

Physical health

Our self-esteem and sense of worth and well-being – our emotional health, in other words – are closely linked to our physical health and choices we make about our health. Vulnerable young people are more likely to engage in risky behaviours and have low self-esteem than other young people, as well as being less able to access the services and information that will support them in making healthy choices.

We receive messages about health from many sources – the media, our friends, our family, our doctors and other service providers. Messages are both verbal and non-verbal. Sometimes they conflict and sometimes they come from sources we do not respect or would prefer to ignore.

It is often hard to disentangle how messages impact on our attitudes, thoughts and emotional and physical feelings before we decide on actions. The first activity aims to provide a starting point for young people to feel more autonomous and in control of their health-related behaviours.

The second activity involves the young people in a health challenge, with the aim of motivating young people to take responsibility for their health and well-being.

Learning outcomes

Young people will:

- have the opportunity to identify health messages and how they impact on them and their lifestyles (Activity 6)
- understand the importance of eating healthily, living healthily and taking part in physical activity (Activity 6)
- have developed their skills in identifying choices, making decisions, communicating with peers, family and community services, goal-setting and planning (Activity 7)
- have increased confidence in their ability to instigate and maintain lifestyle changes and to access help when they need it (Activity 7)
- understand the link between emotional and physical health and how that impacts on their lifestyle (Activity 7).

You will need

- magazines
- paper
- pens
- one copy per group of Worksheet 3: *What I learned about health*
- one copy per participant of Worksheet 4: *My health challenge*
- one copy per participant of Worksheet 5: *My challenge checklist*.

Suggested icebreakers:

Now the news (Activity 6)

One thing I would change (Activity 7)

(See page 21)



Activity 6:

What health means to us

1. Explain that we receive messages about health from many sources.
2. Discuss with the young people what is meant by 'health'. Include both physical and emotional health.
3. Divide the young people into small groups. Give each group a copy of Worksheet 3. Ask them to write, draw or make a collage of where they learn or have learnt about health – both negative and positive.

Then either:

- 4a. Back in the whole group share:

- similarities and differences between their worksheets
- the most significant messages
- messages they like and don't like
- helpful/unhelpful messages
- messages that had a positive effect
- messages that had a negative effect
- ideas for any messages they would like to change.

Or:

- 4b. In pairs or small groups, ask them to choose one or more of the health messages and either:

- use art materials to design a leaflet around one or more of the health messages

Or:

- prepare a storyline and slogan for a TV advert.

Reflection

What are the different messages for boys and girls?

In what different ways are the messages put across?

What did you learn today?

How will you use what you have learned?



Activity 7: Health challenge for young people

1. Divide the group into pairs that feel happy working together and are able to support each other through the challenge.
2. Ask each pair to think about their current health and lifestyle. What elements are unhealthy or healthy? What are their motivations? Discuss what is meant by 'eating healthily' and 'physical activity'.
3. Using Worksheet 4 ask each young person what they would like to do and/or change during the challenge. Stress that their individual goals should be realistic, and that they should set no more than three. These should include eating more healthily than normal and getting more physical activity. When they are setting their goals, ask them to think carefully about how they can achieve them.
4. When they have done this, ask them to complete Worksheet 4.
5. In a group, ask the young people which friends, family or people in their community they could talk to about health and healthy lifestyles, to get ideas, inspiration, advice and support. Ask them to fill in these names on Worksheet 4.
6. Talk about some of the practical things that they could do to achieve their goals, for example:
 - go to their local shops and spend an identified amount on healthy food
 - explore different physical activities available in their community.

During the challenge the feedback process is very important.

Worksheet 5 provides a checklist of things the young people might want to think about. Encourage them to be creative in recording their feedback. You could:

- a) Spend five minutes each day recording the young people on video to get their views on how it is going. They will need space and privacy to say what they think, so you may need to set up a quiet room for this. Points to cover include:
 - how the challenge is going
 - what they have learned so far
 - what difficulties or challenges they are facing
 - what has helped
 - how they are feeling and whether their feelings have had any impact on their challenge.
- b) Give each young person a diary that they can spend five minutes on each night answering the same questions as above.
- c) Create a chart that can be completed each day using art materials or pictures from magazines to record their progress in their health challenge.
- d) Use a camera to take photos of what they are doing.

Reflection

Would you like to continue to try to lead a healthier life style? What might help you to do so? What barriers might there be?

How can you use the learning from the health challenge in future?

What did you learn about your attitude to living more healthily?

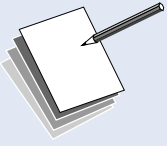
What help and support do you need to live more healthily and who will you get that help from?

How will you ask for this help?

Facilitators note

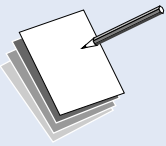
Some key points to consider in running this activity are:

- What opportunities for healthy eating or physical activity are available to support young people during the challenge.
- Choose a time period to suit the young people, for example, the challenge could run for one, two or four days. In exceptional circumstances it may be possible to maintain motivation for longer.
- The challenge is about having a go, participating, learning from whatever happens and enjoying it.
- Discuss what healthy eating and physical activity are in order to check young people's understanding, and provide the general outline of a healthy lifestyle. For example, you could talk about:
 - healthy eating: the government recommends an intake of at least five portions of fruit or vegetables per person per day
 - physical activity: young people should do at least one hour of at least moderate intensity physical activity (such as brisk walking) a day (Health Education Authority 1998), which can include play as well as sport.
- Can you invite in a nurse, dietician or fitness instructor to advise on food and physical activity?
- Young people may not get it 'right' all the time during their challenge. For example, they may buy 'unhealthy' food without realising it. This is not a problem – use it as an opportunity to explore with young people why they bought this food and what some of the health issues might be. It will also give you pointers as to what additional education young people need in relation to health.
- Try to ensure that each health challenge reflects a personal journey that the young person wants to go on.
- During the challenge, ask how they are getting on and offer help if they need it.



Worksheet 3: Where I have learnt about health

What have I learnt about health from
TV?
Family?
Magazines?
Sport?
Friends?
Youth services?
Advertising?



Worksheet 4: My health challenge

This is how I would describe my health and lifestyle at the moment:

So my challenge is to:

To achieve this I will:

1. Try and eat more healthily by:

2. Try and do more physical activity by:

3. My third goal is:

During my challenge I will speak to:

1.

2.

3.

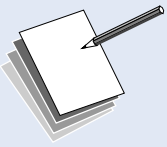
During my health challenge I will also:

1. Visit my local shops and spend £_____ on healthy food

2. Explore opportunities for physical activity in my local community

3.

4.



Worksheet 5: My challenge checklist

Things you could include in your diary:	Thursday
<p>What healthy food did you eat?</p> <p>What exercise did you do?</p> <p>What did you notice on the TV about food or exercise?</p> <p>How did you feel when you ate something healthy/unhealthy?</p>	
Monday	Friday
Tuesday	Saturday
Wednesday	Sunday