What Factors Affect Exercise Habits? Lesson Idea

Objectives

- State the influence of peer pressure on personal health decisions.
- Identify external factors, such as parents, friends and advertising that influence choices about physical activity.
- Identify factors that affect a person's health decisions.
- Describe the logical steps in the decision-making process.

Prepare

- Have students look for and bring in a magazine or newspaper picture of an athlete whom they admire.
- This lesson can take two days — one day for Steps 1, 2, and 3, and one day for Step 4.

Explore

1. Point out to students that engaging in physical activities is a healthy thing to do. But people don't always do what is healthiest for them. And often they have other reasons for doing an activity besides knowing it is good for them. Think about the physical activities that you do often. What are some of the reasons that you want to do them? Encourage students to mention a wide variety of reasons, including admireing a professional or other person who does the same activity; being persuaded by friends to do the activity; being persuaded by parents to do the activity; being talented at or simply enjoying the activity.

2. Point out the negative side of peer pressure in influencing decisions about physical activity. Tina is a girl who loves to do all kinds of physical activities—skating, bicycling, basketball and soccer. She has a new friend, Casey, who prefers to listen to music in her room, go to the mall, or watch movies. Tina finds herself participating in her usual activities less and less because she wants to spend time with Casey. Has Tina made a good choice? How else might Tina and Casey handle the situation and still remain friends? Encourage students to recognize that Tina should not give up the physical activities that she enjoys. They might suggest that the two girls compromise and do more physical activities along with other activities. They might also suggest that Tina spend less time with Casey and find other friends with whom she can do the activities she enjoys.

   Have you ever taken up a sport or other activity because a friend suggested it? Have students contribute both positive and negative experiences of this type. Have you ever decided not to participate in a sport or physical activity because it wasn't popular or because a friend didn't want to? Have students describe experiences of this type. Model how you might respond in such a situation by explaining your reasons for participating in the activity to your friend and suggesting other activities that the two of you could do together.

3. Review with students the steps they can follow in making decisions about what types of physical activities to participate in. Guide students to describe the process of decision-making: gathering information, evaluating it, and then arriving at decisions based on what they have learned.

4. Discuss athletes whom students admire. Encourage them to mention both men and women from a wide variety of sports and other activities. In addition to professional baseball, football and basketball players, students may mention participants in tennis, golf, running, high school and college sports and Olympic events. Point out that many people participate in a physical activity because they had a role model in that activity.

   Remind students of the pictures they brought in that show athletes whom they admire. Let volunteers display their pictures and explain why they admire the athletes. (Students may also bring in trading cards.) Title a bulletin board "I Want To Be Like..." Have students display their pictures on the board with the athlete's name written below.