How Does Physical Activity Help You? Lesson Idea

Objectives

- Identify external factors, such as parents, friends and advertising, that influence choices about physical activity.
- Recognize that the ability to make responsible health decisions helps people feel good about themselves.
- Identify factors that affect a person's health decisions.
- Express positive feelings about physical activity choices.

Prepare

- Provide, or have students bring in, old sports and other magazines that contain pictures of people participating in all kinds of physical activities.
- Download and print Why Do People Exercise? Activity Sheet for class distribution

Materials

- Old magazines, several sheets of poster board, Why Do People Exercise? Activity Sheet

Explore

1. **What are some good reasons why you should exercise?** (To look and feel good, to breathe easily, to improve your blood circulation, to make your heart stronger and to build firm muscles instead of fatty tissue in your body)  
   **In what ways does physical activity make you look good?** (It gives you firm muscles and less fat; it helps you look and feel fit.)

   When you participate in your favorite physical activity, are you usually thinking that you are making your heart stronger? (No, this is usually not a conscious reason, especially for children.) Suppose you have just played a tough soccer game, or swum several laps in the pool, or taken a long bicycle ride with your friends. How do you feel? Students will probably say that they feel tired but good. Why do you think you feel good, even though you may be tired, after physical activity? (The healthful benefits to the heart, lungs, circulation and muscles, mentioned in the article, result in a healthy feeling, even though we may not be conscious of the specific benefits.)

   Everybody has some bad feelings sometimes. We may feel sad or angry or impatient or frustrated. Have you ever gone to shoot baskets or run around the block when you were feeling upset? Encourage volunteers to describe personal experiences. How did you feel after the physical activity? Most students will say that they felt better. Point out that in addition to being fun and good for our bodies, physical activity is also good for our emotional well-being.

2. Have small groups of students look in the magazines for illustrations that show people engaged in different kinds of physical activities. Remind students that a physical activity is anything that involves moving the body, including, for example, raking leaves, mowing lawns and washing the car. Encourage students to cut out one or two illustrations each and discuss them with their group. Ask them to determine what each illustration seems to be saying about physical activity and write a suitable caption for the illustration. For example, “Ice skating is a graceful activity”; “Gardeners need strong arms.” The class can then arrange their pictures, along with their captions, on a sheet of poster board to make a collage.

3. Have students interview several adults and students about the kinds of physical activities they participate in. Stress that physical activities include anything that makes a person move. Have students use Why Do People Exercise? Activity Sheet to record the results of their survey. Tell them they should ask each person to name one to three physical activities he or she participates in and list the activities under the person's name. Then the interviewer should ask the person why he or she does each activity, marking the reasons on
the appropriate squares of the chart. Point out that most reasons people give will fit into one of these categories; for example, “for fun” can be marked as “To Feel Good.”

Talk about the survey results. Encourage discussion, using the following questions: What interesting activities did you find people do? Do people tend to participate in different kinds of activities at different ages? What differences do you find in the reasons people participate in physical activities?

Help students use their survey results to develop a class composite chart that answers questions such as the following: What kinds of activities were the most popular? What reasons did people give most often for doing an activity? Students can also make a graph of the information on their composite chart.