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# I care... for my TOMORROW
# Best Practices Guide for Promoting a Healthy Lifestyle Among Children and Youth




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# I care… for my TOMORROW

## Best Practices Guide for Promoting a Healthy Lifestyle Among Children and Youth

**ERASMUS+ KA220 PROJECT:**

**I care… for my TOMORROW**

**No. 2024-1-RO01-KA220-SCH-000255262**

**KA220-SCH - Cooperation partnerships in school education**

**2024– 2026**

# Introduction

This practical and theoretical guide was created as the final product of an exceptional European initiative, the Erasmus+ KA220-SCH project, Cooperation Partnerships in School Education: **"I care... for my TOMORROW."**

Over the period of 24 months, five partner schools from Romania, Greece, Cyprus, Portugal, and Malta joined efforts, experience, and passion in a partnership dedicated to the future of the youth generation. The project aimed to raise awareness among students aged 12 to 15 about the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle, which is closely connected to protecting and valuing a healthy natural environment.

Through joint activities, mobility programs, and the constant exchange of best practices, our goal has been more than simply providing information: we have aimed to lay the foundations for forming active, responsible citizens who are engaged in the local and European communities of tomorrow.

The need for such a guide is supported by the existence of a considerable amount of valuable experience gained at partner schools and educational services, which often remains known only within the schools where it was implemented.

Teachers and specialists are constantly creating original materials, activities, and resources adapted to students' needs, which can have a significant impact on the wider educational community. By producing this guide, these experiences will become accessible to a larger number of professionals, directly contributing to the development of a culture of collaboration, the exchange of best practices, and mutual learning.

**To support teachers and students, this guide has been organized into two complementary sections:**

**Part I** – Curriculum for the optional subject **I care… for my TOMORROW**

**Part II-** brings together the main themes addressed throughout the partnership, providing a clear analytical framework on the interdependence between physical and mental health and environmental sustainability, as well as practical activities, concrete examples of good practice, workshops and initiatives that have been successfully implemented in partner schools across the five countries.

This guide is not just a summary of past activities, but also a living tool designed to accompany and support the new elective course for 13 to 14 year old students. We hope that the following pages will provide inspiration, practical ideas, and a valuable European perspective for everyday educational practice.

To ensure maximum cross-border dissemination and to allow a wide range of teachers across Europe to benefit from these resources, the guide was originally written in English and subsequently translated into the native languages of the partner schools.

Project Coordinator,
Teacher, Mariana Munteanu– Dulgheru

# PART I

# CURRICULUM FOR THE OPTIONAL SUBJECT

# “I care… for my TOMORROW”

# PRESENTATION NOTE

The school curriculum for the integrated optional course **"I CARE… FOR MY TOMORROW / FOR MY FUTURE"** represents a curricular offer for students aged between 12 and 14, with time allocation of one hour per week. It directly targets the following curricular areas: Biology, Geography, Physical Education and Sport, Health Education, Social Education, and Counseling and Guidance.

The major and accelerated changes of the contemporary world influence the well-being of youth and children, which must remain a priority direction of educational strategy.

The knowledge proposed through this optional course is necessary for raising awareness of the determinants of well-being and related issues, as well as for informing students about ways to improve health and prevent these problems. However, knowledge alone is not a guarantee that young people will apply it. Beyond knowledge, many other factors influence health-promoting (sanogenic) behavior. Therefore, a strong motivation is needed to put this knowledge into practice. Students must grasp the essence of the idea that following certain norms can only bring them benefits. To achieve this, they must develop values and attitudes of accepting protective behaviors and rejecting undesirable ones.Yet, neither knowledge nor beliefs are sufficient on their own. Students must learn how to behave, how to avoid risks, and how to make pertinent choices; they must develop appropriate and healthy behaviors. The way to develop these is through the accumulation of best practices, not just by "learning from books." Thus, health education calls for innovative approaches and a wide variety of active teaching-learning methods.

In its modular structure, this curriculum allows teachers to select and adapt the proposed content according to the students' learning achievements. The proposed modules can be used as follows:

**At the class level:** by following all specific competencies and content domains, or through a selection/adaptation of content from the 4-5 content domains (within these, the teacher can establish the subthemes most relevant to the target group);

**At the level of two classes:** by partitioning the specific competencies (or selecting/adapting them), by multiplying learning activities, and by going through all topics under the 4-5 mandatory domains as needed.

The modular structuring presented offers the following advantages:

* **Ensuring progression** in achievements for the student who follows the optional course over several years of study;
* **Developing specific skills and behaviors** related to well-being education, as well as covering all content domains of the discipline even if students opt for this course only once during their entire schooling. Students have the opportunity to discover the field and integrate it into their cognitive and affective structures;
* **The articulation** of formal, non-formal, and informal education.

Well-being plays an important role in achieving academic performance among students.Through this integrated optional course, students will acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for a healthy lifestyle based on physical activity, as well as for actively contributing to their personal well-being, the well-being of others, and the communities to which they belong. Students will become more responsible regarding their own bodies and health; they will practice specific movements in a variety of contexts and develop skills that will allow them to improve their relationships with themselves and others. Furthermore, they will participate in creating healthy communities by assuming and implementing responsible actions.

In the context of shaping the future of secondary school graduate, the integrated optional course **"I care... for my TOMORROW / MY FUTURE"** aims to develop student competencies through the following dimensions: knowledge, skills, and attitudes, by:

- **Expressing, practicing, realizing, and understanding** the relationship between body – movement – expression – communication – connection – well-being;
- **Developing body expressivity**, the capacity to analyze through movement spatio-temporal (external) dimensions or psychological (internal) drivers, and the harmonized relationships between movement, rhythm, sound, color, emotion, and knowledge.

The prevention of natural and social risk situations, alongside an efficient human response to hazards, are endeavors that must be integrated into the curriculum of educational systems. Contemporary individuals will constantly operate in new environmental contexts generated by unprecedented technological changes. Scientific progress creates global challenges and requires the acquisition of new life skills. The future citizen will reflect more deeply on the relationship between human intervention on the environment and its effects on the quality of life; they will take initiatives to optimize their lifestyle, motivated to analyze surrounding phenomena from the perspective of self and environmental safety.The future citizen will reflect more deeply on the relationship between human intervention in the environment and its effects on the quality of life; they will take initiative in optimizing their lifestyle, being motivated to analyze surrounding phenomena through the lens of safety for both self and the environment.To achieve this, it is necessary to inform the younger generation about the health of the living environment and the effects of its imbalance, while also fostering active and proactive life skills and attitudes. In this context, a transfer of ecological responsibility is required—from the social level (the responsibility of the group or society as a whole) to each individual. Each person must manifest appropriate values and reactions and possess intervention skills for risk situations, so that imminent natural risks can be foreseen, analyzed, prevented, and, ultimately, controlled.

It is a reality that potentially dangerous situations are a part of life. Pre-adolescence is a developmental stage in which the child, driven by general bodily transformations, manifests new states, emotions, and behaviors that lay the foundation of their personality. Thus, pre-adolescents tend to experiment with behaviors or reactions that grant them greater freedom, sometimes bypassing their own personal safety or that of those around them. Furthermore, reality shows that children, youth, and even adults are often not fully

prepared to understand the risks arising from situations related to potentially dangerous physical phenomena (hazards) or initiate actions/events with dangerous potential that can negatively affect their activity or endanger their lives. This school curriculum invites students to reflect on risk situations they may face in their lives, which may be self-initiated (e.g., reckless/risk-taking behaviors), consequences of physical hazard-type phenomena (e.g., earthquakes, floods), or anthropic realities.

Studies show that when a potentially risky event is analyzed and explained in terms of causes, consequences, and prevention possibilities, the effects it can generate at the personal and/or community level are minimized and have a lower probability of occurring. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze typical life situations with risk potential and explain the underlying phenomena using knowledge and skills from the fields of physics, geography, or technology. Additionally, it is essential to prevent or identify effective ways to react in risk situations (for example, through IT applications or activities specific to counseling and personal development). This optional course aims to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors that allow students to cope with potentially risky situations in daily life.

Through this curriculum, the school can intervene proactively and pragmatically in addressing natural and social phenomena with risk potential and in preventing situations with undesirable effects resulting from age-specific curiosity, recklessness, or, sometimes, from the students' insufficient knowledge of reality. Thus, the program proposes the explanation of certain phenomena, building simple action steps as a reaction to the risk situations in students' lives.

**GENERAL COMPETENCIES**

**1. Utilization of notions, norms, rules, processes, and relationships specific to well-being education.**

**2. Formation of responsible attitudes and behaviors regarding well-being, demonstrating critical thinking and relevant skills.**

**3. Utilization of movement as a way to connect with oneself and the world and to understand life, ensuring well-being.**

**4. Manifestation of behaviors for the protection of personal health and the environment, utilizing personal achievements in solving problem-situations.**

**VALUES AND ATTITUDES**

The **"I care… for my TOMORROW / FOR MY FUTURE"** curriculum is based on and promotes the following values and attitudes:

- Developing a healthy lifestyle;
- Respect for personal life, as well as for one's own health and the health of others;
- Acquiring responsible health-related behavior;
- Developing tolerance and solidarity towards people in difficulty;
- Manifesting initiative in critical health-related situations;
- Developing motivation and responsibility for health and environmental protection;

- Acquiring ecological behavior.

**SPECIFIC COMPETENCIES AND EXAMPLES OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

**1. Utilization of notions, norms, rules, processes, and relationships specific to well-being education.**

**1.1. Identifying the factors that constitute WELL-BEING.**

- Creating summary inventories of age-specific risk factors;
- Exercises for drafting a life plan;
- Interpreting scenarios, plays, and roles with specific content;
- Analyzing video materials and case studies on activity and active rest;
- Creating an optimal activity schedule for periods of physical or mental strain;
- Drafting recommendations regarding the expression of emotional states;
- Debates regarding the scale of values and decision-making;
- Implementing personal development projects;
- Writing papers on the importance of immunization for preventing infectious diseases;
- Graphing the curves of intellectual vs. physical effort (comparative analysis);
- Developing an action plan to prevent overexertion, sedentary lifestyle, etc.;
- Analyzing leisure opportunities within the local community.

**1.2. Analyzing factors that determine health / disease, activity / rest, and physical-mental balance, which influence the individual's physical and psychological development.**

- Identifying biological, social, and environmental factors that influence health status;
- Exercises for representing the body at puberty;
- Highlighting somatic changes by age groups;
- Comparing states of health and disease;
- Initiating and conducting games on hygiene themes;
- Applying personal hygiene rules, demonstrating responsible behavior for maintaining the body's health;
- Initiating and conducting simulation games regarding the differences between states of health and illness;
- Discussions within group activities;
- Developing projects;
- Drafting reports/press releases regarding the importance of substances (proteins, carbohydrates, lipids) for the harmonious development of adolescents;
- Designing food rations that contribute to the normal growth and development of the body;
- Writing papers and essays on the importance of body image.

**1.3. Analyzing the interrelationships between physical, psychological, and mental health and personal health.**

- Predictions about health status under conditions of physical or psychological overexertion, or the consumption of alcohol or drugs;
- Formulating and solving problem-situations regarding health status;

- Developing projects;
- Creating summary inventories of age-specific risk factors;
- Creating drawings/posters highlighting the consequences of harmful factors (tobacco, alcohol, drugs) on the human body.

**1.4. Identifying the consequences of deviations from current health legislation.**

- Identifying sources of correct information on health issues;
- Documentation exercises and the use of statistics;
- Creating portfolios, flyers, thematic brochures, and group projects;
- Formulating personal hygiene rules;
- Debates, discussions, and case studies regarding health-promoting (sanogenic) vs. pathogenic lifestyles;
- Role-playing regarding self-image;
- Drafting norms/requirements for cosmetic services and products.

**2.Creating responsible attitudes and behaviors regarding well-being, demonstrating critical thinking and relevant skills.**

**2.1. Building strategies to support a healthy lifestyle.**

- Creating albums, posters, and scripts for audio/video productions on health education themes;
- Analyzing cases of obesity, bulimia, and anorexia;
- Designing dietary regimes for people in special conditions (during preparation for competitions and exams, extreme temperatures, illnesses);
- Developing a guide on healthy eating behavior for middle school students.
- Establish a direct partnership between local health officials and organize sessions led by them that fall within this theme.

**2.2. Exploring the impact of risk situations on the individual and the community.**

- Analyzing the consequences of addictive behaviors and the consumption of toxic substances on physical and mental health;
- Typological characterization of adolescents who consume drugs, tobacco, and alcohol;
- Analysis of drug addiction cases presented in the media;
- Decision-making exercises and analysis of the consequences of addictive behaviors on health status;
- Conducting mini-surveys and interviews regarding addictive behaviors (excessive device use, gambling, extreme sports);
- Developing materials regarding the psychological and behavioral characteristics of dependent persons.

**2.3. Applying strategies to minimize the effects of potentially dangerous situations.**

- Knowledge of legislation regarding the consumption, trafficking, and possession of drugs;
- Debating problem-situations where health education principles are not respected;
- Community/school projects aimed at reducing the frequency of inappropriate behaviors;
- Debates: "Drugs – a false solution to personal problems";
- Involvement in campaigns for the prevention and combating of drug use.

**3. Utilising movement as a way to connect with oneself and the world and to understand life, ensuring well-being.**

**3.1. Exploring various forms of physical movement as a way of knowing and understanding life.**

- Motor expression exercises in relation to emotional responses triggered by various situations (e.g., receiving news, preparing for competitions, participating in learning);
- Exercises for imitating movements in nature (e.g., falling acorns or leaves, summer rain, a storm, the dance of snowflakes, wave movement, the north wind, the walk of elephants, the ant's step);
- Exercises for reproducing walking in different environments (e.g., walking on the Moon, walking on inclined terrain, walking on ice, walking on a hot surface) or to express emotional states (e.g., walking so as not to disturb a butterfly, walking in a hurry, walking peacefully);
- Documenting the physical skills/types of movement required in practicing various trades and professions.

**3.2. Exploring various forms of communication through body movement.**

- Expression exercises through "living statues" in the community;
- Imitating specific movements of dances/games belonging to the culture of different peoples or ethnic groups within the local community.
- Analyzing specific forms of communication through movement in the family, nature, and society;
- Reflection exercises on different physical states and movements in which each person feels good and comfortable;
- Debates on various topics related to movement, the body, health, and well-being, with the participation of specialists (e.g., doctors, ballet dancers, athletes).

**3.3. Adapting body movement in different life contexts to ensure well-being and a healthy lifestyle.**

- Identifying behaviors that involve risk-free and safe movement in various daily life contexts (e.g., on the street, when practicing a sport);
- Group dialogue about the meaning of well-being;
- Breathing and relaxation exercises to connect with one’s own body and emotions as ways to reduce stress;
- Developing an action plan for integrating movement into the personal daily schedule for a healthy lifestyle;
- Creating a list of proposed movement activities to be integrated into the students' daily school schedule or their own family's schedule;
- Group discussions about the impact of using new technologies on physical movement.

**4. Manifesting behaviors for the protection of personal health and the environment, utilising personal achievements in solving problem-situations.**

**4.1. Investigating the influence of environmental factors on individual and collective health.**

- Identifying opportunities for environmental protection and the risk factors threatening it;
- Schematic representation of the organism-environment relationship;

- Proposing solutions for improving the state of the environment;
- Participating in environmental cleanup actions;
- Developing scenarios for the recovery/upcycling of community waste;
- Launching individual or group projects on environmental health topics by creating posters/notices;
- Competitions between classes on environmental issues.

**4.2. Describing the influence of environmental factors on health at local, national, and global levels.**

- Classifying risk factors from the internal/external environment;
- Conducting individual or group mini-projects;
- Creating posters, flyers, charts, comic strips, etc.;
- Writing an essay: "The Impact of the Surrounding Environment on Health";
- Planning projects for the development of leisure/recreational spaces in the locality;
- Ecological project: "Ecological Problems in the Locality and Their Solutions";
- Identifying polluting factors in the hometown and the resulting impact;
- Developing a plan to reduce pollution in the locality.

**4.3. Identifying the consequences of deviations from current legislation regarding environmental health.**

- Studying national environmental legislation and European environmental quality standards;
- Interview: "My contribution to sustainable development";
- Organizing meetings/information sessions with representatives from the local community to clarify how decisions affecting the environment are made (tree cutting/deforestation, landfills, etc.).

**CONTENT DOMAINS**

## 1. WELL-BEING

1.1. Components of well-being

1.2. Physical well-being: health and disease

1.3. Hygiene rules for maintaining physical well-being

1.4. The role of personal hygiene in preventing communicable diseases; vaccinations and their importance

1.5. Common parasitoses in children; diseases transmitted by animals

1.6. The influence of fashion on student personal development: "Beauty standards" promoted in the media – a critical evaluation; cosmetic products and services and the risks of their use (manicures, pedicures, cosmetics as potential risk factors)

1.7. Body needs during puberty and adolescence

1.8. Emotional and psychological well-being

1.9. The physiological curve of intellectual work capacity: The importance of alternating intellectual activity with physical activity and rest

1.10. School fatigue: causes, consequences, ways to avoid/reduce it

1.11. The work and rest schedule of the middle school student

1.13. Sleep, sleep habits and mental health of adolescents.

**2. NUTRITIONAL HEALTH**

2.1. The food pyramid

2.2. The label: the "calling card" of food products

2.3. Consumer rights

2.4. Healthy eating guide

2.5. The impact of food on health status: Nutrition and cardiovascular diseases (atherosclerosis, hypertension).

2.6. Nutritional deficiencies: (weight loss diets, bulimia, anorexia); body image and eating behavior

2.7. Balancing caloric intake with physical and intellectual activity

2.8. Organoleptic qualities of food: the share of food groups in the daily ration; the onset of obesity through unhealthy eating

2.9. Dietary regimens in special conditions: (competition and exam preparation, athletes' nutrition, extreme temperatures)

2.10. Factors disrupting metabolism: (carbohydrates, proteins, lipids, minerals); deficiencies

2.11. Food additives and their influence on health. Energy drinks and consequences of consumption.

**3. MOVEMENT FOR WELL-BEING**

3.1. Movement and well-being. Benefits of exercise in body and mental health

3.2. Expression of personal feelings through movement and non-verbal language

3.3. Tics, stress, and pain

3.4. Group movement as a form of expression: from free movement to coordinated movement

3.5. Movement in nature as a form of knowledge

3.6. The body and movement at different ages

3.7. Learning through movement

3.9. Movement in various trades and occupations

3.10. Types of activities involving movement: free activities, artistic activities, sporting activities

3.11. Self-control and bodily relaxation

3.12. Adapting body movement in different life contexts and at different ages to ensure well-being.

**4. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**

4.1. Environmental pollution – what is it and who produces it?

4.2. The effects of pollution on health

4.3. A cleaner community: differentiated waste collection for a healthy planet

4.4. New objects become waste. But can waste become new objects?

4.5. The gene pool – the importance of conserving natural resources and species diversity

4.6. European standards for environmental quality

4.7. Major environmental problems in our society and worldwide

4.8. Main sources of pollution at local, national, and global levels

4.9. Decisions regarding the avoidance/reduction of the impact of pollution sources on individual and family

life.

4.10. Governmental and non-governmental structures involved in environmental protection

4.11. Projects dedicated to celebrating days centered on environmental protection and sustainable development:

World Cleanup Day (September)

International Day for Disaster Reduction (October 8)

International Day of Urban Areas (November 8)

International Month of Forests (March 21)

Earth Day (April 22)

International Day for Biological Diversity (May 22)

World Environment Day (June 5)

World Oceans Day (June 8)

**5. ABUSE OF ADDICTIVE BEHAVIORS AND TOXIC SUBSTANCES**

5.1. Vulnerability generated by addictive behaviors (device use, pathological gambling, extreme sports, consumption of toxic substances)

5.2. Excessive use of devices: between benefits and addiction. Social Media Addiction.

5.3. Ways to reduce device dependency

5.4. Gambling and extreme sports: risks and addiction

5.5. Strategies for reducing addiction to games and extreme sports

5.6. Drugs. How the consumption of drugs, tobacco, and alcohol influences well-being. Vaping- the new addiction.

5.7. Vulnerable categories for drug use; myths, prejudices, and stereotypes regarding the consumption of toxic substances

5.8. Healthy choices and addiction prevention

5.9. Legislation regarding the sale, trafficking, and consumption of addictive toxic substances

5.10. Governmental and non-governmental structures involved in combating drug use

5.11. Access to information, counseling, and medical services for youth abusing addictive behaviors and harmful substances

**METHODOLOGICAL SUGGESTIONS**

**1.DOMAIN: WELL-BEING**

Emotional, social, and physical health are essential for both school-based learning and for personal, professional, and social life. These aspects can only develop in a learning environment that provides safety, care, attention, support, and meaning—which will help and teach students to develop relationships based on mutual respect. Through the implementation of this curriculum, students will practice health maintenance strategies at the personal, family, and community levels. They will also develop planning and decision-making skills regarding health and social relationships, which will prepare them for future stages of life. These skills will support them in identifying opportunities and building personal development plans

beyond school.

Practical activities and experiences will be offered, involving individual work, teamwork, small groups, or larger groups, based on the physical, emotional, and social resources available to the students. Learning within the context of this program will produce results if the activities are meaningful to the students' life experiences, progressive, enjoyable, and involve movement, real interaction, and active engagement.

The methods and techniques leading to the development of the specific competencies proposed by this optional course:

- Are practical, with intuitive support (drawings, collages, worksheets);
- Presuppose active involvement and the concrete use of simple, readily available materials (e.g., packaging, everyday objects, sanitary items, kitchen products, textiles, etc.);
- Focus on practicing positive behaviors in students' lives, learning in a safe environment based on non-discrimination and positive feedback;
- Involve the use of art-creative and/or movement-based methods to allow for the creative utilization of students' prior skills;
- Involve a balanced use of explanation and presentation, especially when introducing new concepts or reinforcing ideas;
- Involve the use of ICT, where possible, for viewing film segments, creating short mobile videos, or drafting Word documents (e.g., recipes, relaxation exercises, etc.);
- Emphasize group work, cooperation, mutual help and support, and counseling.

