

STRONG⁴LIFE™



Activity Guide and Talking Points

FOR YOUTH-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS



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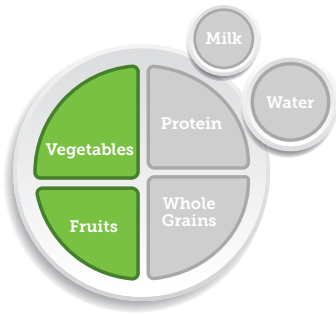


Eat Smarter, Drink Water



Talking points

Fueling your body and brain with nutritious meals and plenty of water gives you energy to focus and the nutrients you need to grow.



- Create a balanced plate by making half your plate fruits and veggies and the other half whole grains and lean proteins.
- Add a colorful variety of fruits and veggies to meals and snacks. Fruits and veggies are full of vitamins, minerals, fiber and other nutrients that you need for long-lasting energy and strength.



FUN

FACT

Different colored fruits and veggies help your body in different ways. For example, blue is good for your memory, and orange is good for your eyes. Choose a variety of colors to get all the benefits fruits and veggies have to offer.

Your body, like every other living thing, needs water to stay strong.

- A healthy body is made up of about 60% water, but there's no set amount everyone needs to drink each day.
- Drinking water gives you energy, fights germs, fuels your brain, boosts your focus, and even improves your heart and lung health.

Tips for drinking more water

- ✓ Keep a refillable water bottle with you wherever you go.
- ✓ Make water fun by adding fruit or herbs, like lemon slices, berries or fresh mint.
- ✓ Limit sugary drinks, like soda, sweet tea, sports drinks, energy drinks, fruit drinks, smoothies and juices. These beverages are loaded with sugar and can slow you down.
- ✓ Drink water with meals and snacks and in between. And if you feel thirsty, your body is telling you it needs water.



Activity

Fruits and Veggies Challenge



Materials

- Two large sheets of white paper or large whiteboards
- Markers in a variety of colors



Time

10 to 15 minutes



Discussion

Different foods have different nutrients and health benefits; that's why it's important to eat foods from all the food groups. When we create a balanced plate—by making half our plates fruits and veggies and the other half whole grains and lean proteins—we're making sure our bodies get the nutrition they need. Did anyone eat a fruit or veggie today? What are some of your favorite fruits and veggies? There are hundreds to pick from. Try to eat a variety each day.



Activity

1. Discuss the provided talking points.
2. Tell the group they're going to have a Minute to Win It-type challenge with fruits and veggies.
3. Ask for two volunteers to be team leaders.
4. Divide the remaining group into two teams (one team leader for each group).
5. Explain the activity:
 - The teams will have one minute to shout out as many fruits and veggies as they can think of to their team leader.
 - Within the minute, the team leader will draw the fruits and veggies their team is shouting out as fast as they can. (Note: The fruits and veggies should be drawn in colors that represent the actual food.)
 - After the minute is up, both team leaders will show their pictures and name all the fruits and veggies they drew.
 - The team who draws the most fruits and veggies within a minute wins.



Wrap up

As we can see, there are lots of different fruits and veggies. Different colored fruits and veggies help our bodies in different ways. Try a fruit or veggie you've never tried before that you see in these drawings, and remember to make half your plate fruits and veggies of all colors.

Screens Away, Go Play

Talking points

Limit screen time, and focus on activities that energize your body and brain.

- Being active is good for your body, mind and overall well-being.
- Moving can help you feel energized, focused and alert so you can do your best at school, in sports and in your other favorite activities.
- Moving your body throughout the day will help you get a better night's sleep and feel better when you wake up.
- Being active can strengthen your muscles and bones and even your immune system.

Physical activity is a great coping skill to help manage feelings and handle stress.

- Using movement (e.g., running, hiking, stretching) as a coping skill can help you become more resilient (better able to handle life's ups and downs).
- Being active can help you feel happier, more confident and less stressed.
- Engaging in physical activity can reduce anxiety and depression. If you have low energy, try stretching or marching in place to bring up your energy. If you have a lot of energy, try skipping or dancing to let some energy out.
- Participating in physical activity every day is one of the most important things you can do for your overall health.

Tips for being more active

- ✓ Make screen-free time fun. Do activities that you enjoy, such as dancing, swimming, walking on park trails, playing tag or other games.
- ✓ Break it up. Try being active for at least 60 minutes a day (it doesn't have to be all at once), and get outside as much as possible.
- ✓ Buddy up. Invite your friend, sibling or parent to be active with you.
- ✓ Encourage your teacher, group or club leader, camp counselor, or others to add activity breaks into your classes, meetings or events. Activity breaks could include standing, taking a minute to stretch, walking around the room or jogging in place.

