MAKING SMART DECISIONS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH AND SAFETY.

Life is about choices. We choose to be safe, healthy, and happy. We have choices. Be safe.

CHOICES

MAKING SMART DECISIONS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH AND SAFETY.
Resources:

- U.S. Department of Agriculture: www.usda.gov
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov
- KidsHealth: www.kidshealth.org
- American Dietetic Association: www.eatright.org
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: www.samhsa.gov
- National Institute on Drug Abuse: www.drugabuse.gov
- Search Institute: www.search-institute.org
- American Institute for Cancer Research: www.aicr.org
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.org
- Harvard School of Public Health: www.hsph.harvard.edu
- i-Safe America: www.isafe.org
- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children: (800) 843-5678 www.cybertipline.com
- National Eating Disorders Association: www.edap.org
- World Cancer Research Fund: www.wcrf.org
- PAX Real Solutions to Gun Violence: www.AskingSavesKids.com
- Youth Venture: www.youthventure.org
- Girls In Action, Inc.: (859) 299-0492
- Project Home Safe: (800) 726-6444
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) 1-800-SUICIDE (784-2133)

Suggested reading:

1) Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood by William Pollack, Mary Pipher
2) Odd Girl Out by Rachel Simmons
3) Odd Girl Speaks Out by Rachel Simmons
4) How to Help your Child be Bully Free by Dr. Allan L. Beane
5) All Kids are Our Kids: What Communities Must do to Raise Caring and Responsible Children and Adolescents by Dr. Peter Bensen
The Internet is a vast source of information, entertainment and opportunities for meeting new friends and keeping in touch with old ones.

But it also can be a source of danger. Learn to recognize and avoid risky Internet behaviors.

Remember the 4 Rs.

RECOGNIZE
Recognize techniques used by online predators to deceive, groom, or intimidate their victims. Grooming techniques are used to encourage an eventual face-to-face meeting:
• Establishes similar interests
• Builds trust
• Encourages secrecy
• Breaks down barriers
• Makes threats

REFUSE
Refuse all requests for personal information. Do not agree to keep the friendship secret. Never meet in person. Refuse to provide personal information by phone or email if you didn’t initiate the communication.

RESPOND
Respond assertively by exiting the program, logging off or turning off the computer.

REPORT
Report any suspicious or dangerous contact that makes you feel uncomfortable to a trusted adult.

DID YOU KNOW?
• When you post something to a blog, Web page or chat line, anyone can read what you post.
• Emails are not 100% confidential. Once your personal information is sent into cyberspace, it’s out there forever in some way, shape or form, regardless of how it was transmitted or whether or not it was deleted. Be careful what you write; it could get into the wrong hands.

A/S/L ... OMG!
Age (birth date) / Sex / Location (zip code).
Studies show 87 percent of Americans can be identified with just these three pieces of information.

If you’ve signed up for any of these social networking tools, you’ve given away private information about yourself, and unwittingly revealed even more through what seems like innocent conversation:
• Instant Messaging
• Chat Rooms
• Blogs
• MySpace
• Facebook
• Bebo
• Blinkz
• Xanga
• Friendster

These sites are mostly to provide companies with information to sell you things by tracking and monitoring the information posted. Criminals can use the information you post to steal your identity or to stalk you.

WHO CHECKS MYSPACE, FACEBOOK, OTHER SIMILAR SITES?
• College admissions officers
• College coaches
• Employers
• Identity thieves
• Predators/criminals
• Hate groups

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO
What the mall was to kids of the 80s and 90s, the Internet is to kids today. Make sure you know what’s happening to your kids online.

• Talk to children about the Internet and its dangers.
• Encourage them not to give out personal information such as addresses, zip codes, phone numbers, last name or school.
• Establish ground rules. Post them near the computer.
• Place the computer in a highly visible spot to keep an eye on Internet activity.
• Report pornographic images received in an email, IM, or social networking site like MySpace to your local law enforcement agency, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at (800) 843-5678, or www.cybertipline.com.
• Know the Web sites your child visits. If you don’t know how to log on, ask your child to show you.