**Examples:**

* Ice-breaking exercises involving movement – these are recommended for use at the beginning of an activity to focus attention, or throughout the session to engage not just the mind but the whole body, reducing boredom and increasing activation.
* Brainstorming – can be used to identify personal opinions regarding a specific aspect and to capitalize on students' life experiences relevant to the field of health.
* Case study – involves analyzing a particular situation, whether real or hypothetical, in the field of health or related areas, with the aim of solving it. Through this method, learning is brought closer to real life, based on the premise that if learning situations integrate real-life scenarios, learning becomes more efficient. The method provides opportunities to observe, research, analyze, investigate, and draw conclusions starting from a realistic base.
* Problem-based learning (Problem-solving) – involves creating conflict situations related to health knowledge or practices and encouraging the discovery of new solutions by resolving the conflict between what is known and what is unknown. It involves investigation, exploration, hypothesis formulation, and the identification of various solutions.
* Role-play and simulation – can be used to transpose students into new situations and identify solutions within a safe environment under the teacher's supervision; they involve assuming a specific role,

triggering discussions, and creating a scenario focused on a current health issue at a personal, family, or community level. Through these, specific behaviors and emotions are experienced, and a specialized language is adopted. These can be performed in pairs, small groups, or through personal reflection exercises. In the larger class group, it is advisable for all participants to receive roles or tasks within the proposed dramatic play. This helps discover strategies for approaching various life situations; through this, behaviors can be learned, and practical information can be acquired, among other benefits.

- Cooperative Learning – involves organizing students into small groups (teamwork) to jointly solve a task on a given topic, develop health-related projects at the community level, share relevant personal experiences, and give or receive advice, ideas, and solutions to concrete problems.
- Gallery Walk – in this method, students are organized into micro-groups to work together on solving controversial issues. The results of their work are written on large sheets of paper, which are then displayed around the classroom to form a "gallery." One member of each team remains as a "guide" by their work, while the others act as "visitors" to the other groups' work; visitors can observe and ask for clarifications regarding the presented subject.
- Debate – consists of discussing a controversial issue to which people assign different values, interpretations, or arguments. Depending on the content, the student group can be divided into two teams: one in favor of the chosen topic and the other in opposition (pro and con debate); teams can ask questions, attempting to challenge the other side's statements with arguments, followed by a summary of conclusions.
- Art-creative activities – involve drawing, painting, or collage, performed individually or in teams. Example themes: healthy behaviors in the family, body anatomy, emotions, family relationships, parent-child relationships, childhood diseases, etc.
- Critical thinking techniques – can be applied in pro and con discussions on various health topics.
- Relaxation and mindfulness techniques – will be used for stress relief and to create a positive and optimistic attitude (meditation, autosuggestion), with a positive impact on personal, family, and community health.
- Meetings with specialists – from various fields of interest can provide contexts for receiving explanations and information from credible sources, as well as expert answers to questions or concerns regarding personal, family, or community health.
- Exhibitions and collections – involve analyzing the products of activities, evaluating the results of various individual or group tasks on health themes, and celebrating success.
- Creation of concrete products – involves student activities to develop items such as: a cookbook, a daily/weekly schedule, a handbook of advice for children/adolescents, etc.
- Explanation and presentation – methods used for introducing certain concepts or information, such as childhood diseases.
- Viewing films or film clips – used for information purposes, to illustrate ideas, and to generate discussions regarding concrete situations beyond the students' immediate lives.

**Competency assessment** will be carried out initially, at the beginning of the study of this discipline, as well

as throughout the activities and at the end of each thematic domain. It will combine traditional assessment methods with alternative ones, based on projects, portfolios, investigations, case studies, etc.

**The Assessment Portfolio** represents a useful tool for evaluating the activity carried out within this optional course, especially since it also carries a strong formative character. The portfolio is a collection of relevant resources focused on health learning. The portfolio will be built and evaluated based on clear, pre-established criteria, using specific quantitative and qualitative indicators.

It will include products from practical activities developed by students in class, resources resulting from their research, graphs, sketches, diagrams, self-assessment questionnaires, etc., all with a practical role useful in daily life.

**Examples:** healthy recipes, the repurposing of waste or old clothes to produce useful household items, self-assessment grids for healthy behaviors. As part of the final assessment, each student may be asked to present one piece from their portfolio of their choice to their peers.

**2. DOMAIN: NUTRITIONAL HEALTH**

This optional course proposes an applicative approach and capitalizes on concrete situations and students' direct experiences related to nutrition and communion, as food represents a powerful social connector.

The general and specific competencies contain the essential benchmarks for designing the pedagogical approach, including aspects such as: responsibility, reason, balance, assuming a system of values, understanding the importance of gastronomy as a cultural heritage, choosing a healthy and balanced life, developing one's own physical and mental potential, responsible eating behavior, and awareness of the social dimension of nutrition. Based on these educational targets, teaching strategies appropriate to the students' age and knowledge level will be selected.

The examples of learning activities associated with the specific competencies are suggestions that may be adopted by the teacher as they are, or they may be developed, adapted, or replaced with more suitable learning situations and experiences that lead to achieving the proposed educational goals. It is important that the choice of activities serves as a context for consultation between student and teacher, thereby stimulating interest in participation and learning.

To configure projects for students, depending on the local context and the students' life experiences, various activities can be used:

⇒ Creating lists of personal food options/needs, or those of a group of friends or family, within a specific context; for example: how to organize a party/anniversary; eating for high-performance sports to ensure adequate nutrition for physical and mental effort; how to prepare a meeting with people from a different culture, etc.

⇒ Drafting realistic budgets in accordance with the proposed dietary needs and contexts;

⇒ Preparing a culinary recipe, whether new or traditional: cooking, preparation, serving, and discussions regarding the participants' perceptions (Is it a new culinary experience? Is it a traditional family-favorite recipe or one recovered from grandparents? What are the most intense perceptions for each person—color, smell, taste? etc.);

⇒ Organizing culinary celebrations specific to the local community or various cultural regions of Romania, Europe, or the entire world;
⇒ Ingredient recognition activities for a specific dish and describing personal experiences so that students can communicate their perceptions and feelings to their peers;
⇒ Recognizing the tastes of "yesteryear", starting from the herbs and spices used for sweet or savory dishes, etc.;
⇒ Gastronomic creativity experiences, where student "chefs" are given only two or three available ingredients;
⇒ Conducting culinary experiments using modern and traditional techniques and tools to discuss perceived differences in taste (Are there significant differences? Does the food have the same flavor? etc.);
⇒ Meetings with professional chefs;
⇒ Viewing presentation films on topics such as recipe creation, ingredient production, or modern vs. traditional kitchen technologies;
⇒ Creating a thematic newsletter based on research regarding thematic museums (dedicated to gastronomy, spices, chocolate, sugar, coffee) or ethnographic museums, etc.;
⇒ Group discussions based on opinions and choices regarding the role of food in defining a healthy and balanced lifestyle.

**Assessment** within this integrated optional course aims to:

- Validate the formation of specific competencies within a learning activity;
- Quantify learning in relation to an assessment grid of learning achievements (competency formation);
- Stimulate or create new needs for knowledge;
- Consolidate the student's reflective experiences through the constant use of feedback, self-assessment, and peer assessment.

The teacher may choose a variety of assessment methods and tools, appropriate to the purpose of the evaluation, specific to the competencies and learning activities proposed, and suitable for the students' group. It is essential that the assessment methods align with a collaborative learning approach involving multiple perspectives, project-based learning, and problem-solving, so that the student gains the benchmarks and reflective experiences necessary to make healthy life choices in the future.

**3. DOMAIN: MOVEMENT FOR WELL-BEING**

The activities proposed in this integrated optional course are recommended to be approached as an invitation for each student to discover their own rhythm, their own physical abilities, and their personal resources that can be activated and utilized for a better understanding of self and the world.

The optional course provides the formative educational support for students to express themselves as they feel, in an authentic rhythm and within a safe space, free from critical evaluations. This allows them to overcome fears and rigidity, embrace spontaneity, gain more self-confidence, relax, and communicate more easily with one another.

**The learning space** will be organized in a way that facilitates movement and the active, dynamic

involvement of students, ensuring visibility for all participants. Depending on the chosen themes and activities, the class may take place in a specifically arranged classroom (with modular furniture arranged in a circle) or in a performance space or arena, with access to the Internet and audio-video equipment. Furthermore, depending on the targeted specific competencies and the themes addressed, it is recommended to organize activities in spaces other than the classroom to allow for varied ways of exploration and expression through body movement and to support a connection with the world.

The proposed activities promote the following core messages: The joy of harmonious movement belongs to everyone, not just the talented or artists; Movement is for everyone; Movement does good; Movement is integrative; It is an important tool for communication, knowledge, and for creating and maintaining well-being.

**Educational contexts**—whether formal or non-formal, in school or within the community, face-to-face, online, or hybrid, synchronous or asynchronous—will be supported by diverse means: from didactic resources specific to physical education and sports, to objects from nature, toys, musical instruments, worksheets, art materials (brushes, watercolors, colored pencils), books on the theme of movement, as well as IT equipment and online resources (websites, mobile phones, tablets or computers, various applications for creating interactive films/games on movement themes, and audio-video equipment for viewing film/dance/ballet sequences, etc.). The proposed activities can be organized both in face-to-face contexts and in the online environment.

**Assessment** will consider individual, pair, team, or whole-class activities and will target products such as: skits, dances, projects, essays, compositions, poems, songs, posters, collages, etc., on the theme of movement as a way of personal knowledge and expression, connecting with others, understanding the world and life, ensuring well-being, and implementing a healthy lifestyle. The products created can be used for reflection and for drawing conclusions regarding the activities carried out.

**4. DOMAIN: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**

The environment is assigned a symbolic significance because it provides information about the history of a territory and the people who inhabit it, regardless of its current value or condition, and represents a legacy for the future. Approaching the environment within learning activities starting at a young age involves preparing students to carefully observe their surroundings and recognize the transformations it may undergo in daily life. Stimulating students' curiosity toward the environment and their capacity for reflection are key strengths that can help ground the educational path at the middle school level through:

- Ways to develop observation and critical thinking regarding the environment: describing and analyzing the environment through adapted methods; recording/collecting data using mapping tools; observing the environment as a social need;
- Ways to raise awareness and stimulate student interest in their surroundings, from the perspective of sustainable development;
- Understanding natural and anthropic characteristics of the environment, starting from basic elements and fostering collaboration between various study disciplines to deepen environmental knowledge.

Drawing upon knowledge from various school subjects, the organization of the teaching process involves:

- A subjective dimension: selecting activities and resources to form each person's ability to "see" and process what they observe.
- An objective dimension: analyzing elements from a scientific and objective point of view (complexity, diversity, homogeneity):

- Abiotic analysis;
- Biotic analysis;
- Anthropic analysis;
- Analysis from an ecological perspective, focusing on the laws of nature, natural hazards, etc.

The subject matters provides significant flexibility, allowing learning activities to support students' interests in observation, reflection, and reaction through *in situ*, interactive, and collaborative learning situations.

It is recommended to use methods based on field investigation, problem-solving, case studies, and promotional projects, following these steps:

♦ Exploration – perception and analysis;
♦ Investigation – observation, analysis, interpretation;
♦ Intervention – analysis, interpretation, conclusions;
♦ Promotion – analysis, interpretation, forecasting, conservation/prevention.

Their role consists of effectively involving students in decision-making regarding the organization and implementation of activities and in the appreciation/assessment of their own work. The following may be utilized:

✦ Cartographic educational tools (maps, aerial images, photographs, etc.);
✦ Observation and visual knowledge methods (the cognitive process of data processing starting from observation);
✦ Reading and analysis of the environment (understanding the landscape following objective scientific analysis from various perspectives—natural, anthropic, historical, ecological);

Strategies for highlighting environmental value (reflective activities/exercises for: identifying the main qualities of the landscape; understanding environmental fragility; focusing attention on the need for environmental protection and the rehabilitation of degraded areas; focusing attention on recognizing the dynamics and evolutionary processes that modify the environment).

Learning activities aim to create opportunities where students learn concrete information about the relationships between people and their living environment and about their initiatives, while encouraging them to ask questions, seek explanations, and express opinions on the topics discussed.

The purpose of these activities is to help students understand what the natural environment entails and to identify their role, and that of other community members, in preserving a common good that holds value for everyone.

In the perspective of a competency-centered educational approach, the predominant use of continuous, formative assessment is recommended. Alongside classic assessment forms and instruments, we recommend using complementary methods and tools, such as: projects, portfolios, self-assessment, peer assessment, and the systematic observation of students' activities and behavior.

**5. DOMAIN: ABUSE OF ADDICTIVE BEHAVIORS AND TOXIC SUBSTANCES**

Teaching about addictive behaviors, especially in the school environment, requires a delicate approach based on scientific evidence and adapted to age, with an emphasis on prevention, understanding the mechanisms of addiction, and developing life skills.

Below are several methodological suggestions based on recent intervention guidelines:

**1.** Differentiated Approach by Age and Development Levels

- Preschoolers and young schoolchildren: Focus is placed on health education, emotion management, self-esteem development, and recognizing healthy habits.
- Adolescents: Emphasis is placed on critical thinking, resistance to peer pressure, understanding long-term consequences, and alternatives for spending leisure time.

**2.** Active and Participatory Pedagogical Strategies

- Guided Group Discussions: Organizing debates on topics related to risks, myths about drugs, or technology/gambling addiction.
- Case Studies and Role-Playing: Simulating situations where youth must refuse a substance or manage a risk-prone scenario.
- Projective Methods: Using drawings, films, or stories to discuss emotions and behaviors without direct labeling.

**3.** Fundamental Content to be Taught

- Mechanisms of Addiction: Explaining how substances or behaviors (gambling, internet) affect the brain (the reward system).
- Risk and Protection Factors: Identifying vulnerable situations (peer group, stress, curiosity) and protective factors (communication, hobbies).
- Non-chemical Addictions: Addressing behavioral addictions such as gambling, technology addiction, or eating disorders.

**4.** Family and Community Involvement (School-Family Partnership)

- Parental Education: Organizing workshops for parents regarding early signs of consumption and effective family communication methods.
- External Resources: Collaborating with specialists (psychologists, doctors) to provide accurate information and intervene when necessary.

**5.** Principles of Prevention and Intervention

- Avoiding Fear-Based Approaches: Presenting consequences must be realistic, not exaggerated, to avoid the "boomerang effect" (triggering curiosity).
- Non-stigmatizing Approach: Individuals with addictions should be seen as people in need of help, not as

criminals.

These suggestions are supported by intervention guides recently launched (2025) in Romania, designed to assist teaching staff in preventing addictive behaviors within the school environment.

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# PART II

# The practical and theoretical guide

# I care… for my TOMORROW

# Chapter I
# WELL-BEING

## 1.1 Components of Well-Being

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

What Is Well-Being?

When people ask “How are you?” we often answer with just one word: “Fine” or “Good.” But being truly well — the Greek expression “EU ZIN” means literally “living well” — is much bigger than just not being sick. Well-being is a state in which your body, your mind, and your relationships with other people are all working well together, allowing you to feel good, function well, and handle the normal challenges of daily life.

Well-being is not a fixed point you reach once and keep forever. It changes from day to day and is influenced by your habits, your environment, the people around you, and how you respond to the challenges life brings. This means that well-being is something you can actively build through the choices you make — it is not just luck or chance.

**The three Connected Components**

Health and education experts usually describe well-being as having three closely connected components. Understanding them helps you notice which parts of your life might need more attention.

**1. Physical Well-Being**

This is the part most people think of first: having a healthy, energetic body that is free from illness or injury. It depends on good nutrition, regular physical activity, sufficient sleep, personal hygiene, and avoiding harmful substances. Physical well-being is the foundation that supports everything else — when your body feels good, it is much easier to think clearly and connect with others

**2. Mental and Emotional Well-Being**

This component is about your inner world — how you think, feel, and cope. It includes recognizing and managing emotions (both pleasant ones like joy and difficult ones like anger or sadness), having a healthy self-image, being able to concentrate and learn, and bouncing back after disappointments or setbacks (a skill called resilience). Mental and emotional well-being does not mean feeling happy all the time — it means being able to handle the full range of human emotions in a healthy way.

**3. Social Well-Being**

Human beings are social creatures, and the quality of our relationships strongly affects how well we feel. Social well-being includes having supportive friendships and family relationships, feeling like you belong to a group or community, being able to communicate and resolve conflicts, and contributing positively to people around you.

**How the three Components Interact**

These three components do not exist in separate boxes — they constantly influence one another.

A change in one area often creates a ripple effect in the others. Consider these everyday examples:

- Poor sleep (physical) can make you feel irritable and less patient (emotional), which can lead to arguments with friends or family (social).
- Feeling left out by classmates (social) can lower your mood and motivation (emotional), which might make you skip exercise or eat poorly (physical).
- Regular physical activity (physical) often improves mood and reduces stress (emotional) and can also be a great way to make friends through teams or clubs (social).

Because of these connections, taking care of your overall well-being means paying attention to all three areas — not just the one that seems most urgent at the moment.

**Why this matters for you, right now**

Adolescence (roughly ages 10–19) is a period of major physical, emotional, and social change. Your body is growing and changing, your brain is developing new ways of thinking and managing emotions, and your social world — friendships, identity, independence — is becoming more complex. This makes the teenage years an especially important time to learn about well-being and to start building habits that will support you not just in school, but throughout your whole life.

**A Closer look: the Well-Being triangle**

A simple way to picture these three components is as a triangle, with physical, emotional, and social well-being forming the three corners. If one corner is much weaker than the others, the whole triangle becomes unbalanced — it can still stand, but it is less stable. The goal is not to be "perfect" in every corner all the time, but to notice when one area needs more attention and to take small, realistic steps to support it.

It also helps to remember that well-being looks different for everyone. Two people can both be "doing well" in very different ways — one person might recharge through quiet time alone, while another feels their best surrounded by friends. There is no single "correct" way to be well; what matters is finding the balance that works for you.

## ***PART B: Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)***

**Topic:** Components of Well-Being

**Duration:** 40–45 minutes

**Class:** Secondary School

**Objective:** Students will be able to:

(1) define well-being and name its three components;

(2) give real-life examples of how the components interact;

(3) identify one personal strength and one area for growth in their own well-being.

**Lesson Flow**

**Warm-up (5 min):** Ask: "What does it mean to feel truly well — not just healthy?" Collect 3–4 quick ideas from the class on the board.

**Direct teaching (10 min):** Introduce the three components of well-being (physical, mental/emotional,

social) using the reading. Sketch the well-being triangle on the board.

**Guided discussion (10 min):** Use the interaction examples (sleep → mood → friendships) to show how the three components connect. Ask students for one more example from their own life.

**Activities (15 min):** Students complete the My Well-Being Triangle worksheet individually, then share with a partner. Short scenarios are presented featuring teenagers dealing with issues such as sleep, anxiety, relationships or a lack of exercise, and the groups identify which aspect of wellbeing is affected.

**Reflection and closure (5min):** Quick round: each student says one word describing their current well-being and why.

**Activity 1 — My Well-Being Triangle**

Draw a triangle with three sides labeled "Physical," "Emotional," and "Social." For each side, write down your thoughts.

1. Write two things you currently do well for each side of the triangle.
2. Choose ONE area you would like to improve this month.
3. Write one small, realistic action you will take to improve it.

**Activity 2 — Spot the Connection**

Working in pairs, read each short scenario below and decide which two components of well-being are connected, and explain how.

- A student stays up late playing video games every night and starts falling asleep in class.
- A student joins the school basketball team and makes three new friends.
- A student has an argument with their best friend and stops wanting to eat lunch.

**Activity 3 — Quick Self-Check**

Rate each area of your own well-being this week from 1 (needs a lot of attention) to 5 (going really well). There are no wrong answers — this is just for your own reflection.

- Physical well-being (sleep, food, movement, hygiene): ____ / 5
- Emotional well-being (mood, stress, self-confidence): ____ / 5
- Social well-being (friendships, family, belonging): ____ / 5

In one or two sentences, explain why you gave your lowest score the rating you did, and name one small thing that might help.

**Activity 4 — Class Closing Circle**

To close the lesson, sit in a circle (or stay at your desks) and go around the room. Each student completes one of the following sentence starters out loud (their choice):

- "One thing I learned about well-being today is…"
- "One small thing I can do this week for my well-being is…"
- "I think my well-being triangle is strongest in… because…"

**Teacher Note**

- For larger classes, Activity 2 can be run as a quick whole-class discussion instead of pair work.
- Activity 3 works well as a private journal entry — students do not need to share their scores unless

they want to.

- Encourage students to keep their completed triangle from Activity 1 — it can be revisited at the end of the WELL BEING unit to track changes in self-awareness.

**Key Vocabulary**

- Well-being – an overall state of feeling good and functioning well in body, mind, and relationships.
- Resilience – the ability to recover and adapt after a difficulty or setback.
- Self-image – the way you see and think about yourself.

## 1.2 Physical Well-Being: Health and disease

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

**What Does "Health" Really Mean?**

Many people think "health" simply means "not being sick." But the World Health Organization defines health more broadly: it is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being — not merely the absence of disease. This means that a person can be free of any illness and still not be fully healthy, if they are constantly stressed, exhausted, or isolated. Likewise, someone managing a chronic condition can still experience strong overall health and well-being.

Physical health specifically refers to the proper functioning of your body — your heart, lungs, muscles, bones, immune system, and all other organs working together as they should, giving you energy and resilience for daily life.