FUN

FACT

Being active keeps your body strong now but also in the future. Make it a habit to be active every day so your future self is healthy too.



Activity

Dance, Dance



Materials

- Music
- Music player and speakers



Time

About 30 minutes



Discussion

Dancing is a great way to be active. You can dance indoors or outdoors, alone or with a large group of people, and with any type of music (or with no music at all!). No one is a bad dancer. Everyone dances differently, which is what makes it fun.



Activity

1. Discuss the provided talking points.
2. Teach the group a line dance, like the Cupid Shuffle.
3. Divide the group into teams of four to five.
4. Explain the activity:
 - Each team will make up their own one-minute dance routine.
 - Then, each team will perform their dance routine for the whole group.
5. Help the teams with their dance routines as needed.

Variations:

If teams are having trouble making a dance routine, ask each team member to show the group a dance move (e.g., the twist, a spin, moves like “the shopping cart”). Have the teams make up a dance routine that connects all of their moves.

For younger kids, you can play freeze dance. When the music plays, the group dances. When the music stops, the kids must freeze until the music starts again. Play as long as time allows or until the kids lose interest.

Cupid Shuffle dance steps

Take four side steps to the right.

Take four side steps to the left.

Kick your right foot forward (heel to the ground).

Kick your left foot forward (heel to the ground).

Kick your right foot forward again (heel to the ground).

Kick your left foot forward again (heel to the ground).

Step in a circle for eight steps.

Repeat.

Mix it up (add a spin or any dance move you'd like).



Wrap up

Who had fun dancing? Do you think you could dance at home as a way to be active? Dancing is just one way to move your body in a fun way. What are some other ways you can be active every day?

Get Rest to Be Your Best

Talking points

Sleep affects your overall health and well-being. That's why it's important to give your body and brain a chance to reset and recharge with rest.

Quality sleep can:



Help with decision-making



Increase your physical energy



Boost your memory and focus



Improve your mood



Strengthen your immune system

FUN

FACT

Sleep can make you stronger by giving your body and muscles a chance to repair and recharge.

Tips for getting quality sleep

- ✓ Start a habit of going to bed and waking up at the same time every day (even on weekends and breaks from school).
- ✓ Power down all screens an hour before bed (e.g., phone, TV, video games, etc.).
- ✓ Keep all screens out of the bedroom.
- ✓ Create a calming bedtime routine, such as brushing your teeth, reading, journaling, listening to relaxing music or connecting with a family member.

Pro tip: Try practicing healthy sleep habits so they become something you do every day, without even thinking about it.



Activity

Red Light, Green Light



Materials N/A



Time 10 to 20 minutes



Setup

- This activity works best in a large, open space.
- Designate a starting line and a finish line.



Discussion

Just like cars need to be refueled or recharged to keep them moving, we need to sleep to recharge our bodies and minds so that we have energy to do our favorite things.



Activity

1. Discuss the provided talking points.
2. Have everyone line up on the starting line.
3. Assign one staff member or volunteer to be the light caller.
4. Explain the activity:
 - The light caller will call out either green, yellow or red to get the players to the finish line.
 - Green light:** Everyone does high knees toward the finish line.
 - Yellow light:** Everyone walks in slow motion toward the finish line.
 - Red light:** Everyone freezes.
 - Any players who are still moving when the light caller calls red must go back to the starting line.
 - Once all players make it across the finish line, start a new round.

Variations:

- Add more colors with different actions for moving toward the finish line, such as **purple** means dance, **orange** means squats, and **pink** means jumping jacks.
- Designate the light caller as the finish line. This enables the game to move around so that when players get close to the finish line (e.g., the light caller), the finish line moves farther away.
- If you don't have access to a large, open space, have players do the actions in place and remove the finish line.



Wrap up

Raise your hand if you've ever gone to bed too late when you had to wake up early. How did you feel the next day? Tired? Sluggish? Lacking energy?

When we don't get enough quality sleep, we wake up feeling tired and lacking energy. Raise your hand if you've ever gotten a good night's rest. How did you feel the next day? Energized? Ready to take on the day?

Sleep affects so many different parts of our bodies and minds. When we don't get enough sleep, our brains have a tough time focusing, and our bodies feel like they're out of fuel. Think of when a car runs out of gas; it can't go anywhere until it's filled back up with fuel. That's how our bodies are. When we get a good night's rest, we're recharging our bodies and brains so we have enough energy (fuel) to take on the day.

Emotions Are Real, Express How You Feel



Talking points

Resilience is the ability to handle life's ups and downs. Expressing and coping with your feelings in healthy ways builds resilience.