• NEVER respond to messages or bulletin board items that are suggestive, obscene, belligerent, threatening, or that make you feel uncomfortable. Encourage your children to tell you whether they encounter such messages and report them.
• Limit time online to ensure your kids have a balance of family, computer and play time.
• Just because it’s on the Internet doesn’t mean it’s true. Investigate information sources before letting your children use them for schoolwork.
• Do not allow a child to meet an online friend in person without you. Safety in numbers is a myth. Public places are not safe. A person can be lured away or overpowered and taken against their will.

ACTIVITIES
1) Take a classroom poll of Internet habits. Do your classmates go online every day? Once a month? Which sites do they visit regularly? Who has more than one email account? Who uses the Internet for schoolwork?

Compile a list of your class’s top five favorite sites and average number of visits per week per person. With your teacher’s guidance, discuss why these sites appeal to so many of your classmates. Then, discuss the dangers associated with visiting those sites regularly and what you can do to protect yourself online, using the information provided here. Also discuss how to tell if online information used for schoolwork is accurate and reliable.

2) How does your newspaper use the Internet?
Watch your newspaper for mentions of the Internet. Scan articles, advertisements and classified ads for Web site and email addresses. In each case, think about why the Internet reference was provided. Was it to supply more information if someone was interested in finding out more about a particular topic? Was it listed as a way to contact someone? Other? Discuss with your class. What other ways can a newspaper use the Internet?
When a gun enters the picture, anger can lead to death or crippling injury. When a person thinks violent thoughts, having a gun nearby makes harming someone that much easier. In the heat of the moment, shots may be fired without thinking. Sadly, most people regret expressing their anger toward another by firing a gun. But gun damage caused by anger cannot be reversed with an apology or kind words. Gun damage is permanent.

So what's the solution? No gun, no gun violence. It's that simple.

Let off steam in a healthy way.

1) Tune in to your feelings.
   What are you angry about and why? Be specific.
   (“I'm angry because someone insulted me in front of others at school.”)

2) Stop and think.
   List three ways you can respond to your anger nonviolently.

3) Consider your options.
   What will happen as a result of each of these three scenarios?

4) Make a decision.
   Which result do I really want?

5) Check your progress.
   How did it go? What did I learn?

FACT: 59% of girls, but only 36% of boys, report that they would resolve an aggressive conflict peacefully.

Choose to chill.
When you’re angry, you say or do things in the heat of the moment. Try stepping back for a moment instead. Take a deep breath. Cool off.

• Talk to a trusted friend or adult.
• Listen to music. Sing.
• Exercise. Take a brisk walk. Dance.
• Write down your feelings or draw them.
• Meditate or practice deep breathing.
• Distract yourself with a book, movie or other activity.
• Give yourself a hug.
• Punch a pillow, a punching bag or a bean bag.
• Do yard work or other physically demanding work.
• Blow into a paper bag and pop it.

What happens to victims of gun violence? What happens to victims who do not die from gun-related wounds? What happens to people who choose to use guns against others? Do you think it’s smart to grab a gun when you’re angry? Watch your newspaper for articles about guns, gun safety, local shootings or other gun-related stories. Then, write a letter to the editor expressing your opinions about guns, gun safety and other gun-related issues. Using the Internet with an adult or at the school library, research how to ensure that guns do not get into the hands of young people who may not understand how to safely handle a firearm. Include a safety checklist in your letter to the editor.
What can you do?

Gun accidents happen. Make sure there is no possible way a child or teen can gain access to firearms and/or ammunition. Gun safety is everyone's responsibility.

- Keep your firearms unloaded. It only takes one bullet.
- Store ammunition separate from guns.
- Use a quality trigger lock, gun safe or lock box.
- Keep keys with you and memorize combinations. Keep numbers as secure as bank account numbers. Do not keep copies at home.
- For help choosing the proper gun security for your home, contact your local police department, or call Project HomeSafe, a national gunlock distribution program, at 1-800-726-6444.

FACT: Your own gun is much more likely to injure or kill you, a member of your family or a friend than a burglar or other violent intruder.

Choose to be a responsible gun owner.

Over 60% of teens who commit suicide use guns.

Choose to be a responsible parent.