**What Is Disease?**

A disease is any disruption of the body's normal structure or function. Diseases are generally grouped into two broad categories:

- Communicable (infectious) diseases – caused by microorganisms such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, or parasites, and capable of spreading from person to person, animal to person, or through contaminated food, water, or surfaces.
- Non-communicable diseases – not spread between people; caused by factors such as genetics, lifestyle (diet, inactivity, smoking), environmental exposure, or aging. Examples include asthma, diabetes, and many heart conditions.

Some non-communicable conditions develop slowly over years and are strongly linked to daily habits, which is why the choices you make now — even as a teenager — can affect your health decades later.

**How the Body Defends Itself**

Your body is remarkably good at protecting itself from disease, using several layers of defense:

- Physical barriers – skin, mucus, and tiny hairs in the nose trap germs before they enter the body.
- The immune system – white blood cells and antibodies recognize and destroy harmful invaders.
- Fever and inflammation – the body's responses that help fight infection and signal something is wrong.

These natural defenses work best when they are well supported — through good nutrition, enough sleep,

regular movement, and low chronic stress. A weakened immune system (from poor sleep, poor diet, or constant stress) makes it easier for disease to take hold.

**The difference between symptoms and causes**

A symptom is a sign that something is wrong (for example, a cough, fever, or fatigue). The cause is the underlying reason the symptom is happening (for example, a virus, an allergy, or a lack of sleep). Understanding this difference matters: treating only the symptom (e.g., taking medicine for a cough) without addressing the cause may provide short-term relief but will not solve the underlying problem.

**Prevention is more powerful than treatment**

Preventing disease is almost always easier, cheaper, and less stressful than treating it after it occurs. Everyday prevention habits include eating a balanced diet, staying physically active, sleeping enough, practicing good hygiene, avoiding harmful substances, and getting recommended medical checkups and vaccinations. Building these habits during adolescence sets a pattern that tends to continue into adulthood.

**Risk factors you can and can not control**

Not all causes of disease are within our control, and it helps to understand the difference so you can focus your energy where it matters most.

- Factors you cannot control – your genetics, your age, and some environmental conditions (such as air pollution in your area).
- Factors you can influence – your diet, how much you move, how much you sleep, your stress levels, your hygiene habits, and whether you use tobacco, alcohol, or other harmful substances.

Even when a risk factor cannot be fully eliminated (such as a family history of a certain illness), healthy habits can often reduce the overall risk or delay the onset of a condition.

**Acute vs. chronic conditions**

Diseases can also be described by how long they last. An acute illness comes on quickly and is usually short-lived (such as a cold or a stomach bug), while a chronic condition develops over a longer period and may last months, years, or a lifetime (such as asthma or diabetes). Many chronic conditions can be well managed with proper treatment and lifestyle adjustments, allowing people to maintain a high quality of life.

## ***PART B: Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)***

**Topic:** Physical Well-Being: Health and disease

**Duration:** 40–45 minutes

**Class:** Secondary School

**Objective:** Students will be able to:

(1)explain health as more than “not being sick”;

(2)distinguish communicable from non-communicable disease;

(3)describe at least two ways the body defends itself;

(4) identify personal prevention habits.

**Lesson Flow**

**Warm-up (5 min):** Ask students to write down their own one-sentence definition of "health" before reading. Compare answers afterward to the WHO definition.

**Direct teaching (10 min):** Present communicable vs. non-communicable disease using the reading. Give 2–3 examples of each from the board.

**Guided discussion (10 min):** Discuss the body's natural defenses and what weakens them (poor sleep, poor diet, stress). Connect to students' own routines.

**Activities (15 min):** Students complete the Disease Sorting Chart in pairs. The teacher presents statements relating to health and illness, and the pupils identify symptoms and causes, providing evidence to support their answer.

**Reflection and closure (5min):** Ask 2–3 students to share one prevention habit they already practice.

**Activity 1: Disease Sorting Chart**

Sort the following conditions into "Communicable" or "Non-communicable," then briefly explain your reasoning for two of them: common cold, type 2 diabetes, chickenpox, asthma, food poisoning, seasonal allergies.

**Activity 2: Symptom or Cause?**

For each example below, identify what is the symptom and what is the likely cause.

- A student has a sore throat and fever after sitting next to a sick classmate all week.
- A student feels constantly tired and has trouble concentrating after several weeks of sleeping only 5 hours a night.

**Activity 3: My Prevention Checklist**

Create a personal prevention checklist with at least five habits you already do (or could start doing) to protect your health. Use the categories below as a guide.

- Nutrition: _____
- Physical activity: _____
- Sleep: _____
- Hygiene: _____
- Medical care (checkups, vaccines): _____

**Teacher Note**

- Activity 1 can be extended by asking students to suggest one prevention method specific to each disease listed.
- For Activity 2, emphasize that treating only a symptom (e.g., painkillers) without addressing causes is sometimes necessary short-term, but should not replace looking at the root cause.
- Activity 4 reinforces that while some risk factors cannot be changed, focusing energy on controllable habits still meaningfully reduces overall risk.

## 1.3 Hygiene rules for maintaining physical Well-Being

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

**What is personal hygiene?**

Personal hygiene refers to the daily practices we use to keep our bodies clean, healthy, and free from harmful germs. While hygiene habits can feel routine or even boring, they are one of the most powerful and low-cost tools we have for protecting our health — far more effective, in many cases, than medicine taken after becoming ill.

Good hygiene does more than prevent illness. It also affects how comfortable you feel in your own body, how you are perceived by others, and your overall confidence and well-being.

**Hand hygiene: the single most important habit**

Hands come into contact with countless surfaces every day — door handles, phones, money, shared school supplies — and easily pick up germs that can then be transferred to your eyes, nose, mouth, or food. Washing your hands properly is considered one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of illness.

- Wash with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (about the time it takes to hum a short song twice).
- Always wash before eating, after using the toilet, after coughing or sneezing, and after touching animals.
- If soap and water are not available, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer is a reasonable temporary substitute.

**Daily body and oral hygiene**

During adolescence, the body's sweat and oil glands become more active, making daily hygiene even more important than in childhood. Key habits include:

- Showering or bathing daily, especially after physical activity or sports.
- Using deodorant or antiperspirant as needed.
- Brushing teeth at least twice a day and flossing regularly to prevent cavities and gum disease.
- Washing your face daily to help manage oil and reduce the risk of acne.

**Hygiene of clothing and personal items**

Bacteria and fungi thrive in damp or dirty fabric, so clean clothing matters as much as a clean body.

- Change socks and underwear daily.
- Wash gym clothes and towels regularly — do not reuse sweaty clothing without washing.
- Avoid sharing personal items like combs, towels, razors, or water bottles, which can spread bacteria, fungi, or viruses between people.

**Respiratory hygiene**

Coughs and sneezes can launch tiny droplets containing viruses or bacteria into the air or onto nearby surfaces. Covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or your elbow (not your bare hand) — and washing your hands afterward — significantly reduces the spread of respiratory illnesses to classmates, family, and friends.

**Hygiene is a habit, not a one-time task**

The protective power of hygiene comes from consistency. Washing your hands once a week,

**What happens when hygiene habits slip**

Skipping hygiene habits — even occasionally — can have noticeable effects. Skin and scalp can become oily or irritated, body odor can increase, the risk of cavities and gum problems rises, and the chance of catching or spreading colds and other infections goes up. These effects are usually temporary and reversible once good habits resume, which is an encouraging reminder that it is never too late to restart a routine.

It is also worth remembering that hygiene needs can change — during illness, after intense exercise, or during puberty, your body may need more frequent washing or different products than before. Paying attention to your own body's signals, rather than following a fixed routine forever, is part of taking responsibility for your own health.

## ***PART B: Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)***

**Topic: Hygiene rules for maintaining physical Well-Being**

**Duration:** 40–45 minutes

**Class:** Secondary School

**Objective:** Students will be able to:

(1) list the key daily personal hygiene habits;

(2) explain why hand hygiene is especially important;

(3) identify items that should not be shared;

(4) build a personal hygiene routine.

**Lesson Flow**

**Warm-up (5 min):** Ask: "What hygiene habits do you already do every day, without even thinking about it?" Collect quick answers.

**Direct teaching (10 min):** Present the key hygiene categories (hand, body, oral, clothing, respiratory) from the reading.

**Guided discussion (10 min):** Demonstrate or describe proper 20-second hand-washing technique. Discuss why some items should never be shared.

**Activities (15 min):** Students complete the Daily Hygiene Routine worksheet.

**Reflection and closure (5min):** Quick round: each student names one hygiene habit they will improve this week.

**Activity 1 — Build my daily hygiene routine**

Fill in the hygiene habits you will commit to for morning, after PE/sports, and before bed.

- Morning routine: _____
- After physical activity: _____
- Evening / before bed: _____

**Activity 2 — Share or Don't Share?**

Decide whether each item below is safe to share with friends or family, and explain your reasoning.

- Hairbrush or comb
- Water bottle
- Towel
- Backpack
- Razor

**Activity 3 — 20-Second Challenge**

In pairs, time how long it actually takes to wash hands thoroughly while humming a short tune twice. Compare with how long you usually spend washing your hands at home or school.

**Alternative activity: Hygiene Stations**

The class is divided into small groups which move through stations featuring short activities on hand washing, dental care, keeping the classroom tidy and the correct use of personal items. Using simple materials, pictures and instruction cards, the pupils practise these skills hands-on.

The students watch a brief demonstration and then practice in pairs, following an instruction card on proper handwashing. Using soap, water, and paper towels, they reinforce daily self-care skills, and the teacher assesses their progress using a brief checklist.

**Activity 4 — Hygiene Habit Tracker**

Track five key hygiene habits for one week using the table below. Mark a checkmark for each day completed.

| Habit | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat | Sun |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |

**Teacher note**

Activity 2 works well as a quick true/false style discussion to keep energy up.

If possible, demonstrate hand-washing technique live for activity 3 using a sink, or describe each step aloud while students mime the actions at their desks.

Consider printing the hygiene tracker from activity 4 as a take-home sheet for the following week.

## 1.4 The role of personal hygiene in preventing communicable diseases. Vaccinations and their importance

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

**How communicable diseases spread**

Communicable (infectious) diseases are caused by microorganisms — bacteria, viruses, fungi, or parasites — that can pass from one living thing to another. Understanding how they spread is the first step to preventing them. Common routes of transmission include:

- Direct contact – touching an infected person, their bodily fluids, or skin.
- Indirect contact – touching contaminated surfaces or shared objects (doorknobs, desks, phones).
- Airborne droplets – released through coughing, sneezing, or talking.
- Contaminated food or water – swallowing germs present in something you eat or drink.

**Hygiene as the first line of defense**

Most communicable diseases require a germ to travel from one host to another through one of the routes above. Personal hygiene works by breaking this chain of transmission at key points — removing germs from hands before they reach the mouth, eyes, or food; reducing the droplets released by coughing or sneezing; and avoiding the sharing of items that could carry germs from one person to another. This is why simple, low-cost habits like hand-washing are described by health organizations as among the most effective tools available for reducing the global spread of infectious disease — sometimes more effective than expensive medical interventions.

**What is a vaccine?**

A vaccine contains a weakened, inactivated, or partial form of a germ (or instructions for the body to build a harmless piece of it). When introduced into the body, it trains your immune system to recognize that specific germ and produce antibodies against it — without causing the actual disease. If you are later exposed to the real germ, your immune system already "remembers" it and can respond quickly, often preventing illness entirely or making it much milder.

**Why vaccination matters for everyone**

Vaccination protects the vaccinated person directly, but its benefits go further. When a large proportion of a population is vaccinated against a disease, it becomes much harder for that disease to spread, even to people who cannot be vaccinated themselves (such as newborns or people with certain medical conditions). This protective effect is called community immunity, or herd immunity.

- Vaccines have dramatically reduced or eliminated diseases that once caused widespread illness and death, such as smallpox and, in many regions, measles outbreaks.
- Most childhood and adolescent vaccines are given according to a recommended schedule developed by health authorities, based on extensive safety research.

**Hygiene and vaccination work together**

Hygiene and vaccination are not competing strategies — they are complementary layers of protection. Hygiene reduces the chance that a germ ever reaches you in the first place, while vaccination prepares your

immune system to fight off specific germs quickly if exposure does occur. Relying on only one of these strategies leaves gaps; using both together provides much stronger protection for you and the people around you.

**Common myths and facts**

- Myth: “If I'm healthy, I don't need to worry about hygiene or vaccines.” Fact: Even healthy people can carry and spread germs to others who are more vulnerable.
- Myth: “Vaccines give you the full disease.” Fact: Vaccines use weakened, inactivated, or partial components — they train the immune system without causing the actual illness.

## ***PART B: Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)***

**Topic:** The role of personal hygiene in preventing communicable diseases; vaccinations and their importance
**Duration:** 40–45 minutes
**Class:** Secondary School
**Objective:** Students will be able to:
(1)describe how communicable diseases spread;
(2)explain how hygiene interrupts disease transmission;
(3)explain in simple terms how vaccines work;
(4)identify why community immunity matters.

**Lesson Flow**

**Warm-up (3 min) Brainstorming: How are germs spread?**

Working in groups, pupils list daily habits that help or hinder the prevention of infectious diseases and categorise them as good or bad practices. They will need a roll of paper or a digital whiteboard; the teacher assesses their initial understanding from their answers and supports the pupils with examples or word puzzles where necessary.

**Demonstration (5 min):** Mist a water spray bottle into the air near a flashlight beam to show how far invisible respiratory droplets travel when someone sneezes.

Glitter experiment: The spread of microbes

With a little glitter or colored powder on one hand, pupils observe how the ‘contamination’ is transferred to objects and classmates through simple handshakes and physical contact. Materials: glitter, paper tissues, soap; the activity reinforces understanding of transmission, and assessment takes the form of a brief oral reflective discussion.

**Explanation (5 min)**

Teach the main ways diseases spread and how hygiene reduces risk.

**Direct teaching: Vaccination discussion (5 min)**

Explain what vaccines do and why they are important for individuals and communities.

**Activities (22 min):** Students read a case study and suggest measures. They create a mini-poster with rules

for preventing disease spread.

**Reflection and closure (5min):** Ask students to name one myth about vaccines they have heard, and correct it together as a class.

**Activity 1: Case study "An illness in the classroom"**

Pupils read a short scenario in which there are many cases of a virus and suggest preventive measures and responsible behavior. A printed worksheet or a projection on the board is required; the teacher assesses the students' reasoning and provides support through guiding questions for those who are struggling.

**Activity 2: A prevention poster for the school**

Each group creates a poster setting out the basic rules of personal hygiene and ways to protect against infectious diseases, to be displayed in the classroom or corridor. Cardboard and felt-tip pens or a digital presentation tool are required; differentiation can be achieved using ready-made templates, and assessment focuses on the accuracy of the messages.

**Activity 3: Myth or Fact? About vaccines**

The teacher hands out cards with statements relating to vaccines, and the groups decide whether they are myths or scientifically substantiated information, giving reasons for their choice.

- "Vaccinated people can never get the disease they were vaccinated against."
- "Washing hands for a few seconds is just as effective as washing for 20 seconds."
- "Vaccinating most of a population helps protect even unvaccinated people."

**Activity 4 — Class Hygiene Pledge**

As a class, agree on three hygiene commitments everyone will try to follow this month (e.g., always covering coughs, washing hands before lunch). Write them below and sign your name.

| Commitment | Signed |
|---|---|
| | |
| | |

## 1.5 Common parasitoses in children; diseases transmitted by animals

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

**What is a parasite?**

A parasite is an organism that lives on or inside another living thing (called a host) and survives by taking nutrients from it, often causing harm in the process. Parasites can be microscopic, like some intestinal organisms, or visible to the naked eye, like head lice. Several parasitic conditions are especially common among school-age children because of close contact, shared spaces, and developing hygiene habits.

**Head lice (Pediculosis)**

Head lice are tiny insects that live on the scalp and feed on small amounts of blood. They spread through

direct head-to-head contact or, less commonly, through sharing items like combs, hats, or hairbrushes. Lice do not jump or fly — they crawl — so transmission requires close contact.

- Signs: persistent itching of the scalp, and visible lice or tiny white eggs (nits) attached to hair strands.
- Having head lice is extremely common and is not a sign of poor hygiene — anyone can get them.
- Treatment usually involves special shampoos or fine-toothed combing, and avoiding head-to-head contact and shared hair items until treated.

**Intestinal Worms (e.g., Pinworms)**

Pinworms are small worms that live in the intestines and are common in school-age children. Eggs are spread when a person scratches an itchy area and then touches food, surfaces, or other people without washing their hands — the eggs can then be swallowed by someone else, continuing the cycle.

- Signs: itching around the anal area, especially at night, and sometimes disturbed sleep.
- Prevention centers on hand-washing (especially after using the toilet and before eating) and keeping fingernails short and clean.

**Scabies**

Scabies is caused by tiny mites that burrow into the skin, causing intense itching and a rash, often between fingers, on wrists, or around the waist. It spreads through prolonged skin-to-skin contact, and occasionally through shared bedding or clothing. It is treated with prescription medication and typically requires treating close contacts as well to prevent reinfection.

**Diseases Transmitted by Animals (Zoonoses)**

A zoonosis is a disease that can pass from animals to humans. Some examples relevant to everyday life include:

- Rabies – transmitted through the bite or scratch of an infected animal (commonly dogs, bats, or wild animals); extremely serious but preventable with prompt medical care after exposure.
- Tick-borne diseases – such as Lyme disease, transmitted through the bite of an infected tick, often picked up in grassy or wooded areas.
- Mosquito-borne diseases – such as West Nile virus, transmitted through mosquito bites, particularly in warmer months.
- Toxoplasmosis and other infections – can be linked to contact with cat litter or undercooked meat.

**Reducing Your Risk**

- Avoid touching or approaching stray or unfamiliar animals, even if they seem friendly.
- Wash hands after playing with or feeding pets.
- Use insect repellent and wear long sleeves/pants when in tick- or mosquito-prone areas.
- Seek medical attention promptly after any animal bite or scratch, even if it seems minor.

## ***PART B: Lesson Plan***

**Topic: Common parasitosis in children; diseases transmitted by animals**

**Duration: 40–45 minutes**

**Class:** Secondary School

**Objective:** Students will be able to:

(1) describe common childhood parasitoses and how they spread;

(2) explain that having lice or worms is not a hygiene failure;

(3) identify at least three animal-transmitted diseases;

(4) list practical risk-reduction steps.

**Lesson Flow**

**Warm-up (5 min): Brainstorming: What do I already know?**

The pupils write down on small pieces of paper or on a shared board what they know about parasites, pets and diseases that can be transmitted by animals. The teacher organises the ideas into categories and identifies any misconceptions, so that formative assessment can take place right from the start of the lesso

**Guided discussion (10 min):** Present three separate objects: a clean tick tweezers tool, a cat litter scoop, and a hat. Ask students to guess how each object connects to a hidden biological threat. Discuss why some items should never be shared.

**Direct teaching (10 min):** Present head lice, pinworms, and scabies — how they spread and how they are prevented/ treated.

Introduce zoonoses (rabies, tick- and mosquito-borne diseases) and risk-reduction steps.

**Activities (15 min):** Students complete the Parasite Fact File in small groups. Role-play- the pupils perform short sketches. Working in groups, pupils sort cards containing statements such as ‘all animals spread disease’ or ‘washing your hands properly reduces the risk of infection’.

**Reflection and closure (5min):** Class discussion: why having lice or worms is not something to be embarrassed about.

**Activity 1 — Parasite Fact File**

In small groups, complete a short fact file for ONE of the following: head lice, pinworms, or scabies. Include: how it spreads, main symptom, and one prevention tip.

- Condition: _____
- How it spreads: _____
- Main symptom: _____
- Prevention tip: _____

**Activity 2: Instructions for my friend**

The pupils perform short sketches in which one pupil gives advice to another on how to behave safely around animals and practice good hygiene. Requiring few materials or just simple role-play cards, the activity is particularly helpful for pupils who learn best through speaking, and the teacher assesses their

performance using an observation checklist.

**Activity 3: Stigma Check**

Decide whether each statement is true or false, and discuss why stigma around parasites is unhelpful and inaccurate.

- "Only children with dirty hair get head lice." (False — lice prefer clean hair and spread through close contact regardless of hygiene.)
- "Anyone, regardless of hygiene habits, can get pinworms through accidental contact." (True.)
- "If a classmate has lice, they should be excluded from class activities." (False — treatment allows a quick return to normal activities.)

**Activity 4: Leaving the classroom: One thing I learnt**

At the end, each pupil writes down one new piece of information and one practical prevention tip that they will remember. This very brief activity requires nothing more than small pieces of paper and helps the teacher to check which key learning points have been mastered and which need to be revised.

Write one rule you will personally follow regarding each: stray animals, insect bites, and pet hygiene.

| Situation | My Rule |
|---|---|
| | |
| | |
| | |

**Teacher Note**

Approach activity 3 with sensitivity — some students may have personal experience with lice or worms; keep the tone factual and non-judgmental throughout.

Activity 1 fact files can be combined into a shared class reference poster.

## 1.6 The influence of fashion on student personal development: "Beauty standards" promoted in the media

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

**Fashion, Identity, and Self-Expression**

Fashion and personal style are normal and healthy ways for teenagers to express identity, creativity, and belonging to a group. Trying out different looks, following trends, or developing a personal style can be a positive part of growing up. Problems arise not from caring about appearance, but from feeling that your worth as a person depends entirely on matching a particular look.

**What Are "Beauty Standards"?**

Beauty standards are the ideas a society or culture holds about what bodies, faces, or styles are considered

most attractive. These standards are not fixed truths — they change across time periods and cultures, and are heavily shaped by media, advertising, and social platforms. What was considered the ideal body or face one generation ago often looks very different from today's media images. Because beauty standards are constructed by media and marketing rather than reflecting biological fact, they can be questioned, criticized, and resisted — they are not rules anyone is required to follow.

