

Lesson Plan:

Making Safe & Responsible Choices

Audience: Early Adolescents

By the end of the lesson, the participants will be able to:

- accurately rate the level of risk in behaviors.
- apply responsible decision-making to reduce risks.
- select safe and responsible choices in situations involving fire.

Step 1: Introduction (5 Minutes)

- Introduce yourself and share your connection to your community.
- Establish the rules early to help connect with the young audience and maintain control. Let students know they should pay attention to the speaker at all times and be respectful during the lesson. Inform students that they can ask questions but they need to signal and be called on first.
- Let the classroom teacher or group leader know that you will need them to be present and assist as needed.

HOOK: Tell the students you will be talking about risky behaviors. Share a simple definition of *risky*: “**Full of the possibility of danger, failure, or loss.**”

Ask volunteers to share examples of **fire-related behaviors** they believe are risky. List them on the board or on chart paper.

Add risky behaviors you have seen in your work to the students’ list. Examples include behaviors related to fireworks, brush fires, vacant structure fires, dumpster fires, bonfires, homemade makeshift bombs, and smoking.

Let students know that some behaviors always carry risk but making responsible choices can lessen the risk and help people stay safe. For example, students might list cooking as a risky behavior but if one follows basic guidelines about cooking (keep anything that can catch fire away from the stovetop, stay in the kitchen while cooking, etc.) the risks are reduced.

Ask: What are some safe uses of fire?

Remind the students how fire is important in everyday life. While fire always carries risk, used with care, it greatly enhances our quality of life through everyday activities such as cooking, heating, science, work (trade) related uses.

Teaching Tip:

Should I use a video clip in my lesson?

A short video clip may be an effective way to show the students an example of a fire-related risky behavior. Select a video less than 3 minutes in length and one that does not show anyone getting hurt. Do not use shock factor and clear all clips with a school leader. The purpose of the video should be to engage students in the lesson. **Note:** Consider this option if you have more than 30 minutes with your audience.



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Step 2: Body of the Presentation (20 minutes)

Ask: Why do you think some early adolescents engage in risky fire behaviors?

Write the students' answers on the board or chart paper. After a substantial list is created, discuss responses such as: the fun and thrill of the activity, social status, peer pressure, outbursts of anger, depression, rejection from peers or family, boredom, revenge, curiosity, malicious intent.

Inform the students that it is always important to consider consequences when deciding to participate in a risky behavior. It is important to acknowledge both positive and negative consequences. Introduce the concept of "weighing the consequences" to students so they can apply this concept in daily life.

Work through an example with the students: Playing with fireworks

Ask: What might be some positive consequences of playing with fireworks? Expect students to provide answers such as fun, social status, excitement

Then ask: What might be some negative consequences of playing with fireworks? Expect students to provide answers such as start a fire, get badly injured, trouble with the police

Discuss how the negative consequences could be severe and permanent. This would make them "outweigh" the positive consequences.

Other consequences related to risky fire-related behaviors to consider include:

- **Positive:** fun and games with your friends, thrilling, adrenaline rush, social status, being cool and daring, bragging rights.
- **Negative:** legal problems, criminal record, financial restitution, injuries, death, psychological effect, ban from school activities, future career opportunities, community rejection, disappointed family members.

Ask: What actions could you take to avoid placing yourself in a situation that would involve engaging in risky behavior?

Discuss possible strategies: walking away, not giving in to peer pressure, reporting the incident to an adult, talking your peers out of making a bad choice involving risky behavior and finding alternative ways to experience the positive consequences.

Inform the students that learning to make safe choices is a process and it takes time. BUT if they make an unsafe choice, they must agree to take responsibility if something goes wrong. Stress the importance of appropriate actions if they are involved in a fire-related situation that gets out of hand: calling 911, calling an adult, evacuation, stop drop and roll.

Teaching Tip:

Early adolescents thrive in interactive learning environments. Use images or props to demonstrate what it would look like if one were weighing consequences with a scale.



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Step 3: Conclusion (3–5 minutes)

- ASK students to distinguish between safe and unsafe fire choices.
- REMIND students of the dangers and negative consequences of engaging in fire-related risky behavior.
- ASK the students to explain a strategy that would help them avoid situations involving risky fire behaviors.
- REMIND the students that learning to make safe choices takes time. If they make a mistake, they must commit to taking responsibility and getting help if something goes wrong.
- THANK the students for being attentive and respectful.
- THANK the teacher for allowing you to come in and address the students.

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