Even if you do not own a gun, remember that more than 40% of homes with children have a gun.

- Ask your neighbor if they have a gun before allowing your children to visit. Tell them you want to make sure your child is safe.
- If your neighbors own a gun, make absolutely sure all guns are stored unloaded and locked, ideally in a gun safe, with ammunition locked separately.
- If there is any doubt about gun safety at a neighbor’s home, invite kids to play at your house.
- For more information, visit www.AskingSavesKids.com.

FACT: Before age eight, most children cannot tell a toy gun from a real gun.
No more bullies!

When there is bullying behavior in schools, no one wins, not even bullies. Here’s a look at the consequences for everyone involved.

**Consequences for victims:**
Studies show that the victims of bullies suffer thoughts of suicide, loneliness, lower self-esteem, lower grades and an increased rate of depression. They also feel afraid, alienated, angry, ashamed, depressed, disempowered, hurt, sad, stupid, subhuman, trampled on, ugly and useless.

**Consequences for bullies:**
Bullying can lead to criminal behaviors. Approximately 60 percent of boys who were characterized as bullies in grades 6 through 9 had at least one conviction by the age of 24. Even more dramatically, as many as 35 percent to 45 percent of former bullies had three or more convictions at this age.

**Consequences for bystanders:**
Even when they’re not being bullied, bystanders suffer fear of retaliation, feel powerless to change things, feel guilty, and unfortunately, feel less empathy for victims. Bullying tears down the environment in schools and communities, which hurts the school climate for everyone.

**Choosing to stop the bullying.**

Bullying is another form of violence that inflicts deep wounds and leaves lasting scars.

Bullying is a form of control. Bullies hit, kick or push other people. They call other people names, tease or scare them. They leave kids out of a group on purpose to hurt their feelings. They make fun of kids they think are overly sensitive or different.

No matter what you believe right now, bullying is not cool. You don’t have to be best friends with everyone you know. But you can choose to cause no harm. You can choose to stop the bullying.

**Bullying:** A person or group keeps doing or saying something to hurt, alarm or embarrass another person or group of people to have power or control over them.

**How to outsmart a bully.**

- **Remember that more than half of all students are bullied at some point.** Bullying is NOT a reflection on you, but it speaks volumes about the bully.
- **Avoid the temptation to trade name-calling.** Sometimes it seems ignoring a bully isn’t working, but giving the bully a response signals it’s working to upset you.
- **Walk away and report the bullying.** The best reaction is to engage someone with more power than the bully thinks they have. Walk away and report the bullying to a trusted adult, teacher or your parents.
- **Don’t get physical.** Verbal exchanges can quickly escalate to physical violence if you let them.
- **Engage your friends in a pact to stick up for one another.** Research shows that it takes just one bystander to stand up for the person being bullied for the bullying to stop.
Physical bullying:
Pushing, punching, kicking, shoving and hitting other people hurts on the outside and inside, leaving visible and emotional marks. This is the bullying most easily noticed by adults and easiest to distinguish.

Verbal/relational bullying:
Excluding, ostracizing, spreading rumors, written and verbal remarks, disparaging looks and gestures and cyber bullying are all designed to hurt inside, to make you feel alone and powerless to make it stop. Visible marks might not result, but emotional scars can cause depression, withdrawal and send signals that someone is a victim of this bullying.

Sexual harassment:
Suggestive comments, lewd remarks, inappropriate touching that may be sexual make the victim feel degraded and powerless to stop possible violence. Visible signs might not be apparent, but depression, withdrawal, changing what they've been wearing or how they've been talking might be clues to recognize sexual harassment.

WHAT BULLYING LOOKS LIKE.

- Spreading rumors. Cyber bullying is common.
- Ignoring someone to punish them or get their own way.
- Excluding someone from a group.
- Damaging or threatening to damage, feelings of acceptance, friendship or belonging to a group.
- Using negative body language or facial expressions to wound.

DO YOU TXT, CHAT, IM OR BLOG?

Social networking sites such as MySpace, Xanga, Friendster, Facebook, Bebo and others, are popular places to be. But these sites have opened up new avenues for cyber bullying and harassment. You don't want to be excluded from the group, so how do you stay safe?