**Media Images: What you are really seeing**

Many images in advertising, magazines, and social media are not unedited reality. They often involve professional lighting and makeup, digital editing or filters that reshape bodies and skin, and careful selection of only the most flattering photo out of dozens taken. Comparing your own ordinary, everyday appearance to these curated, edited images is comparing two fundamentally different things — it is not a fair or accurate comparison.

- Ask yourself: was this image likely edited or filtered?
- Ask: who benefits from me feeling insecure about how I look? (Often, a company selling a product.)
- Remember: real bodies are diverse in shape, size, skin, and feature — diversity is normal, not a flaw.

**The Impact on Well-Being**

Repeated exposure to narrow, unrealistic beauty standards is linked to lower self-esteem, increased anxiety about appearance, and in some cases disordered eating or excessive focus on appearance-changing behaviors. Recognizing media messages critically — rather than absorbing them uncritically — is a protective skill that supports emotional well-being.

**Cosmetic Products and Services: What to Know**

Cosmetic products (creams, makeup, hair products) and services (manicures, pedicures, hair treatments) are common and can be used safely, but they do carry some risks worth understanding:

- Shared, unsterilized tools (nail clippers, files, foot baths) at salons can spread fungal infections, bacterial infections, or in rare cases bloodborne illnesses if tools are not properly disinfected between clients.
- Some cosmetic products contain ingredients that can cause allergic reactions or skin irritation, especially with first-time use.
- Certain treatments (strong chemical hair or skin treatments) may not be appropriate for younger or more sensitive skin.

**Making Safer Choices**

- Choose licensed, reputable providers who follow proper sanitation practices.
- Patch-test new products on a small area of skin before full use.
- Check ingredient lists, especially if you have known allergies or sensitivities.
- Avoid sharing personal beauty tools (razors, tweezers, makeup applicators) with others.

## ***PART B: Lesson Plan***

**Topic: The influence of fashion on student personal development: "Beauty standards" promoted in the media – a critical evaluation**

**Duration: 40–45 minutes**

**Class:** Secondary School

**Objective:** Students will be able to:

(1) explain that beauty standards are culturally constructed, not fixed truths;

(2) critically evaluate media images;

(3) identify physical risks linked to certain cosmetic practices;

(4) describe safer choices.

**Lesson Flow**

**Warm-up (5 min):** Display a side-by-side comparison of an unedited photo next to its heavily filtered social media version. Ask:

"What commercial goals drive these digital changes?"

"Have you ever seen a photo and later found out it was edited or filtered?"

**Direct teaching (10 min):** Present how beauty standards are culturally constructed and shaped by media, using examples across decades if possible.

**Guided discussion (10 min):** Use 2–3 pre-selected advertisements/posts for a media literacy walk-through (see Activity 1).

**Activities (15 min):** Students complete the Cosmetic Safety Case Studies in pairs.

**Reflection and closure (5min):** Round: each student shares one thing they will remember next time they compare themselves to a media image.

**Activity 1 — Media Literacy Walk-Through**

As a class, look at 2–3 advertisements or social media posts chosen by your teacher. For each, discuss:

1. Does the image look realistic, or could it be edited/ filtered?
2. What feeling is the image trying to create in the viewer?
3. Who benefits if you feel that way?

**Activity 2 — Cosmetic Safety Case Studies**

Read each scenario and decide if the practice is SAFE or RISKY, then explain why.

- A nail salon uses the same unsterilized tools on every customer without cleaning between clients.
- A student checks the ingredient label of a new face cream and tests it on their wrist before using it on their face.
- A teenager shares a mascara or lip balm tube with several friends throughout the day.

**Activity 3 — Reframe the Image**

Choose one unrealistic beauty message you have encountered (in an ad, show, or online). Write one sentence that reframes it with a more realistic, body-diverse perspective.

- Example: "Everyone needs flawless skin" → Reframe: "Skin texture and occasional blemishes are a

**Activity 4 — Safer Choices Checklist**

Create a personal checklist of safety habits for cosmetic product and service use.

| Habit | I will follow this |
|---|---|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

**Teacher Note**

Keep discussion focused on media literacy and physical safety rather than judging individual appearance choices — the goal is critical thinking, not appearance policing.

Be mindful that some students may have personal sensitivities around appearance; frame discussion around media and industry practices rather than individual students' looks.

Activity 1 works well with print magazines if available, in addition to or instead of digital examples.

## 1.7 Body needs during puberty and adolescence

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

**What Is Puberty?**

Puberty is the stage of development when the body changes from a child's body into an adult's body, capable of physical growth and reproduction. It is triggered by hormones — chemical messengers in the body — and typically occurs sometime between ages 8 and 16, though the exact timing varies widely and normally from person to person. There is no single “correct” age to start puberty. Starting earlier or later than friends or classmates is completely normal and is influenced by genetics, nutrition, and other individual factors.

**Physical Changes During Puberty**

Puberty brings noticeable changes for everyone, including a growth spurt (a period of rapid height and weight gain), changes in body shape and proportion, increased activity of sweat and oil glands (which is why hygiene needs increase), and the development of secondary sexual characteristics, which differ between people but generally include changes such as body hair growth, voice changes, and other physical developments related to reproductive maturity. These changes do not all happen at once or in the same order for everyone — the timeline and sequence is individual, and comparing your own timeline to others' is rarely useful or accurate.

**Increased Nutritional Needs**

The rapid growth of puberty requires extra fuel and building materials. During this period, the body has increased needs for:

- Energy (calories) – to support the growth spurt and increased activity.
- Protein – essential for building new muscle, tissue, and other growing structures.
- Calcium and vitamin D – critical for building strong bones, since much of adult bone density is established during adolescence.
- Iron – important for blood production, with increased needs especially relevant for menstruating individuals.

**Increased Sleep Needs**

Many important physical processes — including the release of growth hormone — happen primarily during deep sleep. Despite this, biological changes during puberty often shift the body's internal clock later, making teenagers naturally want to fall asleep later than younger children, even though they still need 8–10 hours of sleep per night. This mismatch between biological sleep needs and early school schedules is a common challenge during adolescence.

**Increased Hygiene Needs**

As sweat and oil glands become more active, daily showering, the use of deodorant, regular face washing, and clean clothing become more important than they may have been in childhood. These are normal, expected changes — not signs of anything being wrong.

**Physical Activity for Healthy Development**

Regular physical activity during adolescence supports healthy bone density, muscle development, cardiovascular fitness, and mood regulation. It is recommended that adolescents get at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity most days, through sports, active play, walking, or other movement.

**Emotional Adjustment to Physical Change**

Alongside physical changes, it is normal to experience a wide range of feelings — curiosity, self-consciousness, excitement, or occasional discomfort — about a changing body. These feelings are a normal part of adjusting to a new stage of life, and talking with a trusted adult, school counselor, or healthcare provider can help when questions or concerns arise.

## ***PART B: Lesson Plan***

**Topic: Body needs during puberty and adolescence**

**Duration: 40–45 minutes**

**Class:** Secondary School

**Objective:** Students will be able to:

(1) describe the main physical changes of puberty;

(2) explain why nutrition, sleep, hygiene, and activity needs increase during this stage;

(3) recognize that individual timing of puberty varies normally.

**Lesson Flow**

**Warm-up (5 min):** Ask: “What is one thing about growing up that you've noticed changes for teenagers in general?” Keep answers general, not personal.

**Direct teaching (15 min):** Present what puberty is and why timing varies normally between individuals. Cover increased needs: nutrition, sleep, hygiene, physical activity.

**Activities (20min):** Students complete the Body Needs Matching activity.

**Reflection and closure (5min):** Reinforce that puberty is normal and individual. Remind class that questions about personal changes can be directed to a trusted adult, school nurse, or counselor.

**Activity 1: Body Needs Matching**

Match each body need to the reason it increases during puberty.

- Calcium and vitamin D → reason: _____
- Extra sleep → reason: _____
- More frequent showering → reason: _____
- Iron → reason: _____

**Activity 2: Myth or Fact?**

Decide whether each statement is a myth or a fact.

- “Everyone starts puberty at exactly the same age.” (Myth)
- “Teenagers naturally tend to feel sleepy later at night due to biological changes.” (Fact)
- “Starting puberty earlier or later than friends means something is wrong.” (Myth)

**Activity 3: Build a Balanced Day**

List one example of how you could meet each increased need this week.

| Need | My Plan |
|---|---|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

**Activity 4: Who Can I Talk To?**

List two trusted adults or professionals you could talk to if you had a question or concern about physical changes during puberty.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____

**Activity 5: Healthy Habits Journal**

Students keep a brief journal for 3–5 days, recording their sleep, water intake, meals, physical activity, and rest times, without sharing any personally sensitive information. In this way, they connect theory with everyday life, and the teacher can assess their understanding through reflective questions or a brief reflection

## 1.8 Emotional and psychological well-being

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

**What Is Emotional Well-Being?**

Emotional well-being is the ability to recognize, understand, and manage your emotions in a healthy way — including both pleasant emotions like joy and excitement, and difficult ones like sadness, anger, or fear. It does not mean feeling happy all the time. In fact, experiencing the full range of human emotions, including difficult ones, is a normal and necessary part of life. Emotional well-being is about how you respond to and cope with those emotions, not about avoiding them altogether.

**All Emotions Have a Purpose**

Every emotion carries useful information. Fear can warn you of danger, anger can signal that a boundary has been crossed, sadness can signal loss and the need for support, and joy can reinforce positive experiences worth repeating. Learning to notice and name your emotions — rather than pushing them away or being overwhelmed by them — is a key skill called emotional awareness.

**Resilience: Bouncing Back from Setbacks**

Resilience is the ability to recover and adapt after facing a difficulty, disappointment, or setback. Resilient people are not people who never struggle — they are people who have developed effective ways of coping when things go wrong. Resilience can be built and strengthened over time, much like a muscle, through practice and support.

- Viewing setbacks as temporary and specific, rather than permanent and all-encompassing.
- Seeking support from trusted people rather than facing difficulties entirely alone.
- Focusing on what is within your control, rather than what isn't.

**Healthy Coping Strategies**

When facing stress or difficult emotions, some coping strategies are more helpful than others over the long term. Healthy strategies include:

- Talking to a trusted friend, family member, or counselor.
- Physical activity, which can reduce stress hormones and improve mood.
- Creative outlets such as drawing, music, or writing.
- Relaxation techniques such as deep breathing or mindfulness.
- Spending time in nature or with pets.

Less helpful strategies — such as avoiding the problem entirely, suppressing emotions, or turning to harmful substances — may provide short-term relief but tend to make problems worse over time.

**Self-Esteem and Self-Compassion**

Self-esteem refers to how you generally feel about your own worth and abilities. Healthy self-esteem does not mean believing you are perfect or better than others — it means having a realistic, generally positive view of yourself, including your strengths and areas for growth. Self-compassion — treating

yourself with the same kindness you would offer a good friend, especially during difficult times — is closely linked to emotional well-being and resilience.

**Building Supportive Relationships**

Strong, trusting relationships are one of the most protective factors for emotional well-being. This includes feeling comfortable asking for help when needed, being a supportive presence for others, and maintaining a small circle of people you can be genuinely honest with about how you're doing.

## ***PART B: Lesson Plan***

**Topic: Emotional and Psychological Well-Being**

**Duration: 40–45 minutes**

**Class:** Secondary School

**Objective:** Students will be able to:

(1)define emotional well-being and resilience;

(2)identify healthy vs. less helpful coping strategies;

(3)practice naming and reflecting on their own emotions;

(4)identify sources of support.

**Lesson Flow**

**Warm-up (3 min):** Ask students to silently think of one word describing how they feel right now. No sharing required unless they want to.

**Direct teaching (10 min):** Explain emotional and psychological well-being in simple terms.

**Emotion sorting task (5 min):** Students sort emotions into categories.

**Teaching coping strategies (8 min):** Present healthy ways to manage stress and emotions.

Breaths 4-4-4: The class practices guided breathing for a few minutes: inhale for 4 counts, hold for 4, exhale for 4. No special materials are required, just a quiet environment; the activity teaches self-regulation skills and can be accessed through a brief reflection before and after.

**Activities (15 min):** Scenario activity: Students suggest responses to school stress or friendship problems. Students complete the Emotion Detective worksheet individually.

**Reflection and Closure (4 min):** Remind students of support resources available at school (counselor, trusted teacher, etc.).

**Activity 1: Emotion Detective**

Think of a recent moment when you felt a strong emotion. Answer the following privately in your notebook (no need to share unless you choose to).

1. What emotion did you feel?
2. What do you think caused it?
3. What useful information might that emotion have been giving you?
4. How did you respond, and would you respond the same way again?

**Activity 2 — Coping Strategy Sort**

Sort the strategies below into "Helpful Long-Term" and "Less Helpful Long-Term," then add one of your own to each column.

- Talking to a friend about how you feel
- Going for a walk or run
- Ignoring the problem and hoping it goes away
- Drawing, writing, or playing music
- Bottling up feelings without telling anyone

**Activity 3: Roles and boundaries**

Working in small groups, pupils explore short scenarios, such as peer pressure or the violation of personal boundaries, and suggest healthy ways to respond. Scenario cards are required; the activity fosters empathy and social skills and is assessed on the basis of each group's verbal responses.

**Activity 4: My Resilience Toolbox**

- List three coping strategies you already use, or want to start using, when facing a difficult day.

**Activity 5: My Support Circle**

Write the names or roles of at least three people you could turn to if you were struggling emotionally.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

**Teacher Note**

Activity 1 should remain private/ optional to share — emphasize that the goal is self-reflection, not public disclosure.

If a student discloses a concerning emotional struggle during this lesson, follow your school's standard wellbeing referral procedure.

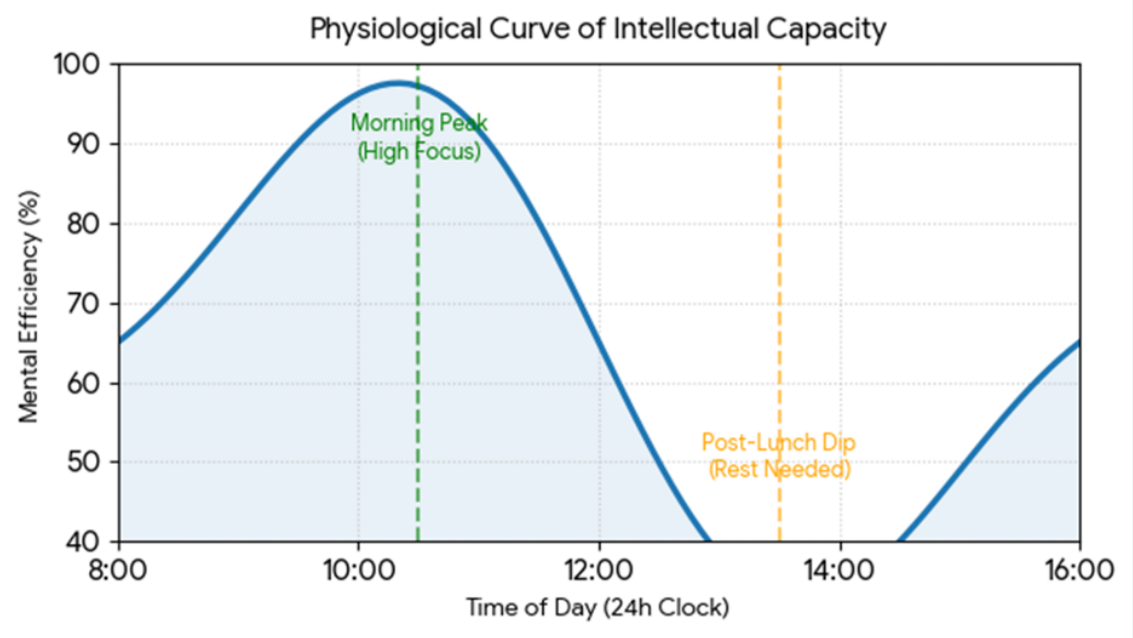
Activity 5 can be revisited later in the term as a quick check-in on whether students feel they have adequate support.

## 1.9 The Physiological curve of intellectual work capacity: The importance of alternating intellectual activity with physical activity and rest

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

**Your Brain's Energy Is Not Constant**

Have you ever noticed that you concentrate better at some times of day than others? This is not random — it reflects a real biological pattern called the physiological curve of intellectual work capacity. This curve describes how your ability to focus, process information, and perform mental tasks naturally rises and falls throughout the day, influenced by your body's internal clock (circadian rhythm), energy levels, and accumulated mental fatigue.




**The general shape of the curve**

While exact timing varies between individuals, research on attention and cognitive performance generally shows a recognizable pattern across a typical school day:

- Morning rise – concentration typically increases after waking and reaches a strong peak in the mid-to-late morning.
- Post-lunch dip – many people experience a noticeable drop in alertness and focus in the early afternoon, partly due to digestion and the body's natural rhythm.
- Late afternoon/early evening recovery – concentration often rises again for a period before declining as the day winds down.
- Evening/night decline – mental performance generally drops as the body prepares for sleep.

This pattern explains why challenging tasks often feel easier mid-morning than right after lunch — it is not a lack of effort or willpower, but a predictable biological rhythm.

**Why mental fatigue builds up**

Sustained concentration uses mental energy, much like physical exercise uses muscular energy. Without breaks, concentration gradually declines even within a single study session, a phenomenon sometimes called “mental fatigue” or “cognitive fatigue.” Working continuously for long periods without pause is often less productive than working in shorter, focused bursts with breaks in between.

**Why alternating activities helps**

Alternating mentally demanding work with physical activity and rest is one of the most effective ways to maintain attention and performance throughout the day, for several reasons:

- Physical activity increases blood flow and oxygen delivery to the brain, which can improve alertness.
- Short breaks allow temporary mental fatigue to recover before it accumulates into significant exhaustion.
- Switching task type (e.g., moving from reading to physical movement) gives overused mental processes a chance to rest while other systems are engaged.

## ***PART B: Lesson Plan***

**Topic: The Physiological curve of intellectual work capacity: The importance of alternating intellectual activity with physical activity and rest**

**Duration: 40–45 minutes**

**Class:** Secondary School

**Objective:** Students will be able to:

(1)describe the general shape of the physiological work-capacity curve;

(2)explain why mental fatigue builds up without breaks;

(3)apply this understanding to plan a more effective personal study schedule.

**Lesson Flow**

**Warm-up (5 min):** Ask: "At what time of day do you usually feel most focused? Least focused?" Quick poll by show of hands.

**Direct teaching (10 min):** Present the general shape of the physiological curve and why it occurs (circadian rhythm, fatigue, digestion).

**Guided discussion (10 min):** Discuss the Pomodoro-style break technique and why alternating activity types helps maintain focus.

**Activities (15 min):** Students sketch their own personal concentration curve and complete the study planning activity. Students plan an afternoon study block that alternates 25 minutes of focused learning with 5-minute active physical breaks (like stretching or walking) to keep their minds sharp.

**Reflection and closure (5min):** Ask 2–3 students to share one change they will try this week.

**Activity 1 — My Personal Concentration Curve**

On a simple graph (time of day on the horizontal axis, concentration level 1–10 on the vertical axis), sketch how focused you typically feel at different points in a school day: morning, late morning, after lunch, late afternoon, evening.

**Activity 2 — Plan Around Your Peak**

Using your personal curve from Activity 1, plan when you would ideally schedule the following tasks this week.

- Hardest homework subject: _____
- Easiest/most routine task: _____
- A short physical activity break: _____

**Activity 3 — Break vs. No-Break Experiment**

This week, try studying for 25 minutes with NO break one day, and 25 minutes WITH a 5-minute movement break the next day. Compare how focused you felt by the end of each session.

| Day / Method | How Focused I Felt (1–10) | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

**Activity 4 — Design a Better Study Block**

Design a 90-minute study block using alternating work and break periods. Include at least one physical movement break.

- 0–25 min: _____
- 25–30 min (break): _____
- 30–55 min: _____
- 55–60 min (break): _____
- 60–90 min: _____

**Teacher Note**

Activity 1 results will vary between students — there is no single correct curve shape, which is itself a useful teaching point about individual differences.

Activity 3 works well as a take-home experiment with results discussed briefly the following lesson.

Emphasize that breaks involving movement (not screens) tend to be more restorative for attention than passive screen-based breaks.

## 1.10 School fatigue: causes, consequences, ways to avoid/ reduce it

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

**What is school fatigue?**

School fatigue is a state of physical and mental tiredness that builds up from the demands of school life — academic workload, schedule intensity, and insufficient recovery time. It is different from simply feeling tired after a long day; school fatigue tends to accumulate over days or weeks if the underlying causes are not addressed, and can affect both academic performance and overall well-being.

Common Causes

- Insufficient sleep – going to bed too late or waking too early relative to the body's needs.
- Overloaded schedules – too many classes, extracurricular activities, or homework hours with little recovery time.
- Lack of breaks – long periods of mental effort without rest or movement.
- Poor nutrition – skipping meals or relying on low-quality food, which affects sustained energy and concentration.
- Excessive screen time – especially during what should be rest or sleep periods, which can also interfere with sleep quality.
- Chronic stress – ongoing worry about grades, social pressures, or other stressors that drain mental energy over time.

**Recognizing the signs**

School fatigue can show up in different ways for different people. Common signs include:

- Difficulty concentrating or remembering information, even on familiar material.

- Increased irritability, low mood, or reduced patience.
- Frequent headaches or other physical complaints.
- Declining grades or motivation, despite putting in effort.
- Feeling tired even after what should be enough sleep.

