

# Factors that Affect My Healthy Choices

*Activity*

**Grade(s):** 5

## Overview

- Students use graphic organizers to identify personal and social factors that might influence a person's decision to drink alcohol or use cannabis at different points in their life.
- Students express their understanding of personal and social choices that might influence a person's decision to drink alcohol or use cannabis at different points in their life, through the presentation of their graphic organizer and teacher-led discussion.
- Students write a personal reflection to demonstrate their understanding of the personal and social factors that might most influence their choices and how they might respond when dealing with pressures to try alcohol or cannabis.
- This activity may be used as part of a unit of learning about substance use, addictions, and related behaviours.

## Curriculum Expectations

A1.2, A1.6, D3.3

## Materials Needed

- Chart paper, tape, and markers
- Envelope with strips of paper containing personal and social factors
- Placemat Graphic Organizer
- T-Chart Graphic Organizer

## Learning Goals

- We are learning about personal factors that can influence a person's decision to drink alcohol or use cannabis.
- We are learning about the social factors that can influence a person's decision to drink alcohol or use cannabis.
- We are learning about factors that influence our own choices and use our critical thinking skills to determine how to respond to pressure to try alcohol and cannabis.

## Sample Success Criteria

- I can identify some of the personal factors that might influence a person's decision to drink alcohol or use cannabis.
- I can identify some of the social factors that might influence a person's decision to drink alcohol or use cannabis.
- I can identify factors that influence my choices and how to respond to pressure to try alcohol or cannabis.

## Opportunities For Assessment

- During the **Minds On**, use the group Graphic Organizer to assess student understanding of the concept of a drug and a person's reasons for using drugs to determine students' prior learning before moving into the action stage.
- During the **Action**, use the T-Chart Graphic Organizers to assess understanding of personal and social factors that influence a person's decision to drink alcohol or use cannabis.
- At the end of the **Consolidation**, use student reflections to assess student learning related to the learning goals and success criteria for this activity.

## Minds-On

- Have students assemble into groups of 4. Provide each group with a graphic organizer such as a Placemat Graphic Organizer to record their thinking. Have students think individually about what they know about substances that are known as drugs and why people might choose to use drugs. Encourage students to think about how a drug might be helpful and how it might be harmful. Have students share their thinking with their group to generate and record the group's answers to the following questions:

1. What is a drug?

2. Why might people choose to use a drug?
3. What are some examples of different types of drugs that people might choose to use?
4. What are some examples of drugs that can be helpful and some examples of drugs that can be harmful?

- Use a chalkboard, whiteboard, or chart paper to generate a class definition of a drug.
- Explain to students that a drug is classified as a medicine or other substance that has a physical effect when ingested or otherwise introduced into the body. It can affect a person's body and/or brain. Inform students that there are different types of drugs, including prescription drugs, non-prescription drugs, such as tobacco, alcohol, and cannabis, and other substances that can have an effect on the body, such as drinks containing caffeine including tea, coffee, and cola drinks. (Adapted from Lexico online dictionary, definition of drug: <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/drug>)
- Have groups review their generated list of examples of different types of drugs and try to classify each as a prescription drug, a non-prescription drug, or other substance. Note for students that cannabis may be classified as both a prescription drug and non-prescription drug depending on whether it has been prescribed for medical reasons or whether adults purchase it for recreational use.
- Inform students that this activity will focus on why people might choose to use drugs such as alcohol and cannabis that are legal drugs for adults. Explain that there are various reasons why people choose to drink alcohol or use cannabis. Their decisions are most often influenced by personal factors such as their own beliefs, their family, and their friends. Their decisions can also be influenced by social factors such as their culture, the media, their peers, and the legal aspects. These influences might change throughout a person's life, and their decision to drink alcohol or use cannabis might also change throughout their life. Note that it is important to set a respectful tone during this conversation in order to avoid stigmatizing as negative those cultures in which substances such as tobacco, alcohol, or cannabis are used traditionally, the individuals belonging to them, or other adults for whom it is legal to use these substances.

## Action

- Share the Learning Goals with students and co-construct the Success Criteria.
- Have students remain in their groups.
- Provide groups with tape or glue stick, a marker, and chart paper. Have groups draw a T-Chart Graphic Organizer, labeling one column "Personal Factors" and the other column "Social Factors".
- Explain the terms "personal factor" and "social factor". Have students think about some of the reasons they generated for why people might choose to use a drug.
- Have each group share one example of what they would categorize as a personal factor and one example they would categorize as a social factor.