Follow these guidelines and you'll minimize the possibility for cyber bullying:
- My profile is set to 'private'
- Requests to become my friend require last name and email address
- Only friends can view my blog postings
- My pictures may be viewed only by me and may not be forwarded
- My birthday may not be viewed by anyone else
- Comments must be approved before posting on my page
- Photos of others are approved before posting on my page
- I know that whatever I post today, even if I delete it tomorrow, might still be available somewhere on the Web

ACTIVITY

Watch your newspaper for stories about bullying. Research states that have anti-bullying laws and what those laws say. Contact your local Board of Education to find out whether there is a local anti-bullying policy. Discuss your findings with your class. Write a letter or send an email to your state legislator about your views on the anti-bullying legislation.
From ages 11 to 18, your body grows and changes rapidly. To function properly during this important time in your life, your body needs quality fuel. Choosing to eat well now will help lower your risk of developing disease in the future. Besides, you'll look good and feel great, now and then!

For one week, keep a food diary. Track everything you eat and how much. Discuss your choices with friends. Brainstorm how you can make healthier food choices. If time is a factor, prepare your lunch or other meals ahead of time. Make sure you're eating nutritious meals most days of the week. Search your newspaper for images of your favorite foods. Are they nutritious? Why or why not?

Whole foods vs. processed foods.
If it comes in a can, box or shrink-wrapped package, it's probably processed. In general, overly processed foods are not as nutritious as fresh, whole foods. Processed foods have been ground up, mixed with chemicals, preservatives and fillers, or have been altered in ways that reduce overall nutritional value.

Whole foods are in their natural state, for the most part. Fruits, vegetables, beans, whole grains, and lean cuts of meat and fish can be purchased with little or no processing. Whole foods are healthier because they contain more naturally occurring vitamins, minerals, proteins and nutrients.

While it may not always be possible to eat unprocessed foods, adding more whole foods to your diet may create better health.

Healthy eating guidelines:
(From the most recommended to least)
- Daily exercise and weight control
- Eat whole grain foods at most meals
- Plant oils are good for you. Think olive, canola, soy, corn, sunflower, peanut and other vegetable oils, as well as fatty fish, like salmon
- Eat vegetables in abundance and fruits 2-3 times a day
- Fish, poultry, and eggs (0 to 2 times a day)
- Nuts and legumes (1 to 3 times)
- Low-fat dairy or calcium supplement (1 to 2 times a day)
- Red meat and butter (only sparingly)
- White rice, white bread, potatoes, white pasta, soda, and sweets (only sparingly)

(Source: Harvard School of Public Health; based on the most recent available scientific evidence about links between diet and health.)

Choose exercise to be healthy.
Studies say American kids are heavier than ever. For your good health, choose to maintain a healthy weight by exercising and eating sensibly, which also will help fend off serious health problems and bolster self-esteem.

Experts suggest at least 30 minutes of vigorous physical activity per day for most people, including teens. Vigorous exercise increases your heart rate for at least 30 minutes straight.

A casual stroll around the block, or a downhill coast on your bicycle is a start, but you need to put some serious effort into it; then you'll notice the difference.

Things you can do for exercise
- Dance.
- Skateboard.
- Roller skate or ice skate.
- Swim.
- Ride a bicycle on a long, flat surface.
- Swing.
- Lift weights.
- Do martial arts.
- Join a gym.
- Join a sports team.

Vitamin and mineral supplements do not replace a healthy diet and can be harmful if used incorrectly. When in doubt, consult your doctor or a dietitian.
A recent study of girls aged 12 to 19 found that milk intake decreased by 36 percent from the late-1970s to the mid-1990s, while consumption of soft drinks and fruit drinks nearly doubled. Results showed that girls who did not drink milk had inadequate intake of vitamin A, folate, calcium, phosphorous and magnesium, all essential vitamins and minerals for healthy growth and development. Girls especially need to consume extra calcium before age 30 to help prevent osteoporosis, a bone disease that affects many women later in life. Studies show black girls are particularly deficient in calcium consumption, and boys of all races would also benefit from increasing calcium intakes.