**Consequences If Left Unaddressed**

If the underlying causes of school fatigue are not addressed, the effects can build over time: academic performance may decline, the risk of anxiety or low mood may increase, the immune system can weaken (making illness more likely), and relationships with family and friends can suffer due to irritability or withdrawal. Recognizing school fatigue early — in yourself or a friend — makes it much easier to address before these effects accumulate.

**Strategies to Reduce School Fatigue**

- Maintain a consistent sleep schedule, aiming for 8–10 hours per night.
- Build short breaks into study sessions — working in focused blocks rather than marathon sessions.
- Include regular physical activity, which helps both energy levels and stress management.
- Eat balanced, regular meals, especially breakfast, to support steady energy throughout the day.
- Set realistic limits on extracurricular commitments to leave room for rest and unstructured downtime.
- Reduce non-essential screen time, particularly in the evening before bed.

## ***PART B: Lesson Plan***

**Topic: School fatigue: causes, consequences, and prevention**

**Duration: 40–45 minutes**

**Class:** Secondary School

**Objective:** Students will be able to:

(1) define school fatigue and identify its common causes;

(2) recognize signs of school fatigue in themselves;

(3) propose realistic strategies to reduce it.

**Lesson Flow**

**Warm-up (5 min):** Write the word Burnout on the board. Ask students to share synonyms or physical symptoms they connect with the word. Ask: “Have you ever felt completely drained by school, even before the day was finished? What do you think caused it?”

**Direct teaching (10 min):** Present common causes and signs of school fatigue from the reading.

**Guided discussion (10 min):** Discuss consequences of unaddressed fatigue and connect to students' own experiences (kept general, not personal disclosure).

**Activities (15 min):** Students complete the Fatigue Cause Audit worksheet. Students analyze a student’s daily routine and identify the causes of fatigue.

**Reflection and closure (5min):** Each student commits to one strategy to try this week.

**Activity 1: Fatigue Cause Audit**

Reflect honestly on your own week. For each potential cause below, rate how much it currently applies to you (Low / Medium / High).

| Possible Cause | Low / Medium / High |
|---|---|
| | |

**Activity 2: Spot the Signs**

The teacher presents a brief scenario involving a student showing signs of fatigue, and the groups identify causes, consequences, and possible solutions. The activity fosters empathy and the application of knowledge.

- A student who used to enjoy math now struggles to focus on it and feels frustrated easily.
- A student has had a headache most afternoons this week and just wants to lie down after school.
- A student snapped at a friend over something small that normally wouldn't bother them.

**Activity 3: My Anti-Fatigue Plan**

Choose three strategies from the reading that you will try this week, and describe how you will fit them into your schedule.

- Strategy 1: _____
- Strategy 2: _____
- Strategy 3: _____

**Activity 4: Check-In Partner**

Pair up with a classmate. Agree to check in with each other once this week about how your anti-fatigue strategies are going. Write your partner's name and the day you'll check in.

- Partner's name: _____
- Check-in day: _____

**Teacher Note**

Activity 1 is intended for private self-reflection — students do not need to share their ratings unless they choose to.

If a pattern of high fatigue scores emerges across the class, consider a follow-up discussion about workload and scheduling more broadly.

Activity 4 builds peer accountability and can be revisited briefly at the start of the next lesson.

## 1.11. The work and the rest schedule of the middle school student

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

**Why a Balanced Daily Schedule Matters**

A well-organized daily routine — balancing schoolwork, rest, physical activity, meals, and social time — supports both academic performance and overall well-being. Without a reasonably consistent structure, it becomes easy for some needs (like sleep or relaxation) to be repeatedly squeezed out by others (like extra screen time or last-minute homework), which over time contributes to school fatigue and reduced well-being.

**Core Components of a Healthy Daily Schedule**

- Sleep – 8–10 hours per night, with a fairly consistent bedtime and wake time, even on weekends.
- School and homework – structured time for classes and study, broken into manageable blocks with short breaks.
- Physical activity – at least 60 minutes per day, through sports, active play, or simply walking and moving.
- Meals – regular, balanced meals at consistent times, including breakfast, to maintain steady energy.
- Free time and social connection – unstructured time for hobbies, relaxation, and being with friends or family.

**A Sample Structure (Not a Strict Rule)**

While every student's schedule will look different depending on school hours, activities, and family circumstances, a general guide for a school day might include: waking with enough time for a calm morning routine and breakfast; school hours; a reasonable homework block (with breaks) typically totaling 1–2 hours for this age group, depending on workload; time for physical activity or a hobby; a relaxed evening routine; and a consistent, sufficiently early bedtime to allow for 8–10 hours of sleep.

This is a general guide, not a strict formula — the goal is balance across all the core components, not perfectly matching a specific timetable.

**The Cost of an Unbalanced Schedule**

When one area of the schedule consistently takes over — for example, hours of screen time replacing sleep, or excessive extracurricular commitments leaving no time for homework or rest — the effects tend to show up across multiple areas of well-being: declining academic performance, increased fatigue, more conflict at home, and reduced enjoyment of activities that once felt fun.

**Building Your Own Realistic Schedule**

The most effective schedule is one that is realistic for your actual life, not an idealized version copied from someone else. Building a sustainable routine involves identifying your non-negotiables (sleep, meals, a minimum amount of movement), being honest about how long homework actually takes you, and building in some flexibility for unpredictable days rather than expecting perfect adherence every single day.

## ***PART B: Lesson Plan***

**Topic: The work and the rest schedule of the middle school student**

**Duration: 40–45 minutes**

**Class:** Secondary School

**Objective:** Students will be able to:

(1)identify the core components of a balanced daily schedule;

(2)evaluate their current schedule against these components;

(3) design a realistic, personalized weekly schedule.

**Lesson Flow**

**Warm-up (5 min):** Write 1,440 on the board. Explain that this is the exact number of minutes everyone gets every day, and look at how quickly that time disappears.

**Direct teaching (10 min):** Present the core components of a healthy daily schedule and the sample structure.

**Guided discussion (10 min):** Discuss what happens when one area (screens, extracurriculars) consistently crowds out others.

**Activities (15 min):** Students map their actual current schedule and compare it to the core components.

**Reflection and closure (5min):** Each student identifies one realistic adjustment to try this week.

**Activity 1: Mapping my day**

Estimate how many hours per day you currently spend on each category (rough estimates are fine).

**Activity 2: Balance check**

Looking at your map from Activity 1, answer honestly:

1. Which category is getting less time than it probably needs?
2. Which category might be taking up more time than necessary?
3. What is one realistic change you could make this week?

**Activity 3: Design my ideal (Realistic) weekday**

Students build a pie chart of their typical day using the 8-8-8 rule as a guide: 8 hours for school and homework, 8 hours for recreation and family time, and 8 hours for sleep. They adjust their charts until all 24 hours are balanced

Sketch out a sample weekday schedule that better balances the core components, using approximate time blocks.

- Morning routine: _____
- School hours: _____
- Homework block(s): _____
- Physical activity: _____
- Free time / social time: _____
- Bedtime: _____

**Activity 4 — One-Week Trial**

Choose ONE specific change from your ideal schedule to actually try this week. Check in with yourself daily.

| Day | Did I follow my change? (Yes/No) | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

**Teacher Note**

Activity 1 estimates are often surprising to students once totaled — allow time for genuine reflection rather than rushing to judgment.

Be sensitive to varying family circumstances and responsibilities (e.g., chores, caregiving) that may affect available free time for some students.

Activity 4 can be revisited briefly the following week as a short check-in.

## 1.12 Mental health- a guarantee of democracy: combating stigma and increasing tolerance towards people with mental health issues

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

**Mental Health Is Part of Health**

Mental health refers to a person's emotional, psychological, and social well-being — how they think, feel, and cope with life's challenges. Just like physical health, mental health exists on a spectrum and can be affected by many factors, including genetics, life experiences, relationships, and environment. Mental health conditions (such as anxiety disorders or depression) are real, common, and treatable medical conditions — not character flaws, weaknesses, or choices.

**What Is Stigma?**

Stigma refers to negative attitudes, stereotypes, or judgments directed at people because of a characteristic they have — in this case, a mental health condition. Stigma can show up as exclusion, hurtful jokes or comments, assumptions about a person's abilities or trustworthiness, or reluctance to be friends with or hire someone because of their mental health history.

Stigma causes real harm: it makes people less likely to seek help when they need it, can damage self

esteem and relationships, and can lead to discrimination in school, work, or social settings — even though mental health conditions are no different, in terms of deserving compassion and support, from physical health conditions.

**Why mental health connects to democracy**

A democratic society is built on principles of equal dignity, human rights, and the inclusion of all citizens — regardless of personal characteristics. When people with mental health conditions face discrimination, exclusion, or reduced access to opportunities, this undermines those democratic principles. Protecting and supporting the mental health of all citizens, and ensuring people are not excluded or discriminated against because of mental health conditions, is therefore connected to building a fair, inclusive, and genuinely democratic society.

Tolerance — accepting and respecting people whose experiences differ from your own — is a core democratic value, and applies directly to how a society treats people experiencing mental health difficulties.

**Common stigmatizing beliefs (and the facts)**

- Belief: "People with mental health conditions are dangerous." Fact: The vast majority of people with mental health conditions are not violent and are, more often, at greater risk of being victims rather than perpetrators of harm.
- Belief: "Mental health struggles mean someone is weak." Fact: Mental health conditions are influenced by biology, environment, and life events — not weakness or lack of effort.
- Belief: "You can just choose to feel better." Fact: Like physical illnesses, many mental health conditions require proper support, and sometimes treatment, to improve.

**How you can help reduce stigma**

- Use respectful, accurate language — avoid using mental health terms casually as insults or jokes (e.g., describing something as "crazy" or "psycho" to mean bad or strange).
- Listen without judgment if a friend shares a mental health struggle, rather than minimizing or dismissing it.
- Educate yourself and others with accurate information rather than assumptions.
- Treat seeking help (therapy, counseling) as a sign of strength and self-awareness, not weakness.

## ***PART B: Lesson Plan***

**Topic: Mental health- a guarantee of democracy: combating stigma and increasing tolerance towards people with mental health issues**

**Duration: 40–45 minutes**

**Class:** Secondary School

**Objective:** Students will be able to:

(1) define stigma and explain its harms;

(2) connect mental health and inclusion to democratic values;

(3) identify and challenge common stigmatizing beliefs;

(4)practice supportive responses.

**Lesson Flow**

**Warm-up (5 min):** Ask: "If a friend breaks their arm, we sign their cast. If a friend says they are dealing with severe anxiety, why do people sometimes look away?"

**Direct teaching (15 min):** Present what stigma is and its real-world harms, using the reading.

Connect mental health, inclusion, and democratic values; review common stigmatizing beliefs and facts.

**Activities (20 min):** Students complete the Myth vs. Fact activity and role-play discussion.

**Reflection and closure (5min):** Class agrees on one respectful language commitment going forward. Quick round: each student names one hygiene habit they will improve this week.

**Activity 1: Myth or fact?**

Decide whether each statement is a myth or a fact, and briefly explain why.

- "Most people with mental health conditions are dangerous."
- "Asking for help with mental health is a sign of strength."
- "Mental health conditions are a choice or a result of laziness."
- "Excluding someone because of a mental health condition goes against democratic values of equality."

**Activity 2: Role-Play "Responding with support"**

In pairs, discuss the following situation: "A classmate mentions they see a counselor for anxiety, and another student makes a joke about it."

1. How might the classmate feel after hearing the joke?
2. What could a supportive classmate say or do instead?
3. Practice saying a supportive response out loud to your partner.

**Activity 3: Words matter**

List two everyday phrases that casually misuse mental health language, and suggest a more respectful alternative for each.

| **Common Phrase** | **Respectful Alternative** |
|---|---|
| | |
| | |

**Activity 4: Our Class Commitment**

As a class, agree on one shared commitment for how you will speak about and respond to mental health topics going forward. Write it below.

- Our class commitment: _____

**Teacher Note**

Approach this topic with sensitivity — some students may have personal or family experience with mental health conditions; avoid asking for personal disclosure.

If a student discloses a personal mental health concern during this lesson, follow your school's standard well-being referral procedure.

Activity 2 can be adapted into a short skit performed for the class if time and group comfort allow.

## 1.13. Sleep, Sleep Habits and Mental Health of Adolescents

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

**Why Sleep Matters So Much**

Sleep is not simply "downtime" — it is an active period during which the brain consolidates memories and learning, the body repairs tissue and releases growth hormone, and the immune system strengthens its defenses. During adolescence, when the brain and body are undergoing rapid development, sufficient sleep is especially important, supporting not just physical growth but also emotional regulation, concentration, and mental health.

**How Much Sleep Do Teenagers Need?**

Most adolescents need approximately 8–10 hours of sleep per night to function and feel their best — more than many adults realize. Despite this need, sleep research consistently shows that a large proportion of teenagers regularly get less sleep than they need, often due to early school start times combined with a natural biological shift.

**Why Teenagers Naturally Sleep Later**

During puberty, the body's internal clock (circadian rhythm) shifts, causing the release of the sleep hormone melatonin to begin later in the evening than it did in childhood. This means many teenagers do not start feeling sleepy until later at night, even if they wake up early for school — this is a real biological shift, not simply poor discipline or stubbornness.

**The Link Between Sleep and Mental Health**

Sleep and mental health are closely connected in both directions: poor sleep can worsen mood, increase irritability, and raise the risk of anxiety symptoms, while difficulties with anxiety or low mood can also make it harder to fall or stay asleep. Chronic sleep deprivation is associated with reduced ability to manage stress, increased emotional reactivity, and greater difficulty concentrating — all of which can compound existing mental health challenges.

**Common Sleep Disruptors for Teenagers**

- Screens before bed – the light emitted from phones and other devices can interfere with melatonin release, and engaging content can also be mentally stimulating right before sleep.
- Caffeine – found in coffee, some teas, energy drinks, and some sodas; consuming it in the afternoon or evening can delay sleep onset.
- Irregular sleep schedules – very different bedtimes on weekdays vs. weekends can confuse the body's internal clock.
- Late-night homework or activities – pushing bedtime later on a regular basis.

Building healthy sleep abits (sleep hygiene)

- Keep a consistent bedtime and wake-up time, even on weekends, as much as possible.
- Avoid screens for at least 30–60 minutes before bed; consider a wind-down activity like reading

- Keep your bedroom dark, quiet, and cool for better sleep quality.
- Avoid caffeine in the afternoon and evening.
- Get natural light exposure during the day, which helps regulate your internal clock.
- Avoid using your bed for activities other than sleep (like extended scrolling or homework) so your brain associate it primarily with rest.

## ***PART B: Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)***

**Topic: Sleep, sleep habits and the mental health of adolescents**

**Duration: 40–45 minutes**

**Class:** Secondary School

**Objective:** Students will be able to:

**Objective:** Students will be able to:

(1) explain why teenagers need 8–10 hours of sleep; (2)

(2) describe the biological reason teens naturally sleep later; (3)

(3) explain the link between sleep and mental health;

(4) (4) apply healthy sleep habits to their own routine.

**Lesson Flow**

**Warm-up (5 min):** Ask:

"Who checks their phone in bed right before falling asleep?"

"How many hours of sleep do you think you got last night? How did it affect your day?"

Quick informal poll.

**Direct teaching (10 min):** Explain how screen light signals the brain that it is still daytime, which stops melatonin production. Present sleep needs, the biological shift during puberty, and why teens naturally sleep later.

**Guided discussion (10 min):** Discuss the two-way link between sleep and mental health, and common sleep disruptors.

**Activities (15 min):** Students complete the Sleep Diary Reflection and Sleep Hygiene Self-Check.

**Reflection and closure (5min):** Each student commits to one sleep hygiene change to try this week.

**Activity 1: Sleep Diary Reflection**

For three nights, record your bedtime, wake-up time, and total hours slept. Then answer the questions below.

| Night | Bedtime | Wake Time | Hours Slept |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

1. Did you reach the recommended 8–10 hours on any night?
2. Name one habit (e.g., screen use before bed) that may have affected your sleep quality.
3. Write one change you could make this week to improve your sleep.

**Activity 2: Sleep Hygiene Self-Check**

Check which of these healthy sleep habits you already follow, and circle one you will start this week.

⇒ Consistent bedtime, even on weekends
⇒ No screens for 30–60 minutes before bed
⇒ Dark, quiet, cool bedroom
⇒ No caffeine in the afternoon/evening
⇒ Bed used mainly for sleep, not other activities

**Activity 3: Myth or Fact?**

Decide whether each statement is a myth or a fact.

⇒ "Teenagers who go to bed late are just being lazy or undisciplined." (Myth — it reflects a real biological shift.)
⇒ "Poor sleep can make it harder to manage stress and emotions." (Fact.)
⇒ "Screens before bed have no effect on sleep quality." (Myth.)

**Teacher Note**

Activity 1 works well as a take-home tracker, with brief follow-up discussion the following lesson.

Be sensitive to students whose sleep may be affected by factors outside their control (family circumstances, anxiety, etc.) — frame the activity as informative rather than judgmental.

If a student's sleep diary reveals a concerning pattern (e.g., consistently very low sleep linked to distress), consider a private follow-up conversation or referral to school support staff.

## *From our activities…*

**European School Sports Day 2025**



**Collective art mural**



**World Mental Health Day**



**Erasmus+ MASTER CHEF**



**A visit to Mount Hymettus**





**Young gardeners**

**International Climate Action Day - Paper-making**



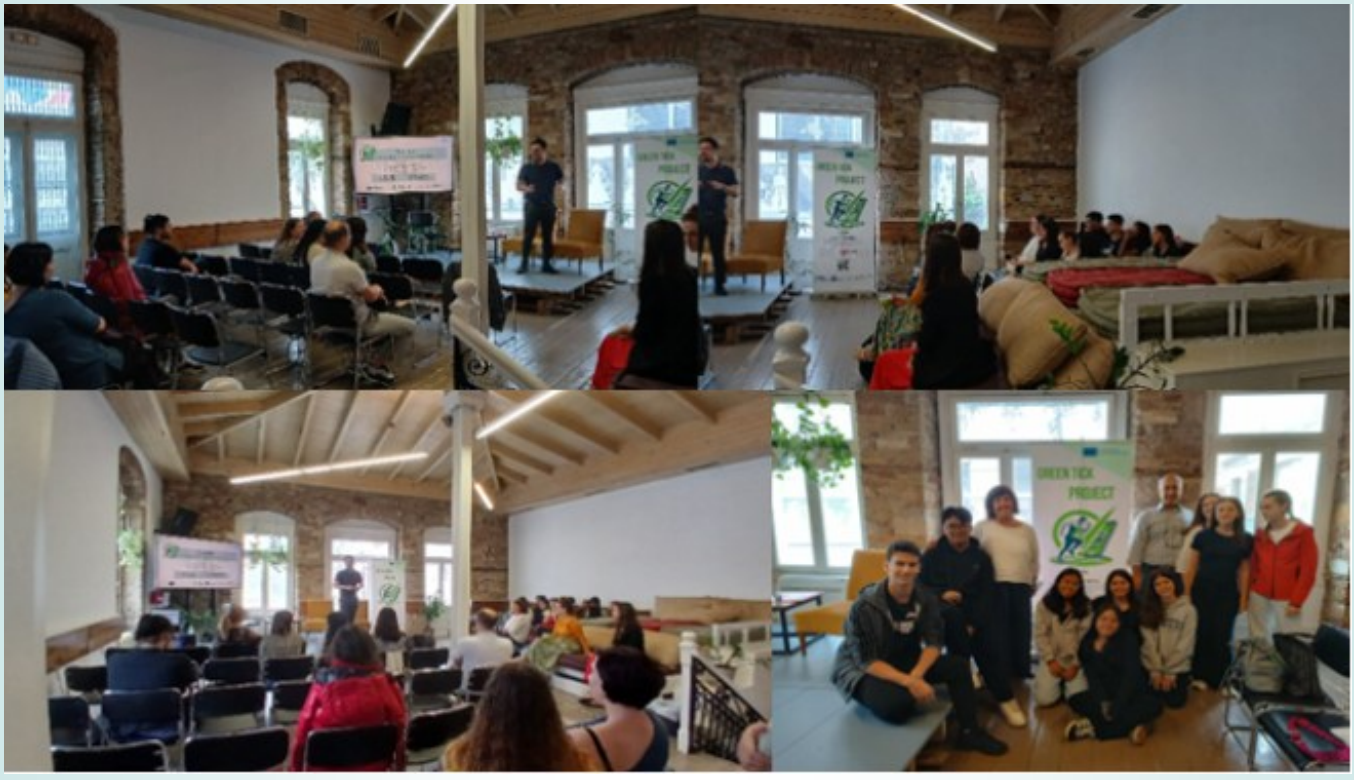
**Action for a Sustainable Future**







**Green Tick Project**



# Chapter 2

# NUTRITIONAL HEALTH

## 2.1. The Food Pyramid

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

The Food Pyramid is a simple and easy-to-use nutritional education tool. It visually presents the food groups and the frequency with which they should be consumed. The lower a food group is in the pyramid, the greater its consumption should be. Conversely, foods at the top should be consumed less frequently and in smaller quantities.

The philosophy of the pyramid is based on variety, balance and moderation. No food is considered absolutely "good" or "bad". What matters is the frequency and quantity of its consumption. This approach is in line with modern nutritional recommendations and encourages the development of healthy eating habits.

**The levels of the Food Pyramid**

**1. Cereals and whole grain products**

At the base of the pyramid are grains, such as bread, rice, pasta, potatoes, and breakfast cereals. These foods are the main source of energy for the body, as they contain complex carbohydrates.

It is particularly important to choose whole grain products, because they contain more fiber, vitamins and minerals. Fiber contributes to the proper functioning of the digestive system and the prevention of various diseases.

**2. Fruits and vegetables**

Fruits and vegetables are an important source of vitamins, minerals, water and antioxidants. These substances protect the body from diseases and contribute to the proper functioning of the immune system.

