

It's My Choice

TOPIC: Choices

CONCEPT: It is easier to prevent unhealthy behaviors than to try to change them once they have been initiated or established in a child's life. Students in upper elementary grades are often unaware of the power of their peers to influence their choices. This is important because students most at risk for using tobacco, alcohol and other drugs are those who do not realize they have options and those who are afraid they will lose their friendships if they are perceived as being "different."

OBJECTIVE: Students practice making choices and learn they can make different choices and still keep their friendships.

GRADE LEVEL: 3rd - 5th

Method: Class room activity

Time Frame: 15 minutes plus "Post Test" and "Discussion"

Material: Create you own list of "options," such as: pizza or tacos; tacos or hamburgers; watching TV or listening to music; getting a new bike or going to camp; going to the movies or going skating; sleeping over at a friend's house or going out to dinner at a great restaurant with the family.

ACTIVITY: Engage the students in a discussion about choices and the kinds of choices we make every day. We make dozens of choices in a day or sometimes a dozen choices in an hour or a few minutes. Some choices are more important than others. Arrange the furnishings to create an open space where all the students can stand. Create an imaginary line down the middle of the space. Explain that you will name two options and they will have to choose one. As you name the first option you will point to one side of the line and as you name the other option you will point to the opposite side of the line. Everyone must choose one side or the other. Allow students to change sides; this will be discussed.

POST-TEST: After the activity, ask the class:

- What happened in this activity? Did everyone make the same choice?
- How did it feel when you made a different choice from your friends?
- Did any of your friends try to get you to "come over to their side?"
- How did it feel when they tried to get you to change your choice?
- Did anyone change their choice so they could be with his/her friends?

- Can you make a different choice from a friend and keep your friendship?
- When could making the same choice as a friend cause a problem?
- When could making the same choice as a friend be dangerous?

DISCUSSION: After the "Post-Test", explain that even when our friends don't pressure us to do something or pressure us to change our minds, we may put pressure on ourselves to be like them. When we do this we are not being true to ourselves. Emphasize that a true friend will respect your choice, even if it is different. Discuss how learning to make your own choices is a sign of growing up or becoming mature.

(Source: preventionpartners.com)