FACT: “Perfect” usually isn’t.
Many images of perfect bodies in magazines, on TV and in the movies are altered. These bodies are made to appear perfect using computer and photography effects, lighting, special clothing, tape or other means.

CHOOSE TO BE STRONG AND BEAUTIFUL.

Got calcium?

A recent study of girls aged 12 to 19 found that milk intake decreased by 36 percent from the late-1970s to the mid-1990s, while consumption of soft drinks and fruit drinks nearly doubled. Results showed that girls who did not drink milk had inadequate intake of vitamin A, folate, calcium, phosphorous and magnesium, all essential vitamins and minerals for healthy growth and development. Girls especially need to consume extra calcium before age 30 to help prevent osteoporosis, a bone disease that affects many women later in life. Studies show black girls are particularly deficient in calcium consumption, and boys of all races would also benefit from increasing calcium intakes.

Good sources of calcium:
- Low-fat milk and cheeses
- Yogurt
- Salmon
- Orange juice, calcium-fortified
- Tofu
- Spinach, kale and broccoli

Dying to be thin.

Maintaining a consistent weight is important for good health. But if it becomes an obsession, you may have a disease. Anorexia nervosa and bulimia (binge and purge) are serious eating disorders that can lead to serious illness or death.

If you or someone you know shows any of these behaviors, seek help from a trusted adult, or call the National Eating Disorders Helpline at (800) 931-2237:
- Refuses to eat, or eats only small portions of food
- Loses a lot of weight in a short time, or shows great fluctuations in weight
- Displays an extreme fear of being fat
- Exercises excessively
- Believes she is fat even though she is not
- Appears depressed, insecure, moody and/or hyperactive

Activity

Watch your newspaper and magazines for images of women. Such images can appear in news photos, advertisements or illustrations. Collect these images for two weeks, making notes of which section of the publications you found them in. Arrange the images according to your idea of average weight, overweight and underweight. Which sections do the different types of body images appear in, and why? Do you see a pattern? What could this mean?
Divide into teams and, as a team, choose to research a particular drug and its effects on a young person’s body, as well as other risks. Find newspaper articles to support your research. For instance, to illustrate the fact that consuming alcohol impairs driving ability, locate articles about an alcohol-related crash, physical violence or death. As a team, make a presentation to the class based on your work.

**FACTS:**
- Studies show 1 in 5 teens have used prescription drugs to get high.
- 1 in 10 have used over-the-counter cough syrups or cold tablets like Coricidin HBP Cough & Cold (Triple C) which contains Dextromethorphan (DMX) to get high.
- In certain combinations or dosages, prescription drugs and/or DMX can kill.
- Many teens do not realize how highly addictive prescription drugs can be.
- When abused, prescription drugs are NOT safer than street drugs like cocaine, methamphetamine, Ecstasy or crack.

**How do teens get prescription drugs?**
- Buy or accept them from friends and peers.
- Steal them from family members, relatives or medicine cabinets.
- Order them over the Internet.

**Commonly abused prescription drugs:**
- Oxycontin
- Percocet
- Vicodin
- Xanax
- Benzodiazepines
- Barbituates
- Ritalin
- Amphetamines

**"Pharming":**
Swapping or exchanging prescription drugs at a party, at school or another’s house.

**Drugs are not the answer. Get help.**
Abusing drugs or alcohol to deal with problems at home or at school only makes things worse. If you or someone you know is abusing substances, get help. Call 1-800-662-HELP or visit www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov.

**What can parents do?**
- Guard your medicine chest the way you do a liquor cabinet.
- Talk to teens about drugs and warn them of the dangers.
- Be aware of what your child is doing, who he or she is a friend with and where they go.
It’s impossible to be happy all the time, bad moods happen. Everyone has a bad day now and then. It’s normal.

As a teenager, you may have noticed your moods changing more often than ever before. This is normal, too. You’re going through changes. Your moods might reflect that.