It is recommended to consume at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day. The variety of colours in fruits and vegetables ensures a greater variety of nutrients.

**3. Dairy products**

Dairy products, such as milk, yogurt, and cheese, provide calcium, protein, and vitamin D. These nutrients are essential for the proper development and maintenance of bones and teeth.

During adolescence, calcium needs increase significantly due to skeletal development. For this reason, two to three servings of dairy products are recommended daily.

**4. Protein sources**

This category includes meat, fish, eggs, legumes, and nuts. Proteins are essential for the growth and repair of body tissues.

Particular emphasis is placed on the consumption of fish and legumes, as they offer important nutrients and contribute to reducing the risk of chronic diseases.

**5. Fats and oils**

Fats are essential for the body, but they should be consumed in moderation. The use of olive oil is preferred, which is a key element of the Mediterranean Diet and is associated with significant health benefits.

**6. Sweets and processed foods**

At the top of the pyramid are sweets, soft drinks, snacks and processed foods. These products usually contain large amounts of sugar, salt and saturated fat.

Their frequent consumption is associated with an increased risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. For this reason, they should be consumed occasionally.

**The importance of the Food Pyramid**

Applying the principles of the Food Pyramid:

- contributes to maintaining a healthy body weight,
- reduces the risk of chronic diseases,
- enhances the development of children and adolescents,
- promotes the adoption of healthy habits,

reinforces personal responsibility for health care.

The Food Guide Pyramid is not a strict diet, but a guide that helps the individual to make healthier and more balanced dietary decisions every day.

## *PART B: Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)*

**Topic:** The Food Pyramid

**Duration:** 40–45 minutes

**Class:** Secondary School

| Teaching Objectives | Materials |
|---|---|
| • Recognize the levels of the Food Pyramid.<br>• To classify foods into the correct groups.<br>• Explain the importance of a balanced diet. | • Printed food pyramid<br>• Cards food / food simulants<br>• A3 paper<br>• Markers |

**Course Outline**

**1. Warm-up (5 minutes)**

The teacher shows pictures of various foods.

Formatting questions :

- What Did you eat today ?
- What foods do you eat more often ?

Do you believe that we are eating a balanced diet?

The answers are briefly recorded on the board.

**2. Presentation of new knowledge (10 minutes)**

- the Food pyramid ,
- the groups food ,
- the importance of each level ,

the concept of a balanced diet.

A brief discussion is held with examples from the students' everyday lives.

**3. Main activities**

**Activity 1: “Building my own Pyramid” (10 minutes)**

Students are divided into groups of 4 people.

Each team receives :

- pictures of food / food simulants

an empty pyramid .

Target:

Place each food on the correct level of the pyramid.

Then, they present their choices to the class.

**Activity 2: "Yesterday's dish" (10 minutes) -** Individual work.

Students record:

- breakfast ,
- tithe
- lunch
- afternoon snack,

dinner

They then note which food group each choice belongs to.

Discussion :

- Was there variety?
- Were there any overruns?

What could be improved?

**4. Reflection – Closing Lesson (5 minutes)**

The teacher asks the students to orally complete the sentence:

**"From today's lesson I learned that..."**

and

**"One change I can make to my diet is..."**

A brief recap of the key points is given:

- The groups food .
- The importance of variety .
- The importance of a balanced diet.
- The role of the Food Guide Pyramid as a guide to healthy choices.

## 2.2. The label: the “calling card” of food products

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

In modern society, consumers are faced with a huge variety of foods every day. The choice of a product should not be based only on its packaging, advertising or price, but mainly on the information provided on its label. The food label is the main means of communication between producer and consumer, as it provides valuable information on the composition, nutritional value, origin and safety of a product.

Properly reading and understanding the label contributes to the development of responsible consumer behaviours and helps the individual make healthier dietary choices. Especially during adolescence, when attitudes and habits are formed that are often maintained in adulthood, education in label reading becomes particularly important.

**Information included on a food label**

European legislation sets out specific information that must be included on all packaged food. This information ensures the consumer's right to information and protects public health.

**Product name:** The name clearly describes the type of food and allows the consumer to know exactly what he is buying. The trade name must not be misleading as to the nature or composition of the product.

**Ingredients list:** Ingredients are listed in descending order of content. This means that the ingredient that appears first is found in the largest quantity in the product. By studying the ingredients list, the consumer can evaluate the quality of a food and identify additives or ingredients that they may wish to avoid.

**Allergens:** Allergen labelling is particularly important to protect people with food allergies or intolerances. Ingredients such as milk, eggs, nuts, gluten and soy are labelled in bold so that they are easily identifiable.

**Expiration date:** The expiration date informs the consumer of the date until which the product can be safely consumed. Following it helps prevent food poisoning and other health risks.

**Country of origin and producer details:** This information enhances transparency and allows the consumer to know the origin of the product, as well as the responsible producer or distributor.

**The nutritional table:** One of the most important elements of the label is the nutritional table. It provides information about the nutritional value of the product per 100 grams or per serving. Usually listed: Energy (calories), Fat, Saturated fat, Carbohydrates, Sugars, Protein, Salt

This information helps the consumer compare products and choose those that best meet their nutritional needs.

**The importance of reading labels**

Correct use of label information allows the consumer to:

- to compare different products,
- to choose healthier options,
- limit the consumption of sugar, salt and saturated fats,
- avoid foods that contain allergens,
- to be protected from misleading advertising practices.

Oftentimes, packaging uses attractive images or advertising claims such as “natural,” “light,” or “sugar-free.” The consumer is influenced not only by these claims but also by carefully examining the actual information provided on the label before making a purchasing decision.

**The label as a health education tool**

Label reading training contributes to the development of health and consumer education skills. Students acquire the ability to evaluate information, make informed decisions, and adopt healthier eating behaviours. At the same time, critical thinking and a responsible attitude towards nutrition and health are strengthened.

## ***PART B: Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)***

**Subject:** Label study

**Duration:** 40–45 minutes

**Class:** Secondary School

| Teaching Objectives | Materials |
|---|---|
| By the end of the course, students will be able to:<br>• identify the basic elements of a food label,<br>• interpret the nutritional table,<br>• compare products and choose the healthiest one,<br>• to recognize misleading information . | • 5–6 real food packages (cereals, cookies, juices, yogurts),<br>• photocopies of labels ,<br>• table or interactive table , |

**Course Outline**

**1. Warm-up (5 minutes)**

- The teacher shows two similar products (e.g. two cereal bars).
- He asks the students: "Which one would you choose and why?"
- Goal: to highlight that packaging is not enough — label reading is needed.

**2. Presentation of new knowledge – 10 minutes**

The teacher presents:

- the mandatory label elements,
- how to read the nutritional table,
- what do the terms “per 100 g ” and “per serving” mean,
- how to identify "hidden" sugar (e.g. glucose syrup, dextrose),
- how we recognize misleading claims (e.g. “sugar-free” but with lots of sweeteners).

**3. Main activities – 20 minutes**

**Activity 1: "Decoding the label" (group)**

- Students are divided into groups of 3–4.
- Each group receives **a real food package**.
- They complete a worksheet with the following:
    - What is the product?
    - What are the first 3 ingredients?
    - How much sugar does it contain per 100 g?
    - How much salt does it contain per 100 g?
    - Does it contain any allergens?
    - Is the product healthy? Why or why not?

**Activity 2: "Product Battle" (debate)**

- Each group compares its product with that of another group.
- They argue about which is healthier.
- The teacher guides with questions:
    - Which one has less sugar?
    - Which one has less saturated fat?
    - Which one has more fiber?

**4. Closing: Reflection – 5 minutes**

Students write on sticky notes: "What will I pay attention to from now on when I buy food?"
The answers are placed on the board and the "Smart Consumer Wall" is created.

## 2.3. Consumer Rights

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

In modern society, every individual acts as a consumer every day. From purchasing food and clothing to using digital services, consumers are constantly making decisions that affect their health, financial situation and quality of life. For this reason, consumer protection is a key element of a democratic society and is enshrined in both European and national legislation.

Consumer education is not only about purchasing products but also about developing skills that allow individuals to make responsible decisions, evaluate information and protect themselves from misleading practices. Educating students on consumer rights contributes to the development of active and responsible citizens.

**Consumer rights**

Consumer rights are a set of protective measures that ensure that citizens can buy products and services safely, transparently and reliably. Businesses have an obligation to provide accurate information about their products and to respect consumers' rights.

These rights are particularly important in the food sector, as they are directly related to the health and safety of citizens.

**Basic consumer rights**

**Right to security**

Consumers have the right to buy products that do not pose a risk to their health or life. Food must meet specific safety and hygiene standards before being placed on the market. The competent authorities carry out inspections to ensure that producers comply with the legislation.

**Right to information**

Every consumer has the right to know what they are buying. For this reason, product labels must provide clear information about ingredients, allergens, nutritional value, expiration date, country of origin. Proper information allows consumers to make informed and safe choices.

**Right to choose**

Consumers should have access to a variety of products and services without being affected by misleading or unfair practices. Healthy competition between businesses helps to improve quality and maintain reasonable prices.

**Right to compensation or refund**

When a product is defective, dangerous or does not meet the characteristics presented, the consumer has the right to return, replacement or compensation.

**Right to education**

Citizens must have access to information and programs that help them understand their rights and obligations as consumers. Education is a key tool for protecting against fraud and deception.

**The right for the consumer's voice to be heard**

Consumers have the opportunity to file complaints or reports to competent services when they believe their rights are being violated. This opportunity contributes to improving the market and protecting society as a whole.

**Misleading practices and responsible consumption**

Consumers are often influenced by advertisements, promotions and attractive packaging. However, not all advertising practices reflect reality. Some may make exaggerated claims or hide important information.

Responsible consumption requires:

- control of information ,
- product comparison ,
- a reading labels ,
- evaluation of quality and price,
- avoiding impulse purchases.

Developing critical thinking helps young people function as informed and responsible consumers.

**The importance of consumer education**

Knowing consumer rights contributes to:

- in the protection of health ,
- in the proper management of financial resources,
- in the summary by fraud,
- in the development of responsible consumer behaviour,

in shaping active and informed citizens.

Consumer education is a key element of health education, as it is directly linked to the daily choices that affect an individual's well-being and quality of life.

## ***PART B: Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)***

**Subject:** Consumer rights

**Duration:** 40–45 minutes

**Class:** Secondary School

| Teaching Objectives | Materials |
|---|---|
| By the end of the course, students will be able to:<br>• to recognize the basic rights of the consumer,<br>• to identify misleading practices ,<br>• to assess whether a product is reliable,<br>• know where they can turn for complaints. | • photocopies of actual food advertisements ,<br>• 2–3 product packages with “impressive” labels,<br>• whiteboard or projector,<br>• "The Smart Consumer" worksheet. |

**Course Outline**

**1. Warm-up – 5 minutes**

The teacher shows an impressive advertisement (e.g. “vitamin-rich” cereal). Asks: “Do you think what the advertisement says is always true?” Objective: to activate critical thinking.

**2. Presentation of new knowledge – 10 minutes**

The teacher explains:

- the basic rights of the consumer,
- examples of misleading practices ,
- how can someone file a complaint,
- What “safe product” means .

It uses real packaging to show how packaging can "hide" information.

**3. Main activities – 20 minutes**

**Activity 1: “Discovering the trap” (group)**

- Students are divided into groups.
- Each group receives an advertisement or package.

Objective: to identify 3 potentially misleading elements.

**Examples :**

- fruit images without real content,
- light " claims without low calories,

small letters that hide sugar or salt.

**Activity 2: “The consumer claims” (role play)**

- A student plays the consumer who purchased a product with an incorrect label.
- Another plays the store clerk.

Objective: to learn how to make a proper claim.

**4. Reflection - Closing Lesson – 5 minutes**

Students write in one sentence: "The right I consider most important is... because..."

## 2.4. Healthy Eating Guide

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

**The importance of a healthy diet**

Nutrition is one of the most important factors that affect human health. The foods we consume daily provide the body with the necessary energy and nutrients required for growth, physical activity, learning and maintaining health. Adopting healthy eating habits from a young age contributes significantly to the prevention of chronic diseases and improving the quality of life.

During adolescence, nutritional needs increase as the body undergoes rapid growth. Adequate intake of energy, protein, vitamins and minerals is essential for normal body development, proper brain function and the maintenance of physical and mental well-being.

**What does healthy eating mean?**

A healthy diet means consuming a variety of foods in appropriate quantities to meet the body's needs without excess or deficiency. It is not about strict diets or excluding specific foods, but about balance and moderation.

A healthy diet is based on the following principles:

- Variety of foods from all groups.
- Balance between energy intake and energy expenditure.
- Limit your consumption of sugar, salt and fat.
- Adequate consumption water.
- Regular physics activity.

These principles form the basis of modern dietary guidelines and the Mediterranean Diet.

**The basics of a healthy diet**

**Fruits and vegetables:** Fruits and vegetables provide vitamins, minerals, fiber, and antioxidants.

Their daily consumption contributes to the proper functioning of the body and the prevention of many diseases. It is recommended to consume at least five servings of fruits and vegetables daily. A variety of colours ensures a greater variety of nutrients.

**Cereals and whole grain products:** Cereals are an important source of energy. Whole grain products contain more fibbers and contribute to better functioning of the digestive system.

**Proteins:** Proteins are essential for the growth and repair of tissues. Good sources of protein are fish, legumes, eggs, lean meat, nuts. The variety in protein sources helps to better meet the body's needs.

**Dairy products:** Milk, yogurt, and cheese provide calcium and protein that help develop and maintain healthy bones and teeth.

**Water:** Water is essential for all body functions. Adequate hydration helps with concentration, regulating body temperature, and proper organ function.

**Habits that promote health**

Healthy eating is not only about food choices but also about eating habits.

Important habits are:

- Daily breakfast lunch
- Regular meals during the day.
- Limit soft drinks and junk food.
- Drinking water instead of sugary drinks.
- Participation in physics activity.

These habits contribute to maintaining normal body weight and overall well-being.

**The Mediterranean Diet as a model of healthy eating**

The Mediterranean Diet is considered internationally one of the healthiest dietary patterns. It is based on:

- in the consumption of fruits and vegetables,
- in legumes,
- in whole grains grinding,
- in olive oil as the main source of fat,
- in moderate dairy consumption,
- in frequent consumption of fish,
- in limiting processed foods.

Adopting the principles of the Mediterranean Diet is associated with better health and a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease and obesity.

**Healthy Choices Guide**

Healthy eating is a daily choice. Small changes, such as increasing fruit consumption, reducing sweets and choosing more natural foods, can have significant health benefits. Knowing the basic principles of healthy eating helps young people develop skills that will accompany them throughout their lives.

## ***PART B: Lesson Plan (2 teaching periods)***

**Subject:** Healthy Eating Guide

**Duration:** 40–45 minutes

**Class:** Secondary School

| Teaching Objectives | Materials |
|---|---|
| By the end of the course, students will be able to:<br>• Describe the basic principles of healthy eating.<br>• Recognize the characteristics of a balanced diet.<br>• Explain the importance of the Mediterranean Diet.<br>• To relate nutrition to disease prevention. | • PowerPoint presentation<br>• Meal pictures<br>• Food labels<br>• Group worksheets<br>• Whiteboard |

**Course Outline – Lesson 1st**

**1. Warm-up (5 minutes)**

The teacher presents pictures of different meals.

It asks the questions:

- Which of the meals do you consider the healthiest?
- What criteria did you use to choose it?

What does "healthy eating" mean to you?

Students freely express their opinions.

**2. Presentation of New Knowledge (10 minutes)**

The teacher presents:

- the basic principles of healthy eating,
- the groups food,
- the importance of variety and moderation,
- the characteristics of the Mediterranean Diet,

the relationship between nutrition and health.

The presentation is accompanied by examples of everyday choices.

**3. Main Activities (25 minutes)**

**Activity 1: "The Healthy Plate" -** Group work (4 students per group)

Each group receives food images and is asked to create an "ideal daily menu" for a teenager.

Students must choose:

- breakfast ,
- tithe

- lunch
- afternoon snack,

dinner

They then justify their choices based on the principles of healthy eating.

**Activity 2: "Healthy or not?"** Pair work

The teacher presents brief scenarios of eating habits.

Examples :

- Skipping breakfast .
- Daily consumption of soft drinks .
- Daily consumption of fruit .

Frequent consumption of fast food .

Students discuss and decide:

- whether the habit is beneficial or harmful,

what improvements can be suggested.

A plenary debate follows.

**4. Reflection – Closing Lesson (5 minutes)**

Students complete the sentences orally:

**"One change I can implement starting today is..."**

The teacher summarizes the key messages of the lesson and encourages students to apply what was discussed in their daily lives.

**Course Outline – Lesson 2**

**"MasterChef Healthy Eating" -** Teamwork

- The groups create/prepare a healthy meal.
- They must justify:
  - nutritional value,
  - variety,
  - balance.

## 2.5. The impact of food on health status: Nutrition and cardiovascular diseases (atherosclerosis, hypertension)

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

The heart is a muscular organ that functions as a pump and ensures the continuous circulation of blood throughout the body. Through the blood, oxygen and nutrients are transported to the cells, while waste substances are removed. Maintaining the proper functioning of the heart and blood vessels requires a healthy lifestyle, in which nutrition plays a decisive role.

Cardiovascular diseases are currently one of the most common causes of death worldwide. Although they usually appear in older ages, many of the risk factors develop in childhood and adolescence. For this reason, prevention must start early through the adoption of proper nutritional and healthy habits.

**What are cardiovascular diseases?**

Cardiovascular diseases are conditions that affect the heart and blood vessels. The most important are:

**Coronary artery disease:** Coronary artery disease occurs when the arteries that supply blood to the heart become narrowed due to a buildup of fatty substances in their walls (atherosclerosis). This results in a reduction in the supply of oxygen to the heart muscle.

**Hypertension (High Blood Pressure):** Hypertension is a condition in which blood exerts increased pressure on the walls of the arteries. When left untreated for a long time, it can cause damage to the heart, brain, and kidneys.

**Myocardial infarction:** A heart attack occurs when blood supply to a part of the heart is cut off due to a blockage in an artery. It is an emergency that requires immediate medical attention.

**Stroke:** A stroke occurs when the blood supply to part of the brain is interrupted or significantly reduced. This condition can cause serious and permanent damage.

**Risk factors**

The occurrence of cardiovascular diseases is influenced by various factors.

- Factors that cannot be changed such as heredity, age and gender.
- Factors that can be limited through healthy choices and proper information such as unhealthy diet, obesity, lack of exercise, smoking, high cholesterol, hypertension, chronic stress

**The relationship between diet and cardiovascular health**

Diet directly affects heart health. Frequent consumption of foods rich in saturated fats, trans fats, sugar and salt increases the risk of hypertension, obesity and elevated cholesterol. On the contrary, a balanced diet helps maintain normal body weight, regulate blood pressure and reduce blood cholesterol levels.

**Nutritional prevention of cardiovascular diseases**

Prevention starts with daily dietary choices.

**Increase fruit and vegetable consumption:** Fruits and vegetables are rich in vitamins, minerals, fibers and antioxidants that protect blood vessels and help maintain good cardiovascular health.

**Choose whole grains:** Whole grain products contain more fibers, which helps reduce cholesterol and maintain proper digestive function.

**Frequent consumption of fish:** Fish, especially oily fish, contain omega-3 fatty acids that help protect the heart and blood vessels.

**Use of olive oil:** Olive oil is a key component of the Mediterranean Diet and is considered one of the healthiest sources of fat.

**Salt restriction:** Excessive salt consumption is linked to increased blood pressure. It is recommended to reduce salt in meals and avoid processed foods with high sodium content.

**Limit sugar and saturated fats:** Excessive consumption of sweets, soft drinks, fried foods, and

processed foods increases the risk of obesity and cardiovascular problems.

**The Mediterranean Diet as a model of prevention**

The Mediterranean Diet is internationally considered one of the most effective dietary patterns for the prevention of cardiovascular diseases. It is based on: fruits and vegetables, legumes, whole grains, olive oil, fish, moderate consumption of dairy products, and limiting processed foods. Adopting this dietary pattern contributes to the reduction of risk factors and the promotion of health.

## ***PART B: Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)***

**Topic:** Nutrition and Cardiovascular Diseases

**Duration:** 40–45 minutes

**Class:** Secondary School

| Teaching Objectives | Materials |
|---|---|
| By the end of the course, students will be able to:<br>• describe what cardiovascular diseases are,<br>• to report key risk factors,<br>• explain the relationship between nutrition and cardiovascular health,<br>• recognize basic principles of nutritional prevention. | • Meal pictures<br>• Food labels<br>• Group worksheets<br>• Whiteboard |

**Course Outline**

**1. Warm-up (5 minutes)**

The teacher shows two pictures of:

1. a healthy artery,
2. an artery with atherosclerotic plaque. Asks: “What do you think might cause this difference?”

**Objective**: connection picture with food.

**2. Presentation of New Knowledge (10 minutes)**

The teacher explains:

- what is atherosclerosis and hypertension,
- how diet affects the heart,
- which foods increase the risk,
- which foods protect the cardiovascular system.

Uses examples from students' everyday choices (e.g. chips vs. nuts).

**3. Main activities– 20 minutes**

**Activity 1: “Friendly or unfriendly for the heart?” (group)**

- Students receive food cards.
- They are divided into two categories:
    - **Friendly to the heart**
    - **Unfriendly/dangerous to the heart**

**They discuss why they put each food in its respective category.**

**Activity 2: Nutritionist»**

- Each team takes tests from a hypothetical patient:
    - increased pressure,
    - high cholesterol,

They suggest dietary changes and lifestyle improvements in each scenario

**Activity 3: "Mission: Reduce salt" (mini challenge)**

- Students identify foods with "hidden" salt (e.g. bread, cold cuts, sauces).
- They suggest alternatives.