- We all have feelings, whether we acknowledge them or not.
- All feelings are OK and normal. Feelings aren't good or bad, positive or negative; they just are.
- Feelings are temporary and can change from moment to moment. It can be helpful to remind ourselves that our feelings won't last forever.
- We can feel more than one feeling at a time. Sometimes those feelings might even be opposites of each other.
- It's OK (and helpful!) to talk about feelings.

Educator and caregiver tips for supporting emotional expression and coping in kids.

- Validate all feelings, even if you disagree. Let kids know that their feelings are normal and that you understand by repeating back what you hear, without judging or interpreting.
- Teach kids words to build their feelings vocabularies. When kids don't have the words to express themselves, it can come out in behavior. By teaching feelings words, you're helping them learn to communicate their needs in a more direct way.
- Ask questions instead of telling kids how they feel. For example, instead of saying, "Don't be mad," try asking, "I wonder if you're feeling mad. Is that right?" By asking in this way, you're giving kids opportunities to practice identifying their feelings and clarify, if needed.
- Remind kids that there are many ways to express their feelings, in addition to talking. Art, music, dancing and playing are just a few options to try.
 - Everybody needs healthy coping skills, and we're never too young or too old to start practicing them.
 - What works for one child may not work for another. And what works one day may not work the next. Encourage kids to try lots of different coping skills to find what works best for them.



Activity

Coping Skills Balloon



Materials

Deflated balloons for each participant
Optional: Permanent marker



Time

10 to 15 minutes



Setup

Before beginning this activity, write each participant's initials on their balloon so when the balloons blow away, each participant can pick up their own balloon. In a large group, for which finding a specific balloon may be impractical, you may want to provide a second balloon for each participant to avoid mix-ups.



Discussion

Sometimes when we aren't sure how to express our feelings, they can build up inside of us. Our feelings don't go away just because we ignore them. That's why it's important to learn how to identify, express and cope with our feelings in healthy ways.



Activity

1. Discuss the provided talking points.
2. Give each participant a deflated balloon.
3. Explain the activity: Start by picking up your balloon. I'm going to describe some situations, and if they're situations that you think might cause you to feel upset, angry or sad, blow a big breath of air into your balloon, inflating it a little at a time.
4. Read the following scenarios, and pause in between each one to give participants time to think and inflate their balloons:
 - Someone says something hurtful about you.
 - You're thinking hard but can't figure out a math problem.
 - You get blamed for something that someone else did.
 - You have to turn off your favorite show because it's time for bed.
 - You slip and fall in front of a large group of people.
 - You don't get invited to a birthday party.
 - You ask someone for help, but they're too busy.
5. Encourage participants to keep blowing up their balloons until they're full. Say:
 - Notice your balloon—is it getting very full? All those feelings are building up inside and causing lots of discomfort. I think it might be time to let out some air. Let go of your balloon to let the feelings out.
 - Did your balloon fly all over the place? Did you have any control over where your balloon went or where it landed? That's what it's like when we don't express our feelings or cope with them in a healthy and safe way. Sometimes, when we hold our feelings inside, we can feel stressed or like we're out of control. Those are moments when you might notice yourself frustrated, mad or crying without knowing why. We can avoid this by expressing our feelings regularly and managing them using coping skills, which are things we can do to feel better. This helps us be more in control of our feelings, rather than our feelings controlling us.
6. Have participants collect their balloons.

Activity cont'd

7. Read the following scenarios and coping skills. Have participants blow into their balloons when they hear a stressful scenario, but this time, have them release the air in a controlled manner after they hear a coping skill. For the last two scenarios, ask them to come up with their own ideas for coping skills.
 - Someone says something hurtful about you blow some air into the balloon, so you take some deep breaths to relax release some air from the balloon.
 - You're thinking hard but can't figure out a math problem blow some air into the balloon, so you put on your favorite music to clear your mind release some air from the balloon.
 - You get blamed for something that someone else did blow some air into the balloon, so you do some jumping jacks to feel less frustrated release some air from the balloon.
 - You're not able to watch more of your favorite show because it's time for bed blow some air into the balloon, so you tell a family member how you feel disappointed about it release some air from the balloon.
 - You slip and fall in front of a large group of people blow some air into the balloon, so you walk away and share with a friend how you felt embarrassed release some air from the balloon.
 - You don't get invited to a birthday party blow some air into the balloon, so you [ask participants to share a coping skill idea] release some air from the balloon.
 - You ask someone for help, but they're too busy blow some air into the balloon, so you [ask participants to share a coping skill idea] release some air from the balloon.



Wrap up

We all have feelings, and it's important to express them rather than hold them in. It's helpful to practice coping skills regularly to help us remember to use them when we need them. Keep in mind that every coping skill won't work for everyone or in every situation. In fact, you may still have some air in your balloon, and that's OK. That's why it's important to try lots of different coping skills to see what works for you.

