Is for Everyone*, StopBullying.gov, accessed May 5, 2023, <https://www.stopbullying.gov/kids/kid-videos/playground-is-for-everyone>. Note: Click on Read Along to access the transcript for this video.

- c. Was Zack a positive or a negative influence on preventing bullying by Lance and Alexa? Why? (Zack told Lance and Alexa that the climbing bars belonged to everyone, that Lance and Alexa were being mean by not letting Ty and JoJo play, and that their behavior was bullying.)
 - d. Was Mr. Ortiz a positive or negative influence on preventing bullying? Why? (He came over to the climbing bars and said that Zack did a good job recognizing the bullying. He said that it is best to share and include others.)
 - e. At the end of the video, Lance moved over, and all the children began to play on the climbing bars. Was this a positive or negative influence on the behavior and feelings of the children? (It was positive because they were playing together and having fun.)
7. The teacher ends the lesson by asking the students to identify ways classmates and other people at school can be a positive influence on classmates while at school (e.g., not bullying others, sharing equipment, and letting everyone play).



Example 2

For this example, the lesson that is being taught is eating healthy, and the HBOs for the lesson are *FN-8: Limit foods high in added sugars, saturated fats, trans fats, and sodium* and *FN-9: Choose to eat or drink nutrient-dense foods and beverages when dining* ([HECAT Appendix 3](#)).

1. For this lesson, the students have already learned functional health information regarding the importance of choosing nutrient-dense foods and beverages that help people feel good, the importance of eating different foods from all the food groups, the types of foods and beverages that should be limited, and the benefits of eating healthily.
2. The focus of this lesson is identifying influences on eating healthily.
3. The teacher explains that many things influence or affect our food choices and things we eat and drink. These influences can be our families, what foods are offered at school, as well as videos, messages, and images we see on television, computers, tablets, and phones.
4. The teacher then asks the students:
 - a. Are there ways families help students eat healthy foods and beverages?
 - b. What are ways that the school helps students eat healthy foods and beverages?
5. The teacher then explains that the images we see on television, computers, tablets, and phones can also influence our food choices. The teacher then asks the students:
 - a. What is an advertisement? (Note: An advertisement is a video, picture, or song that encourages people to buy something or to ask family members to buy something.)
 - b. What are things that advertisements on television or online encourage children to do, buy, or ask family members to do or buy for them? (Note: Children's advertising often focuses on toys, other programming for children, unhealthy snacks, and breakfast cereals.)
 - c. Have you ever seen an advertisement for snacks or breakfast cereals? (Note: Advertisements for breakfast cereals are those that are typically high in sugar.) Are they usually healthy or unhealthy foods?
6. The teacher concludes the lesson by encouraging students to eat healthy foods and beverages.



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Grades 3–5 Examples

Example 1

For this example, the lesson that is being taught is influences on safe and risky behaviors, and the HBOs for the lesson are *S-3: Use safety equipment appropriately and correctly* and *PA-6: Avoid injury during physical activity* ([HECAT Appendix 3](#)).

1. For this lesson, students have already learned the functional health information about how injuries can be prevented, examples of dangerous or risky behaviors, and why it is important to wear a helmet or other appropriate protective gear when participating in sports and other physical activities.
2. The focus of this lesson is on family, peer, school, community, and media influences on the use of helmets or other protective gear when participating in sports and other physical activities.
3. The teacher begins the lesson by asking the following questions:
 - a. What does it mean to be influenced by someone to do something safe, like wearing a bike helmet?
 - b. Who are people who influence you to wear a bike helmet?
4. The teacher then explains that people can be a positive influence by encouraging others to do something safe or a negative influence by encouraging others to do something that is not safe.
5. The teacher also explains that students can also be positively influenced to do safe things and negatively influenced to do unsafe things while at home, at school, or in the community.
6. The teacher then tells the students that they are going to select a specific sport or physical activity to identify positive and negative influences on the use of helmets or other protective gear.
7. Students are asked to complete the following worksheet to identify positive and negative influences of helmet use and/or other protective gear.