**4. Reflection - Closing lesson – 5 minutes**

Students complete the sentence: "One thing I will change in my diet to protect my heart is..."

## 2.6. Nutritional deficiencies: weight loss diets, bulimia, anorexia; body image and eating behavior

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

Adolescence is a period of intense physical, psychological and social changes. During this period, young people become more sensitive to their body image and are often influenced by beauty standards promoted by social media, advertising and the wider social environment.

The desire to lose weight or achieve an "ideal body" can lead some individuals to adopt unhealthy eating habits or even develop eating disorders. For this reason, it is important for students to understand that health is not synonymous with a specific body shape but with physical, mental and social well-being.

**What are nutritional deficiencies?**

Nutritional deficiency occurs when the body does not receive enough energy or nutrients necessary for its normal functioning. Deficiencies may involve proteins, iron, calcium, vitamins, carbohydrates, and healthy fats. During adolescence, the body's needs increase significantly due to growth. Therefore, strict diets without scientific guidance can have negative health consequences.

**Weight loss diets and risks**

Many teenagers try diets that promise quick weight loss. However, extreme diets often:

- do not meet the needs of the organization,
- cause a lack of nutrients,
- lead to fatigue and weakness,
- affect concentration and school performance,

can cause eating disorders.

Weight loss, when necessary, should be done in a safe manner and with the help of specialized health professionals.

**Anorexia Nervosa**

Anorexia nervosa is a serious eating disorder in which the person excessively restricts their food intake due to an intense fear of gaining weight or a distorted perception of their body image.

**Joyful constructions features**

- Intense fear of weight gain.
- Constant preoccupation with food and calories.
- Excessive restriction food.
- Significant weight loss.
- Negative body image.

**Possible consequences**

- Weakness and exhaustion.
- Hormonal due to disturbances.
- Problems with deployment.
- Reduced concentration.
- Serious effects on physical and mental health.

**Bulimia Nervosa**

Bulimia nervosa is characterized by repeated episodes of binge eating, during which the person consumes a large amount of food in a short period of time, and then tries to compensate for the calorie intake in unhealthy ways.

**Joyful constructions features**

- Episode of overeating.
- Intense feeling of guilt after eating.
- Excessive concern about weight.
- Low self - esteem.

**Impacts**

- Digestive disorders system.
- Fatigue.
- Psychological burden.

Disruption of the normal relationship with food.

**Body image and self-esteem**

Body image concerns the way someone perceives their body and the emotions associated with that perception. Positive body image helps:

- in the development of self - confidence,
- at the reception her diversity,

in making healthy decisions about diet and exercise.

Conversely, constant comparison with unrealistic standards can lead to dissatisfaction, stress, and unhealthy behaviours.

**Healthy eating behaviour**

A healthy relationship with food is based on:

- in the balanced diet,
- at the reception of body,
- in avoiding extreme demands,
- in tactics physics activity,
- in seeking help when there are difficulties.

Health is not determined only by body weight but by overall care of the body and mental well-being.

## ***PART B: Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)***

**Topic:** Nutritional Deficiencies – Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia Nervosa

**Duration:** 40–45 minutes

**Class:** Secondary School

| Teaching Objectives | Materials |
|---|---|
| By the end of the course, students will be able to:<br>⇒ recognize signs of nutritional deficiencies,<br>⇒ understand the dangers of strict diets,<br>⇒ to distinguish basic characteristics of anorexia and bulimia,<br>⇒ to develop a positive body image,<br>⇒ to adopt healthy eating behaviors. | • cards with statements (true/ false),<br>• images of healthy and unhealthy body standards,<br>• worksheet "True needs – false expectations",<br>• whiteboard or projector . |

**Course outline**

**1. Warm-up – 5 minutes**

The teacher shows two pictures:

1. a healthy , normal body ,
2. an overly "perfect" body from social media.

Question: "Which of the two is more realistic? Which is healthier?

Goal: deconstruction of non-realistic models.

**2. Presentation of New Knowledge (10 minutes)**

The teacher explains:

- what are nutritional deficiencies,
- why strict diets are dangerous,
- basic characteristics of anorexia and bulimia,
- How is body image affected by social media?

It uses examples from students' everyday lives.

**3. Main activities – 20 minutes**

**Activity 1: “Myth or Truth?” (group)**

Students receive cards with statements such as:

- "Very thin bodies are always healthy."
- Express diets are safe."
- “My worth does not depend on my weight.” Each group decides whether it is a myth or truth and explains why.

**Activity 2: “My body – my needs” (individual)**

Students complete a worksheet where they write:

- 3 things they like about their body,
- 2 healthy habits they want to adopt,
- 1 unrealistic expectation they want to leave behind.

**Activity 3: "Healthy lifestyle" (group)**

Each group creates a poster with 5 rules for a healthy relationship with food:

- balance,
- variety,
- reception body,
- avoiding strict by applicant,
- Please ask for help if you need it.

**4. Reflection - Closing lesson – 5 minutes**

Students complete the sentence: "My body deserves..." and stick it on an empowerment board.

## 2.7. Balancing caloric intake with physical and intellectual activity

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

The human body needs energy to perform all of its functions, from the simplest, such as breathing and blood circulation, to more complex activities such as exercise, studying, and problem-solving. This energy comes from the foods we consume and is measured in calories. Maintaining a balance between the energy intake through food and the energy consumed by the body is essential for maintaining a healthy body weight, good health and proper growth.

**What are calories?**

Calories are a unit of measurement for the energy provided by food. The body uses this energy to meet its daily needs.

The main energy sources are:

- Carbohydrates: 4 kcal per serving gr sand
- Proteins: 4 kcal per serving gr sand
- Fat: 9 kcal per serving gr sand

Knowing the energy value of foods helps to better organize your diet and avoid excesses or deficiencies.

**Why does the body need energy?**

The body consumes energy daily for:

- **Basic functions**

Even when we are at rest, the body needs energy to: breathing, heart function, maintaining body temperature, organ function.

- **Physics activity**

Every form of movement requires energy. The greater the intensity and duration of the activity, the more energy is used . Examples : walking , cycling , dancing , sports , games .

- **Spiritual activity**

Brain function requires a constant supply of energy. Studying, concentrating, memorizing, and problem-solving depend on an adequate supply of glucose, which is the brain's primary fuel.

**Energy balance**

The relationship between the calories we consume and the calories we burn is called energy balance.

**Balanced energy balance**

When calories consumed equal calories burned, body weight remains stable. The body is in a state of energy balance.

**Positive energy balance**

When energy intake is greater than energy expenditure, the excess is stored in the body as fat. This leads to weight gain and, in the long term, can contribute to obesity.

**Negative energy balance**

When energy intake is less than expenditure, the body uses stored energy, resulting in a reduction in body

weight.

**Factors affecting energy needs**

Energy needs are not the same for all people. They are influenced by various factors such as: age, gender, basal metabolism, level of physical activity, muscle mass, physical condition, duration and intensity of mental work. For example, a teenager who exercises daily needs more energy than a peer with a sedentary lifestyle.

**Balance of diet, exercise and rest**

Maintaining good health depends not only on the number of calories but also on the quality of the foods we choose. Even when there is energy balance, excessive consumption of foods high in sugar, salt and saturated fat can negatively affect health.

To achieve a balanced lifestyle, you need:

- balanced diet,
- daily physics activity,
- adequate sleep,
- correct hydration,
- restriction of the chair life.

The balance between nutrition, physical activity and rest contributes to physical health, school performance and mental well-being.

## ***PART B: Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)***

**Topic:** Balancing Calorie Intake with Physical and Mental Activity
**Duration:** 40–45 minutes
**Class:** Secondary School

| Teaching Objectives | Materials |
|---|---|
| By the end of the course, students will be able to:<br>• explain the concept of energy balance,<br>• to recognize the body's energy needs,<br>• to link nutrition with physical and mental performance,<br>• create a balanced daily diet and activity plan. | • whiteboard or projector,<br>• activity cards (running, reading, playing, sleeping, walking),<br>• worksheet "The energy of my day",<br>• food images with calorie values. |

**Course outline**

**1. Warm-up – 5 minutes**

The teacher introduces two students:

- the first one is exercising every day ,
- the second spends many hours in front of screens.

Asks the questions:

- Do they have the same energy needs?
- Do they need the same amount of food?
- Where does the body use the energy it receives?

A brief discussion follows.

**2. Presentation of New Knowledge (10 minutes)**

The teacher explains:

- what calories are ,
- how energy balance works,
- why mental work requires energy,
- how diet affects concentration and performance.

It presents examples:

- 30 minutes walking → ~120 kcal
- 1 hour of study → increased need for glucose
- 1 chocolate → ~250 kcal

**3. Main Activities – 20 minutes**

**Activity 1: "How much energy do I need?" (group)**

- Students receive activity cards and match them to energy levels:
  - low,
  - moderate,
  - high.

They discuss why each activity requires a specific action.

**Activity 2: "The energy of my day" (individual)**

Students complete a worksheet:

- what they ate yesterday,
- what kind of activities they perform the previous day,
- if there was a balance between energy intake and consumption.

**Activity 3: "Planning the Perfectly Balanced Day" (group)**

Each group creates a daily schedule that includes:

- 3 main meals + 2 snacks,

- 1 hour of physical activity,
- 2–3 hours study,
- adequate sleep. Objective: understanding energy balance.

**4. Reflection – Closing Lesson 5 minutes**

Students complete the sentence: "To have energy and concentration, I need..." and stick it on the board.

## 2.8. Organoleptic qualities of food: the share of food groups in the daily ration. The onset of obesity through unhealthy eating

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

Daily food choices are influenced not only by the nutritional value of foods but also by the characteristics we perceive with our senses. The color, smell, taste and texture of a food largely determine whether we will choose it or not. These properties are called **organoleptic properties** and are an important factor in shaping the eating habits of children and adolescents. At the same time, the balanced participation of all food groups in the daily diet contributes to meeting the nutritional needs of the body, proper development and maintaining a healthy body weight. On the contrary, the systematic consumption of energy-dense foods and lack of physical activity increase the risk of obesity.

**Organoleptic properties of foods**

Organoleptic properties are the characteristics of foods that are perceived through the senses. They include:

- **Appearance:** Appearance refers to the color, shape, and overall appearance of a food. An attractive dish usually arouses greater interest in eating.
- **Smell:** The smell of a food significantly influences the desire to consume it. Pleasant smell is often associated with positive expectations about the taste.
- **Taste:** Taste is one of the most important factors in food selection. The basic tastes are: sweet , salty , sour , bitter , umami .
- **Texture:** Texture relates to how a food feels in the mouth, whether it is crunchy, soft, creamy or hard.
- **Sound:** Some foods produce characteristic sounds when chewed, such as cereals or crunchy vegetables, which positively affects their acceptance.

Organoleptic properties influence the appetite, preferences and ultimately the eating habits of individuals.

**Food groups in the daily diet**

For a diet to be considered balanced, it must include foods from all the main groups.

◊ **Fruits and vegetables:** They provide vitamins, minerals, fibbers, and antioxidants. It is recommended to consume at least five servings per day.

◊ **Cereals and whole grain products:** They are a basic source of energy and fibbers. Approximately 4–6 servings per day are recommended.

◊ **Dairy products:** They provide calcium, protein, and vitamins essential for bone development. 2–3 servings per day are recommended.

◊ **Protein foods:** These include meat, fish, eggs, legumes, and nuts. They contribute to the growth and repair of tissues. 1–2 servings per day are recommended.

◊ **Fats:** Unsaturated fats are preferred, mainly olive oil, in small quantities.

◊ **Sweet and processed foods:** They should be consumed rarely and in moderation, as they often contain large amounts of sugar, salt and saturated fat.

**Obesity and unhealthy diet**

Obesity is a chronic condition in which excess fat accumulates in the body. It occurs when the energy intake from food is greater than the energy expended by the body over a long period of time.

**Factors that contribute to obesity**

- Super convenient consumption calories.
- Frequent consumption of fast food.
- Consumption of soft drinks and sugary drinks.
- Lack physics activity.
- Multi-hour use screens.
- A peaceful sleep.

**Consequences of obesity**

Obesity can increase the risk of:

- Diabetes type 2,
- hypertension,
- cardiovascular diseases,
- musculoskeletal problems,
- low self-esteem and psychosocial difficulties.

**Obesity prevention**

Prevention is based on:

- in the balanced diet,
- in the daily physics activity,
- drinking water instead of soft drinks,
- in the growth of fruits and vegetables,
- in limiting junk food,
- in adopting a healthy lifestyle.

Healthy eating habits acquired during childhood and adolescence contribute significantly to maintaining good health during adulthood.

## ***PART B: Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)***

**Topic:** Organoleptic Properties of Foods – Food Groups and Obesity

**Duration:** 40–45 minutes

**Class:** Secondary School

| Teaching Objectives | Materials |
|---|---|
| By the end of the course, students will be able to:<br>• to recognize the organoleptic properties of foods,<br>• understand the importance of portions in the daily diet,<br>• explain how unhealthy eating leads to obesity,<br>• to make healthier choices in their daily lives. | • small food samples (e.g. apple, cracker, carrot, chocolate),<br>• cards with pictures food ,<br>• worksheet "My senses on a plate",<br>• whiteboard or projector. |

**Course Outline**

**1. Warm-up – 5 minutes**

The teacher shows two foods:

1. a natural food (e.g. apple),
2. a processed one (e.g. chocolate)

Question: “Why do we sometimes prefer the latter?” Objective: connecting senses with Dietary choices.

**2. Presentation of New Knowledge (10 minutes)**

The teacher explains:

- what organoleptic properties are,
- how do they affect the preferences,
- what is the correct portion distribution,
- how unhealthy diet leads to obesity.

It uses examples from students' everyday choices.

**3. Main Activities – 20 minutes**

**Activity 1: “My senses on a plate” (individual)**

Students taste 3–4 foods and note:

- color,
- texture,

- taste,
- perfume,

attractiveness.

Objective: understanding the role of the senses.

**Activity 2: "My daily portions" (group)**

Each group receives food cards and must create:

- a balanced daily menu with proper portions. They discuss whether their menu is healthy.

**Activity 3: "Mission: Save the menu!" (game)**

The teacher presents an "unhealthy" menu (e.g. fast food + soft drink + dessert). Teams must "fix" it by replacing 3 foods with healthy options.

**4. Closing Reflection – 5 minutes**

Students complete the sentence: "From today on I will try to eat…..

## 2.9. Dietary regimens in special conditions (competition and exam preparation, athletes' nutrition, extreme temperatures)

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

Human nutritional needs are not constant in all cases. Depending on physical activity, mental effort and environmental conditions, the body needs different amounts of energy, fluids and nutrients. During periods of intense study, sports activities or exposure to extreme temperatures, proper nutrition contributes to maintaining health, performance and well-being.

Adapting nutrition to the specific needs of each situation is a basic prerequisite for the effective functioning of the body.

**Nutrition when preparing for exams**

During exam season, students spend many hours studying and concentrating. The brain needs a constant supply of energy to function effectively. The brain's main source of energy is glucose, which comes mainly from carbohydrates.

**Important nutrients**

**Complex carbohydrates**

Foods such as whole wheat bread, oats , whole grains, brown rice,

they provide a gradual release of energy and help maintain concentration.

**Omega-3 fatty acids**

Omega-3 fatty acids found in fish, nuts and seeds contribute to brain function and memory.

**B vitamins**

B vitamins are involved in the functioning of the nervous system and energy metabolism. They are found in whole grains, legumes, dairy products and meat.

**Hydration**

Dehydration can negatively affect concentration, memory, and mental performance. Adequate water

consumption is essential during study.

**Athletes' nutrition**

Athletes and people who exercise regularly have increased energy needs. Their diet must cover the body's needs for energy, proteins, vitamins, minerals and fluids.

**Carbohydrates**

Carbohydrates are the main fuel for muscles during exercise. Foods like bread, pasta, rice, potatoes, and fruit help replenish energy stores.

**Proteins**

Proteins contribute to muscle growth and repair after exercise . Good sources It is : fish , chicken , eggs , dairy products , legumes .

**Electrolytes**

During intense exercise, water and minerals such as sodium and potassium are lost through sweat. Replacing them is important for the proper functioning of muscles and the nervous system.

**Nutrition before and after exercise**

**Before exercise**

Before a sporting activity it is recommended to consume:

- composite carbon dioxide,
- light meals,
- enough water.
- heavy and fatty meals are avoided.

**After exercise**

After exercise, the combination of:

- protein,
- carbon dioxide,
- water.

This combination contributes to muscle recovery and replenishment of the energy consumed.

**Nutrition in extreme temperatures**

Weather conditions affect the needs of the body.

**High temperatures**

During hot days, fluid loss through sweating increases.

Recommended:

- frequent consumption water,
- fruits and vegetables with high water content,
- light meals,
- avoiding excessively fatty foods.

**Low temperatures**

In cold conditions, the body needs more energy to maintain body temperature.

Recommended:

- warm meals,
- sufficient energy consumption,
- foods rich in complex carbohydrates and proteins.

**Basic principles of nutrition in special conditions**

Regardless of the particular needs of each situation, certain principles remain constant:

- variety of food,
- balanced diet,
- tactics meals,
- sufficient hydration,
- avoiding excessive consumption of sugar and processed foods.

Proper nutrition helps improve physical and mental performance and maintain health.

## *PART B: Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)*

**Topic:** Nutritional Programs in Special Conditions

**Duration:** 40–45 minutes

**Class:** Secondary School

| Teaching Objectives | Materials |
|---|---|
| By the end of the course, students will be able to:<br>• recognize different nutritional needs in special circumstances,<br>• create menus for exams, sports and extreme temperatures,<br>• understand the importance of hydration,<br>• to adjust their diet according to the demands of the day. | • activity cards (exam, training, heat wave, cold),<br>• pictures food,<br>• worksheet "The menu of the occasion",<br>• whiteboard or projector . |

**Course outline**

**1. Warm-up – 5 minutes**

The teacher presents three different scenarios:

1. Student preparing to take exams.
2. Teenager participating in a sports tournament.
3. Person working on a day with very high temperature.

The students they discuss:

- Does everyone need the same diet?
- What needs does each case have?

**2. Presentation of new knowledge (10 minutes)**

The teacher presents

⇒ the needs of the brain during study,

⇒ athletes ' nutrition,

⇒ the importance of carbohydrates, proteins and electrolytes,

⇒ nutrition at extreme temperatures,

⇒ the meaning of hydration.

**3. Main activities – 25 minutes**

**Activity 1: "The right menu for every occasion" -** Group work

Each team takes on a scenario:

- exam preparation,
- athletic competition,
- Heat
- very cold weather.

Students choose appropriate foods and drinks and justify their choices.

A presentation in plenary follows.

**Activity 2: "Nutritional Counsellor" (10 minutes) -** Pair work

Students plan a daily meal plan for a student taking exams or a young athlete.

The program must include:

- breakfast,
- tithe
- lunch
- afternoon snack,
- Dinner
- instructions hydration.

**4. Reflection – Closing Lesson (5 minutes)**

Students complete the sentences:

**"During exam period it is important to..."**

**"An athlete needs special attention to..."**

The teacher summarizes the key points and emphasizes that nutritional needs change depending on the demands and conditions of daily life.

# 2.10. Factors disrupting metabolism (carbohydrates, proteins, lipids, minerals); deficiencies

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

Metabolism is the set of chemical processes that occur continuously in the body and allow energy production, growth, tissue repair and the maintenance of all vital functions. The proper functioning of metabolism depends largely on the quality and quantity of nutrients we receive through diet. Carbohydrates, proteins, lipids and minerals are essential components of a balanced diet. When their intake is excessive or insufficient, metabolic disorders and health problems can occur.

**Carbohydrates and metabolism**

Carbohydrates are the body's main source of energy. The glucose produced from their digestion is used by cells, especially the brain and muscles.

**Excessive carbohydrate intake**

Excessive consumption of simple sugars, such as sweets, soft drinks and processed foods, sharply increases blood sugar, leads to sudden energy fluctuations, promotes fat storage and increases the risk of obesity.

**Lack of carbohydrates**

Insufficient intake can cause fatigue, weakness, difficulty concentrating, and reduced physical and mental performance.

**Healthy sources of carbohydrates:** whole grains, legumes, fruits and vegetables.

**Proteins and metabolism**

Proteins are essential for muscle growth, tissue repair, immune system function, and the synthesis of hormones and enzymes.

**Lack of proteins**

Insufficient protein intake can lead to muscle weakness, delayed growth, reduced body defences, and easy fatigue.

**Protein sources:** meat, fish, eggs, dairy products, legumes, nuts.

Adequate protein intake is particularly important during childhood and adolescence.

**Lipids and metabolism**

Lipids (fats) are a concentrated source of energy and participate in many functions of the body.

Fats protect organs, contribute to the synthesis of hormones, and help absorb fat-soluble vitamins (A, D , E , K ).

**Excessive lipid intake**

Systematic consumption of foods rich in saturated and trans fats can cause increased cholesterol, weight gain, and an increased risk of cardiovascular disease.

**Lack of lipids**

Too low a fat intake can affect hormone synthesis, skin health, and the absorption of certain vitamins.

**Healthy sources of fats:** olive oil, nuts, fish, avocado.

## Minerals and nutritional deficiencies

Minerals are essential for the proper functioning of the body, although they are needed in small quantities.




### Iron

Iron is involved in the transport of oxygen in the blood. Iron deficiency can cause anemia, fatigue, decreased concentration, and weakness.

### Calcium

Calcium is essential for strong bones, healthy teeth, and normal muscle function. Its deficiency affects bone development.

### Magnesium

Magnesium is involved in muscle function, nervous system function, and energy production. Its deficiency can cause muscle cramps and fatigue.

### Potassium

Potassium helps regulate body fluids, muscle function, and heart function. Low potassium levels can cause muscle weakness and fatigue.