Why?
• Hormonal changes due to puberty
• Pressure from friends, parents and school to meet certain expectations
• The normal maturing process which causes you to examine who you are and what you want from life

Choose help.
When happiness doesn’t happen for a long time, despite your best efforts, you could need help coping with your feelings. Start with your school counselor. Your counselor might be able to recommend professional therapists who can help you sort out what’s making you unhappy, as well as provide you with ways to deal with your feelings positively.

Therapy can help with:
• Depression, anxiety, painful shyness, or an eating disorder
• An attention or learning problem
• The emotions of coping with a weight problem or chronic illness
• The confusion of separating or divorcing parents
• A trauma, loss or death
• The difficulties of living with a family troubled by fighting, anger, alcoholism or drug problems
• Problems related to peer pressure, self-confidence and friendship skills
• Difficulties getting along with others

Seeking therapy or counseling may seem hard or silly, at first. But you can choose to tell as many, or as few, people about your therapy as you wish. Remember: if you choose counseling, you’re doing it to help yourself. That’s what matters.

What happens in therapy?
Through talking, listening and observing, a therapist evaluates a problem, then helps a person figure out what’s been causing their unhappiness. After that, the two work together to decide how to put things on a better track. All discussions are private and confidential.

How to handle a bad mood:
• Realize you’re not alone
• Catch your breath: Settle down for a few moments, especially if you’re feeling angry or irritated
• Talk to people you trust: Keeping feelings inside can make them seem much worse
• Exercise: It produces beta-endorphin, a hormone that controls stress and improves mood
• Get enough sleep: Being tired makes you irritable
• Create something: Express yourself
• Cry: It’s a great way to release bad feelings!
• Wait: Your bad mood will probably pass

Choose to live.
If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, please talk to a trusted adult immediately, or call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255), or 1-800-SUICIDE.

Suicide Warning Signs:
• Threatening to hurt or kill oneself or talking about wanting to hurt or kill oneself
• Looking for ways to kill oneself by seeking access to firearms, available pills or other means
• Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide when these actions are out of the ordinary for the person
• Feeling hopeless
• Feeling rage or uncontrolled anger or seeking revenge
• Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities, seemingly without thinking
• Feeling trapped, like there’s no way out
• Increasing alcohol or drug use
• Withdrawing from friends, family and society
• Feeling anxious or agitated, being unable to sleep, or sleeping all the time
• Experiencing dramatic mood changes
• Seeing no reason for living or having no sense of purpose in life

(Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)
LEADERSHIP
Will you choose to take a stand for making your world a better place?

RELATIONSHIPS
Will you choose to respect your classmates and support their differences?

DRUGS, ALCOHOL & TOBACCO
Will you choose to avoid drugs, alcohol and tobacco, to stay healthy and strong?

HEALTH & EXERCISE
Will you choose to eat healthy foods and to exercise, keeping your body in the best shape possible?

EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING
Will you choose to share your feelings with a trusted friend or adult if you feel overwhelmed by sadness, anger or hopelessness?

ACTIVITIES

1) How can you make sure your community is meeting the five promises next year? Start by planning to get involved! Search through your newspaper to find groups that sound interesting. Join one or form your own group.

2) Name one community activity you’ve participated in this year to make your community a better place. Examples include raising money for school or club events by holding a car wash or bake sale, coaching sports for younger kids or volunteering. Write a newspaper-style article about your experience.

3) Over several days, collect newspaper articles about different community events, groups, clubs, clean-up efforts around town - anything that involves a group of people working together to make a difference. Brainstorm ideas for forming your own grass-roots community group based on ideas you get from the newspaper. Without copying these ideas exactly, write a mission statement for your new group. A mission statement includes the purpose of the group, who’s in it and what specific goals the group wishes to reach. Create posters and attempt to recruit others to join.

INTERNAL ASSETS CHECKLIST
Here are a few positive internal values that are necessary for youth to grow into caring, rounded adults:

- I am actively engaged in learning
- I can stand up for what I believe
- I can accept and take personal responsibility
- I am good at planning ahead and making decisions
- I am good at making/keeping friends
- I try to resolve conflict nonviolently
- I care about my school and community
- I believe it’s important to help others
- I read for pleasure 3-4 hours each week
- I believe what happens to me is under my control
- I believe my life has a purpose
- I am optimistic about my future