Name of Sport or Physical Activity		
Influence	Positive	Negative
Family		
Peers		
School		
Community		

8. Students are asked to share examples of positive and negative influences on the use of helmets and/or other protective gear.
9. Students are given a partner who selected the same or similar sport or physical activity. The students identify how they could counter two of the identified negative influences so that students always use helmets and other protective gear.
10. The teacher calls on pairs to share strategies.
11. The teacher concludes the lesson by encouraging students to be positive influences on one another. The teacher also urges the students to listen to people who encourage them to use helmets or other protective gear when participating in sports and other physical activities.

Example 2

For this example, the lesson that is being taught is the influence of social media and technology on bullying, and the HBO for this lesson is *V-3: Avoid bullying or being a bystander to bullying, or being a victim of bullying* ([HECAT Appendix 3](#)).

1. For this lesson, the students have already learned functional health information to help them with the following actions:
 - a. Describing the difference between bullying and teasing
 - b. Explaining why it is wrong to tease or bully others based on personal characteristics
 - c. Describing what to do if oneself or someone else is being bullied
 - d. Explaining the difference between tattling and reporting aggression, bullying, or violence

The students have also identified trusted adults at home, at school, and in the community whom they can ask for help, and they've learned how to ask those trusted adults for help when bullied.

2. The focus for this lesson is on identifying the influence of social media and technology on bullying.
3. The teacher begins the lesson by asking the following questions:
 - a. What does it mean to influence someone? ("Influence" means to have an effect on another person.)
 - b. Can this influence be positive?
 - c. Can this influence be negative?
 - d. What is social media? ("Social media" is a form of communication with others through the use of phones, computers, tablets, and other devices by using Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok, Omegle, House Party, or other online platforms.)
 - e. Can social media have a positive influence on people? How?
 - f. Can social media have a negative influence on people? How?



4. The teacher breaks the students into groups of three to four people to brainstorm responses to the following question:
 - a. What are rules you should follow to be safe while using social media?
5. The teacher asks students the following question about different scenarios:
 - a. Why should you always talk with your parents or other trusted adults in the following situations?
 - i. You are contacted by someone you don't know or who pretends to be someone you do know.
 - ii. Someone says mean things, bullies, or threatens you.
 - iii. Someone asks you to tell them your name, birthday, school, or address.
 - iv. Someone asks you to give them your picture.
 - v. Someone sends you a picture of themselves without your permission.
 - vi. Someone asks to meet you in person.
6. The teacher concludes the lesson by encouraging students to
 - a. Be positive influences on social media,
 - b. Follow the rules for safe use of social media, and
 - c. Always talk with a trusted adult in these situations:
 - i. When students are contacted by someone they don't know or who pretends to be someone they know,
 - ii. When someone says mean things, bullies, or threatens them,
 - iii. When someone asks for personal information and/or their picture, and
 - iv. When someone asks to meet them.

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Grades 6–8 Examples

Example 1

For this example, the unit that is being taught is Violence Prevention, and the HBO for the lesson is VP-3: *Avoid bullying or being a bystander to bullying, or being a victim of bullying* ([HECAT Appendix 3](#)).

1. The focus of this lesson is on identifying influences in students' lives such as peers, social media, teachers, family, and trusted adults that affect bullying or the prevention of bullying.
2. The students have previously learned about how stigma, bias, and prejudice can lead to discrimination and violence; why it is wrong to tease others based on personal characteristics; and the role of bystanders in escalating, preventing, or stopping bullying, fighting, and violence.
3. Students are divided into groups of three and provided with scenarios that reflect various forms of bullying. Students are asked to read the scenarios and respond to the following prompts:
 - a. Identify the bully, victim, bystanders (both who were silent and who spoke up), and adult.
 - b. What type of bullying did they experience (e.g., teasing, taunting, cyberbullying, spreading rumors, cliques)?
 - c. How do you think the victim, bystander, defender, and adult felt (e.g., intimidated, sad, depressed)?
 - d. What is the difference between a negative and positive influence? (A negative influence contributes to bullying, and a positive influence helps to prevent or intervene.)
 - e. What were the negative and positive influences on the situation that impacted the bullying action(s) (e.g., peers, teachers, other adults, physical space)?
 - f. What are possible solutions to address the bullying (e.g., confronting the bully, asking for help)?
4. Students share the scenarios and discuss responses with the class.
5. The culminating activity is for students to write a reflection on how they can be positive bystanders to prevent and intervene when someone is being bullied.



