

Friends

Summary

This lesson is about the importance of friends as part of a support system that helps students make healthy choices.

Main Core Tie

Health Education I (7-8)

[Strand 6: HUMAN DEVELOPMENT \(HD\) Standard HI.HD.8:](#)

Materials

30 to 60 mouse traps, masking tape, 6 toy mice (or drawings of mice)

Worksheet: ["My Circle of Friends," "Instructions for making a Circle of Friends"](#)

Music: "Lean On Me" (Bill Withers, *Best of Bill Withers*, Sony Music Entertainment, 1994)

Intended Learning Outcomes

Identify the people comprising a positive support system.

Give examples of how friends influence us.

List characteristics of friends who care, and friends who don't, and how to tell the difference.

Identify the benefits of having good friends.

Assess the importance of positive involvement with others in making healthy choices.

Describe how peers and peer group norms can help support abstinence from substance abuse.

Instructional Procedures

Lesson at a Glance

Play the mouse trap game.

Complete the Venn diagram, ["Friends Who Care, Friends Who Don't Care."](#)

Discuss ideas of keeping friends, being a friend, and ending friendships.

Complete "My Circle of Friends" worksheet.

Form a yurt circle.

New Vocabulary

positive peer support

support model

Introduction (Setting Focus)

Use masking tape to define the borders of one or two rectangles about 6x4 feet each. Scatter and set about thirty mouse traps within each taped area and place four or five toy mice (or papers with drawings of mice) in the rectangle.

Each student selects a partner to lead him or her safely into the traps to retrieve one or two mice.

The mouse collector is blindfolded and must enter the masking tape area under the direction of the partner, who must remain outside the rectangle. The partners cannot make any kind of physical contact. After the first student has completed the task, the partners trade places and roles.

The goal of the activity is to retrieve the mice without springing any traps. During the activity, encourage students to think about how this experience relates to friends, life and obstacles.

Discuss the activity using the following prompts:

What was watching the traps activity like?

What was your experience as the mouse collector?

What kinds of thoughts and feelings did you have toward the guide?

Did you prefer leading or being lead?

What kinds of communication problems happened between collector and guide?

What helped or hindered the success of the collector?

How does the trap activity relate to other situations where we rely on friends to influence us?

What feelings and thoughts accompany the possibility of getting caught in a mouse trap?

What are some metaphors in life that relate to mouse traps?

What traps of life can be devastating?

How can friends lead us away from or towards life's traps?

Why did many spectators seem very concerned when someone was close to a mouse trap, and yet people sometimes seem disinterested when someone gets close to a trap of life?

What are the traits of friends who lead us away from traps rather than toward traps?

How can you change to become a friend who cares rather than a friend who doesn't care?

Body (Strategies/Activities)

Divide the class into small groups.

Each group completes the Venn diagram worksheet, "Friends Who Care, Friends Who Don't Care" or, as an alternate activity, lists qualities of a good friend.

Each group shares the results of their Venn diagram.

Discuss how students can tell the difference between friends who care and friends who don't care. An illustration using the image of a crab pot may be useful. Crab pots are fairly shallow have no lids, but are very effective in keeping the crabs captive. When several crabs are placed in the pot and one seems almost poised to escape over the edge, the other crabs will grab hold of the escapee and drag it back into the pot.

Discuss ideas of parental concerns about friends and why parents might be concerned about the friends of children. An illustration using a game of "spring back" may be useful. Pairs of students stand about three feet apart facing each other and touch palm to palm. Using each other for support, move away from each other, forming a pyramid between the partners. Students see how far they can separate while still being able to spring back to an independent standing position. Friends who care allow us to use them for support and also help us spring back to a solid, independent position when we need to do so.

Discuss and list the benefits of having friends who care. Some ideas might be:

They have a positive influence on the choices we make.

Our parents trust them more.

We can do more things with them.

They are there when we need them.

They help us feel good about who we are.

They help us avoid problems.

They help us out of bad situations.

They help us reach our goals.

Discuss and list examples of situations in which it may be beneficial to end a friendship. The illustration of the dragging balloon may be useful. Draw a balloon diagram with two balloons soaring on strings and a third balloon, only minimally inflated, dragging along on a string. List thoughts and ideas about the behaviors of friends who help us soar and the behaviors of friends who drag us down. Suggest that sometimes people just need to "cut the string" and move on rather than be continually dragged down.

Closure (Wrap-Up and Extension)

Discuss the saying, "To have a good friend, you need to be a good friend."

List ideas of how students can be supportive friends who care. Use the teacher resource, ["Ways to Help and Support Your Circle of Friends,"](#) as a suggestion.

Students complete the "My Circle of Friends" worksheet and list five ways they can help, support, and strengthen their circle of friends. If students wish to make a paper cut-out of the Circle of Friends, relate how making the cut-out is like creating a real life circle of friends. It takes time, work and patience.

Form a yurt circle and, all together, say, "If we stand together we stand a chance."

Yurt Circle

A yurt is a sturdy round house built on the plains of Mongolia by setting opposing stakes to form the walls. Students can form a yurt circle by standing in a circle and holding hands. Every other student leans toward the center of the circle, and the others lean toward the outside of the circle. If properly balanced, the students can lean at a sharp angle without falling. Each "stake" of the circle supports his or her neighbor.

Play the song, "Lean On Me," while forming the yurt circle.

Authors

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