- Clarify any confusion that may arise about each term based on student responses.
- Provide each group with an envelope containing strips of paper with various personal and social factors that may affect a person's decision to use or refrain from using alcohol or cannabis. Each factor should be on a separate piece of paper but not identified as a personal or social factor. Personal and social factors may include:
  - Feelings of being unwanted
  - Wanting to feel a different set of emotions
  - Ethical reasons
  - Religious reasons
  - Cultural reasons
  - Feeling insecure with friends
  - Wanting to project a different image of themselves
  - TV or other social media influences
  - Personal goals to achieve
  - Body image
  - Legal laws regarding buying alcohol/cannabis
  - Driving laws related to alcohol and cannabis
  - Curiosity or a desire to experiment
  - Drinking and driving campaigns (e.g., MADD)
  - Alcohol addiction in family
  - Physical isolation (living in remote areas with little recreation)
  - Emotional isolation (not having someone to support them)
  - Social isolation (not having friends)
  - Friends' attitudes toward drinking / cannabis use
  - Health issues
  - Participation in activities (e.g., sports, hobbies)
  - Stress
  - Getting into trouble
  - Influence of adults

- Have groups discuss each factor and decide if it is a personal factor or a social factor that would influence a person's choice to use or refrain from drinking alcohol or using cannabis. Tell groups that when they reach consensus about each factor to stick it on their chart paper under the appropriate column.
- After groups have had sufficient time to sort the factors into the two columns, have them use their marker to put a square around the factors that might influence a person's choice to drink alcohol or use cannabis and a circle around the factors that might influence a person's choice to refrain from drinking alcohol or using cannabis. Explain to students that some factors may have both a square and a circle around them, because they might influence a person's choices to drink alcohol or use cannabis or to abstain from using either or both substances depending on the situation.
- Have groups share their charts with the class explaining their rationale for how they categorized the factors as either factors that can influence a person's choices to drink alcohol or use cannabis or to abstain from drinking alcohol or using cannabis.
- Have group post their completed charts around the space for use during the **Consolidation**.

## Consolidation

- Lead a class discussion using a discussion prompt 1, such as:
  - Some adults choose to drink alcohol or use cannabis in social settings or during celebrations. How is this different from a young person drinking alcohol or using cannabis?
- Student responses 2 may include:
  - It is legal for adults to use alcohol or cannabis.
  - Adults can choose to use substances responsibly, such as limiting the amount they consume.
  - Adults may choose to consume a substance as part of a special occasion such as celebrations.
  - Adults know and accept their responsibility to follow the laws about using substances and driving
  - Adults can make decisions about using substances without hurting their overall health and well-being. It is not legal for younger people under the age of 19 to use these substances, and these substances may affect their body differently because they are still growing and their brains are still developing.
- Explain to students that now that cannabis is also legal for adults, it may be more readily available like alcohol, so it is important for young people to understand the factors that most influence them and their choices when faced with pressures to engage in behaviours that can lead to injury or harm, such as drinking alcohol or using cannabis.

- Have students use the information on the T-chart Graphic Organizers posted around the room to identify two personal and two social factors that might influence them the most when they are faced with pressure to engage in behaviours that may be harmful to them such as trying alcohol or cannabis.
- Have students write a reflection explaining why these factors have the most influence on them and what they might say to someone who is pressuring them to try alcohol or cannabis.

## Ideas For Extension

- Have students consider how they might use question prompts to talk to their parents/guardians/caregivers about alcohol and cannabis and their learning. For example:
  - It can be difficult for adults and youth to discuss alcohol and cannabis. What are some difficulties families may have discussing the topic of alcohol and cannabis?
  - How can young people like me help start the dialogue?
  - What do you think parents/guardians/caregivers and children should talk about during their conversations about alcohol and cannabis?
  - What information do you think is most important for parents/guardians/caregivers to have when it comes to talking with their child(ren) about alcohol and cannabis?
- Have students explore media messages as a factor that might influence a younger person's choices related to alcohol and cannabis use.

## Notes To Teachers

Providing opportunities for students to explore concepts from multiple perspectives and through a variety of lenses enriches their learning.

- As part of the reflection, consider integrating this activity into the Grade 5 Language curriculum, such as using Writing 1. Developing and Organizing Content and/or Writing 2. Using Knowledge and Form and Style in Writing, in order to develop students' writing skills.
- As part of a media literacy unit, consider having students explore how substance use is portrayed in media.
- The intent of this activity is to focus on cannabis education as part of the intended learning in grade 5. To fully address the learning in the Substance Use, Addictions, and Related Behaviours topic within the Grade 5 Healthy Living strand, students should be provided with opportunities to describe the short- and long-term effects of alcohol use and identify factors that can affect intoxication and apply decision-making, assertiveness, and refusal skills for dealing with pressures pertaining to alcohol use or other behaviours that would later lead to addiction, as articulated in curriculum expectations D1.2 and D2.3.

<sup>1</sup>Sample discussion prompt adapted from *The Ontario Curriculum, Grade 1-8, Health and Physical Education*, 2019, page 205.

<sup>2</sup>Sample student responses adapted from *The Ontario Curriculum, Grade 1-8, Health and Physical Education*, 2019, page 205.