Example 2

For this example, the unit that is being taught is Personal Health and Wellness, and the HBO is *PHW-2: Get the appropriate amount of sleep and rest* ([HECAT Appendix 3](#)).

1. Prior to this activity, students were taught functional health information about the benefits of getting proper rest and sleep for healthy growth and development and the positive and negative influences from peers, family, social media, and society on using health-related products and services. The focus for this activity is on analyzing the positive and negative influences that affect teens' sleep and rest.
2. Students are asked to list examples of positive influences that support getting the appropriate amount of sleep (e.g., parents' expectations about sleep, a quiet room, fresh air, having enough to eat, a set sleep schedule, phone in a different room).
3. Students are asked to list examples of negative influences on getting the appropriate amount of sleep (e.g., phones, siblings, a loud house, caffeine, a stuffy room, not having a safe place to sleep).
4. Students participate in a "think-pair-share," discussing the positive and negative influences on getting the appropriate amount of sleep. The students brainstorm strategies with their partners about how to overcome the negative influences that may disrupt getting the appropriate amount of sleep. The teacher calls on several pairs to share examples.
5. Students develop a personal plan incorporating three positive influences they have control over and will use, or reinforce, to get the appropriate amount of sleep each night. In addition, students will identify three strategies they will incorporate to help reduce negative sleep influences.

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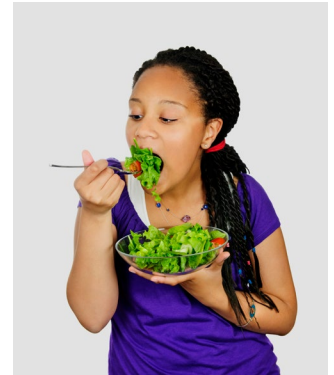


Grades 9–12 Examples

Example 1

For this example, the unit that is being taught is Food and Nutrition, and the HBO for the lesson is *FN-3: Eat lots of fruits and vegetables* ([HECAT Appendix 3](#)).

1. The focus for this activity is on analyzing the influences on eating fruits and vegetables. Prior to this activity, students have been taught functional health information about the benefits of eating an abundance of fruits and vegetables every day.
2. The teacher posts five pieces of chart paper in the room and labels them as follows: peers, family, media, environment, and culture. Divide each piece of chart paper with a line down the middle and label it with a plus (+) and minus (–) sign. The teacher provides an example of a positive and negative influence on eating an abundance of fruits and vegetables every day for each category (e.g., family—positive = have a garden with vegetables, negative = no fruits or vegetables are purchased, environment—positive = live close to a fresh fruit and vegetable market, negative = there isn't a grocery store close by that sells fresh fruits and vegetables).
3. Students are divided into five equal groups and assigned to one of the chart paper stations. Each group receives a different color marker.
4. Each group will have 2 minutes to brainstorm and write examples of both positive and negative influences to eat an abundance of fruits and vegetables every day.
5. After 2 minutes, students rotate to the piece of chart paper to their right. They read the items on the list and add to it or write a question mark next to any ideas they don't understand. After another 2 minutes, the students rotate again to the next piece of chart paper and add to that list. They continue this process until students are back to their original piece of chart paper.
6. Students then review the list on the original piece of chart paper and choose a reporter to report the positive and negative influences on their list.
7. As an exit ticket, students are asked to identify a negative influence that they could change and explain how they could change that negative influence.



Example 2

For this example, the unit that is being taught is Safety, and the HBO for the lesson is *S-2: Avoid driving a motor vehicle—or riding in a motor vehicle driven by someone—while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs* ([HECAT Appendix 3](#)).

1. For this activity, students have already learned the functional information about the dangers of riding in or driving a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol and other drugs.
2. Students are asked to write down examples of negative media influences (e.g., scenes from movies, song lyrics, social media posts) and negative peer pressure to ride in or drive a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol and other drugs.
3. Students are asked to share examples with the entire class.
4. Students are asked to find a partner and identify how they could counteract two of the identified negative influences to ride in or drive a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol and other drugs.
5. The teacher calls on pairs to share strategies.

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