## Factors that disrupt metabolism

In addition to nutritional imbalances, there are other factors that negatively affect metabolism: poor diet, lack of sleep, chronic stress, dehydration, strict diets, and skipping meals. These factors can affect energy production, concentration, physical performance, and overall health.

## Prevention of metabolic disorders

Proper metabolic function is supported through:

- balanced diet,
- regular meals,
- adequate sleep ,
- daily exercise ,
- good hydration ,
- avoiding extreme eating habits.



## ***PART B: Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)***

**Topic:** Factors That Disrupt Metabolism – Nutritional Deficiencies

**Duration:** 40–45 minutes

**Class:** Secondary School

| Nutritional Goals | Materials |
|---|---|
| By the end of the course, students will be able to:<br>⇒ explain what metabolism is,<br>⇒ recognize the role of carbohydrates, proteins, lipids and minerals,<br>⇒ describe the consequences of nutritional deficiencies,<br>⇒ · list factors that disrupt metabolism. | ◊ Worksheet<br>◊ Food and symptom cards<br>◊ Interactive table<br>◊ Pictures food. |

**Course outline**

**1. Warm-up – 5 minutes**

The educator shows images of a:

**1.** tired student,

**2.** student full of energy.

Asks: "What could be the reason for this difference?"

Goal: connection energy needs with nutritional ingredients.

**2. Presentation of new knowledge (10 minutes)**

The teacher explains:

- the role of essential nutrients,
- what happens when there is a shortage or excess,
- how Metabolism is disrupted .

It uses examples from students' everyday choices.

**3. Main Activities – 20 minutes**

**Activity 1: "Match the symptom with the deficiency" (group)**

Students receive cards with symptoms:

- fatigue,
- cramps
- a weak nails
- difficulty concentrating. They must match them with the deficiency (iron, magnesium, protein, carbohydrates).

**Activity 2: "Making the perfect metabolism dish" (individual work)**

Students create a dish that includes:

- water, carbon dioxide,
- protein,
- healthy fat
- vegetables.

They write because they consider it balanced.

**Activity 3: "Save the metabolism!" (game)**

The teacher presents a "bad" daily menu. The groups must correct it by replacing 3 foods.

**4. Reflection- Closing lesson – 5 minutes**

Students complete the sentence: "For my metabolism to function well, I need..."

## 2.11. Food additives and their influence on health – Energy drinks and consequences of consumption

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

In the modern food industry, various substances are used that are added to foods to improve their appearance, taste, shelf life and stability. These substances are called **food additives** and are used in a large number of processed products. At the same time, the consumption of energy drinks by teenagers has been increasing in recent years. These products are often promoted as a means of increasing energy and performance, but excessive consumption can have negative health effects. Informing students about food additives and energy drinks contributes to the development of responsible dietary choices.

**What are food additives?**

Food additives are substances added to foods to improve the taste, color, shelf life, texture, and stability of the products.

On food packaging they usually appear in the form of **E-codes ( E - numbers )** , which are used throughout the European Union to identify approved additives.

**Food additive categories**

- **Colourings ( E 100– E 199):** Used to give or enhance the colour of foods and drinks. They are often found in sweets, soft drinks and processed products.
- **Preservatives ( E 200– E 299):** They protect foods from the growth of microorganisms and extend their shelf life.
- **Antioxidants ( E 300– E 399):** They slow down deterioration caused by oxygen and help maintain food quality.
- **Thickeners and stabilizers ( E 400– E 499):** Improve the texture and maintain the stability of products such as sauces, yogurts and desserts.
- **Sweeteners ( E 950– E 969):** Used as sugar substitutes in low-calorie or sugar-free products.
- **Flavour enhancers:** They improve or enhance the flavour of foods. A typical example is glutamate monosodium ( MSG ).

**Effect of additives on health**

Additives that are legally available on the market have been evaluated and approved by relevant food safety organizations. However, excessive consumption of processed foods can lead to increased intake of additives, sugar and salt. Possible effects reported in the literature include: headaches, allergic reactions, hyperactivity in some children, fluid retention, weight gain, increased sugar and salt intake.

For this reason, it is recommended to consume more fresh and fewer processed foods.

**What are energy drinks?**

Energy drinks are beverages that contain substances with a stimulating effect and are advertised as products that increase energy and alertness. Their most common ingredients are caffeine, sugar, taurine, B vitamins, and herbal stimulants. Energy drinks should not be confused with isotonic drinks, which have a different purpose and composition.

**Why are energy drinks popular among teenagers?**

Teenagers are often influenced by advertising, peer influence, the association of products with sports, action and fun, and the belief that they instantly increase performance and energy.

Companies use bright colours, eye-catching logos, and sponsorships of sporting events to attract a young audience.

**Consequences of consuming energy drinks**

Excessive consumption of energy drinks can cause increased heart rate, tachycardia, anxiety and nervousness, insomnia, headaches, dehydration, and a sudden drop in energy after the initial stimulation. According to the recommendations of the competent authorities, energy drinks are not recommended for children and adolescents, nor should they be used as a means of hydration during physical exercise. The combination of energy drinks with alcohol or certain medications is considered particularly dangerous.

**Responsible dietary choices**

Consumers can protect their health:

- reading the tags food ,
- recognizing the additional ingredients ,
- limiting overly processed foods ,
- choosing water instead of energy drinks,
- adopting a balanced diet based on natural foods.

## ***PART B: Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)***

**Topic: Food** Additives and Energy Drinks

**Duration** : 40–45 minutes

**Class:** Secondary School

| 1. Learning objectives | 3. Materials |
|---|---|
| By the end of the course, students will be able to:<br>• to define food additives,<br>• recognize basic categories of additives,<br>• explain the role of E - numbers ,<br>• describe the composition of energy drinks<br>• to report possible risks from their consumption. | • Food and beverage packaging<br>• Product labels<br>• Group worksheet<br>• Panel |

**Course outline**

**1. Warm-up – 5 minutes**

The teacher presents an energy drink and a bottle of water.

Questions :

- Which of the two would you choose after exercise?
- Which you consider more healthy;
- Why are energy drinks so popular?

A brief discussion follows.

**2. Presentation of new knowledge (10 minutes)**

Presented by:

- food additives ,
- the E -number categories ,
- the possible effects of overconsumption of processed foods,
- the ingredients of energy drinks,
- their effects on adolescent health.

**3. Main Activities – 25 minutes**

**Activity 1: "Tag Detective" -** Group work

The groups examine real food labels.

identify :

- E-numbers,
- preservatives ,
- pigments ,
- sweet antiques.

They discuss why they have been added to the product and present their conclusions to the class.

**Activity 2: “Myth or Reality?” -** Pair work

The teacher presents suggestions such as:

- "Energy drinks hydrate better than water."
- "All food additives are dangerous."
- "Excessive consumption of energy drinks can cause insomnia."

Students discuss and substantiate their point of view based on what they have learned.

**4. Reflection – Closing Lesson (5 minutes)**

Students complete the sentences:

**"One thing I will now check on labels is..."**

**"One reason I would avoid energy drinks is..."**

The teacher summarizes the key points of the unit and emphasizes the importance of a critical attitude towards advertised products.

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## *From our activities…*

**International Volunteer Day**
**"Love Baskets"**

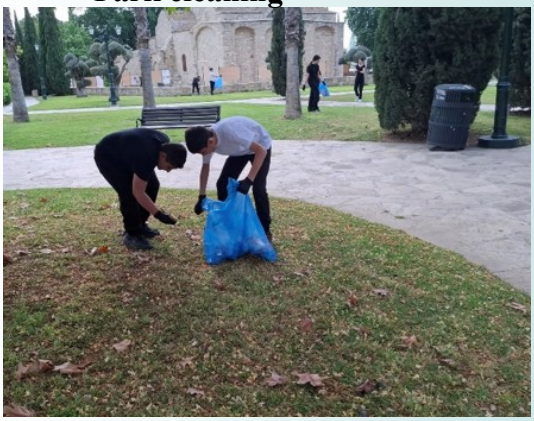


**Workshop for the effect of toxic**





**Park cleaning**



**Plant trees in a park near school**



**Healthy snack for World Health Day**







**Exercise Day for World Health Day**

**Beach CleaningLidl Food Academy -**






**Cooking Healthy**

**Be Active –**
**Dancing all together**

**Healthy Snack for Word**



**Health Day 2026**

**World Walking Day – Morning Walking**



**World Mental Health Day**



**Plant trees in school yard**



**Organic Food – Label studying**



**Workshops for mental powering**



**Sports Days in School**



# Chapter 3

# MOVEMENT FOR WELL-BEING

## *3.1. PART A: Theoretical Background*

### Walking for Well-being: Learning Through Movement and Nature

Modern children spend much of their day sitting in classrooms, travelling by car or bus, using digital devices, or playing indoors. As a result, many children are less physically active than previous generations and have fewer opportunities to experience the benefits of everyday walking and spending time outdoors.

Walking is one of the easiest and most natural forms of physical activity. Unlike competitive sports, walking is accessible to every student regardless of fitness level or sporting ability. It requires no expensive equipment and can be enjoyed throughout life. Because it is an activity that everyone can participate in, walking promotes inclusion, confidence and equal opportunities for all students.

Research has shown that regular walking improves cardiovascular health, strengthens muscles and bones, reduces stress, improves mood, increases concentration and supports learning. A short walk before studying or after school can help students return to learning with better focus, improved memory and reduced anxiety.

Walking is not only beneficial for physical health but also for emotional, mental and social well-being. During walks, students communicate naturally with classmates, observe nature, solve problems together and learn to appreciate their local environment. They also develop curiosity, independence and confidence while exploring the world around them.

Today's busy lifestyles often leave parents with little time to walk with their children. As a result, many children experience nature mainly through television, social media or digital devices rather than through real-life experiences. Schools therefore have an important role in helping students reconnect with their surroundings through safe, structured walking activities.

This optional subject encourages students to discover that movement does not always need to be competitive or physically demanding. Walking offers a peaceful opportunity to relax, reflect, observe, communicate and develop healthy habits that can last a lifetime.

**Goal of "Walking for Well-being"**

To promote students' physical, mental, emotional and social well-being through regular walking activities that encourage healthy lifestyles, environmental awareness, self-reflection and improved readiness for learning.

**Objectives**

By the end of the optional course, students will be able to:

- Understand the relationship between walking and physical health.
- Explain how walking reduces stress and improves mental well-being.
- Recognise the benefits of walking for concentration, memory and academic performance.

- Participate safely in walking activities in different environments.
- Observe and appreciate natural and local surroundings.
- Communicate respectfully and cooperate with classmates during walks.
- Develop healthy habits that can be used before examinations, homework or other stressful situations.
- Understand road safety and environmental responsibility while walking.
- Reflect on their own physical and emotional well-being.

**Why Walking?**

Walking is different from a traditional Physical Education lesson. During Physical Education lessons, students often focus on learning sports skills, improving coordination, following rules and performing specific physical tasks. While these are important learning experiences, they may also create pressure for some students who lack confidence or have lower physical abilities.

Walking, however, allows every student to participate successfully regardless of ability. Students can move at a comfortable pace while relaxing their minds, talking with friends, observing nature and reflecting on their feelings. Unlike traditional Physical Education, walking does not require students to compete against others or master sport-specific skills. Instead, it provides an inclusive learning environment where every child can experience the benefits of movement without the pressure of performance.

Walking teaches students that movement can be enjoyable, calming and part of everyday life rather than only organised sport. It helps them understand that physical activity is not only about exercise but also about taking care of their mental health and overall well-being.

During our school's April walking activities, I observed that students naturally asked questions, noticed wildlife, recognised plants, read road signs and information boards, discussed what they observed and even offered help to older members of the community when appropriate. They became more curious about their surroundings and showed genuine interest in learning from real-life experiences. These observations demonstrated that walking supports both learning and well-being in ways that cannot always be achieved inside the classroom.

Walking can also become a valuable strategy before examinations or revision sessions by reducing anxiety, improving concentration and providing an active mental break. Students may discover that a short walk helps them return to studying feeling calmer, more focused and better prepared to learn.

**Part B: Methodological and Formative Assessment Suggestions**

Assessment in this optional subject will focus on each student's individual progress rather than competition with others. The aim is to encourage students to become more aware of their own physical activity, well-being and personal development throughout the course.

During walking lessons, students may use a walking app or pedometer to record their activity. Each student will have their own login to monitor attendance, distance walked and personal progress throughout the course. The app will encourage students to set realistic goals, track their own development and celebrate improvements, no matter how small. Students will also have the opportunity to record short reflections on how

they felt before and after each walk, including their mood, energy levels, concentration and overall well-being. This reflective feedback will help students recognise the positive impact that regular walking can have on both their physical and emotional health.
Assessment will be based on a variety of evidence, including:

- regular attendance and participation in walking lessons;
- active involvement and a positive attitude during activities;
- individual progress recorded through the walking app;
- short reflections on how walking affects concentration, mood and well-being;
- teamwork, communication and respect for others during walks;

safe behaviour and awareness of the local environment.

Students who attend all walking sessions and actively participate throughout the course will receive recognition through certificates, digital achievement badges or positive teacher feedback. Students who miss sessions or need additional encouragement will be supported in setting realistic personal goals to help increase their confidence and participation. Progress will be measured against each student's own development rather than compared with other members of the class.

The overall purpose of assessment is to encourage students to develop healthy lifelong habits, become more physically active and recognise how regular walking can improve both their physical health and their mental well-being. By reflecting on their own progress, students can see that small, consistent changes can have a positive impact on their health, learning and everyday lives.

**Scientific justification**

Walking is one of the safest, simplest and most accessible forms of physical activity for children. Scientific research demonstrates that regular walking contributes to physical fitness, emotional well-being, improved concentration and better cognitive functioning.

Walking increases blood flow and oxygen supply to the brain, stimulates brain plasticity and supports working memory. These benefits help students maintain attention, improve memory and return to classroom learning feeling calmer and more focused.

Research also suggests that regular physical activity reduces stress and anxiety while improving mood and emotional well-being. Walking before or after lessons, homework or examinations may help students regulate their emotions, reduce mental fatigue and improve their readiness for learning.

Outdoor walking provides additional educational benefits. Students become more aware of their local environment, develop observation skills, strengthen communication with their peers and learn through real-life experiences rather than only from textbooks. Walking also encourages curiosity, independence and respect for nature and the local community.

The proposed optional subject is further supported by Attention Restoration Theory (ART), which suggests that spending time in natural environments helps the brain recover from mental fatigue. After walking outdoors, students often return to learning with improved concentration, attention and emotional well-being. Incorporating regular walking into the school curriculum may therefore benefit both students' well-being and the overall teaching and learning process.

Because walking is suitable for students of all abilities, it provides an inclusive approach to

promoting lifelong healthy habits, resilience and overall well-being.

**Conclusion**

Walking is much more than a form of exercise. It provides opportunities for students to learn, observe, communicate, reflect and connect with both nature and their local community. Through simple everyday walks, students can develop healthier lifestyles, stronger social relationships and greater awareness of the world around them.

The "Walking for Well-being" optional subject aims to encourage lifelong healthy habits by showing students that movement can be simple, enjoyable and accessible to everyone. It supports physical health, mental well-being and academic readiness while helping students appreciate nature, build confidence and develop practical life skills that extend far beyond the classroom.

## 3. 2. From our activities...




**Saving Turtles, Protecting Our Seas**







Science for a Helthier Sea





Planting for a Greener Future





Discover Species, Protect Nature



Climate Change
















**European Sports Day**





### 3. 3. PART B: Lesson Plans (1 teaching period)

**Topic:** Walking and My Well-Being

**Duration:** 40–45 minutes

**Class:** Secondary School (students aged 12–14)

**Location:** School grounds or a safe walking route near the school

**Objective:** Students will be able to:

1.Identify the physical, mental, emotional and social benefits of walking.

2.Observe how their mood, energy and concentration may change before and after a short walk.

3.Participate safely and responsibly in a group walking activity.

Reflect on how walking can become part of a healthy daily routine.

**Lesson Flow**

Warm-up and Well-Being Check (5 min)

Before beginning the walk, ask students:

"How do you feel right now?"

Students privately rate themselves from 1 to 5 in the following areas:

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mood | | | | | |
| Energy | | | | | |
| Concentration | | | | | |
| Stress/relaxation | | | | | |

Briefly explain that walking is not only a way of exercising. It can also provide an opportunity to relax, think, communicate, observe the environment and prepare the mind for learning.

**Activity 1 — Walk at Your Own Pace (15–20 min)**

Take students on a safe, planned walking route around the school grounds or local area.

Explain that this is not a race or competition. Students should walk at a comfortable pace and remain with the group.

During the first few minutes, encourage students simply to notice how their body feels while walking.

Ask them to think about:

- Is my breathing changing?
- Do I feel warmer?
- How does my body feel after sitting in class compared with walking?
- Does my mind feel busy or relaxed?

The aim is for students to become aware of movement and their own well-being rather than focusing on speed or sporting performance.

**Activity 2 — Walk, Look and Listen (5–10 min)**

During part of the walk, ask students to pay closer attention to their surroundings.

Each student should try to notice:

- three things they can see;
- two things they can hear;
- one thing they have never noticed before.

These may include plants, birds, buildings, road signs, colours, sounds, weather conditions, people or features of the local environment.

When appropriate, students may quietly discuss their observations with a partner.

At the end of this part of the walk, ask:

"Do you notice more about your surroundings when you walk instead of travelling by car or bus?"

**Activity 3 — My Before-and-After Check (5 min)**

After returning from the walk, students repeat their original ratings.

| Area | Before Walking | After Walking |
|---|---|---|
| Mood | / 5 | / 5 |
| Energy | / 5 | / 5 |
| Concentration | / 5 | / 5 |
| Stress/Relaxation | / 5 | / 5 |

Students then answer:

1. What changed the most after the walk?
2. Did anything stay the same?
3. ow does your body feel now?

How does your mind feel now?

Explain that different students may experience the walk differently. The purpose is not to achieve a particular score but to become more aware of how movement affects them personally.

**Activity 4 — When Could Walking Help Me? (5 min)**

In pairs, students discuss situations in which a short walk might be useful.

Examples could include:

- before starting homework;
- during a break from studying;
- before an examination;

**Reflection and Closure (5 min)**

Ask students to complete one of the following sentences:

- "After walking today, I noticed…"
- "Walking could help my well-being because…"
- "One thing I noticed in my surroundings was…"

"One time when I could use walking to help myself is…"

Conclude by reinforcing the key message:

Movement does not always have to mean sport or competition. A simple walk can be a form of physical activity, relaxation, learning, communication and connection with the world around us.

**Teacher Note**

The activity should be inclusive and non-competitive. Students should not be compared according to speed, distance or physical ability. The emphasis should be on participation, personal awareness and individual progress.

Before leaving the school grounds, the teacher should review basic walking and road-safety rules and ensure that the selected route is appropriate for the students.

Students who cannot complete the same distance as others should be offered an adapted route or equivalent activity so that everyone can participate meaningfully.

The before-and-after ratings are intended for personal reflection. Students should not be required to disclose their scores to the class.

Where available, students may use a pedometer or walking application to record distance or steps. These results should be used to monitor individual progress rather than to create competition between students.

**Formative Assessment**

Assessment can be based on:

- participation in the walking activity;
- safe and responsible behaviour;
- awareness of the surrounding environment;
- respectful communication with classmates;
- completion of the before-and-after reflection;

ability to identify at least one way in which walking may support personal well-being.

**Optional Follow-Up**

***My Walking Journal***

Students can keep a simple walking journal during the course.

After each walk, they record:

Date: _____

Walking time: _____

Distance/steps (optional): _____

Mood before: ____ / 5

Mood after: ____ / 5

Concentration before: ____ / 5

Concentration after: ____ / 5

Something I noticed during today's walk:

_____

_____

Something I learned about myself or my surroundings:

_____

_____

Over several lessons, students can compare their entries and reflect on whether regular walking has influenced their mood, concentration, physical activity and overall well-being.

_____

_____

**Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)**

**Topic:** Walking Detectives: Learning Through Nature and Our Community

**Duration:** 40–45 minutes

**Class:** Secondary School (students aged 12–14)

**Location:** School grounds or a safe walking route in the local community

**Objective**

Students will be able to:

1. Observe and identify features of the natural and local environment during a walk.
2. Develop curiosity and observation skills through movement.
3. Recognise that walking can provide opportunities for learning outside the classroom.

Demonstrate responsible and respectful behaviour towards the environment and local community.

Lesson Flow

Warm-up – What Do We Really Notice? (5 min)

Before leaving the classroom, ask students:

“Think about the route you normally take to school. What do you remember seeing along the way?”

Collect a few answers.

Explain that people often pass through the same places every day without really observing them. Today's walk will therefore be different: students will become “Walking Detectives.”

Their aim is not to walk quickly or cover the greatest distance, but to slow down, look carefully, listen and discover things they might normally miss.

**Activity 1** — The Walking Detective Challenge (15–20 min)

Take students on a planned walking route around the school grounds or local community.

Students work in pairs and try to find examples from the following categories:

Nature

- a plant or tree they recognise;
- an insect, bird or other animal;
- evidence of changing weather or seasons;
- something natural they find interesting.

Community

- an important building or community facility;
- a road sign;
- an information sign or notice;
- something that helps people move safely through the community.

Something New

- something they have walked past before but never really noticed;
- something that makes them curious;
- something they would like to know more about.

Students can record their observations using short notes. If permitted by school policy, they may also photograph interesting observations using a tablet or mobile device.

**Activity 2** — Stop, Look, Listen (5 min)

At a safe point along the route, ask the group to stop.

For approximately one minute, students remain quiet and simply observe their surroundings.

Ask them to notice:

5 things they can see?

4 things they can hear?

3 things connected with nature?

2 things connected with people or the community?

1 thing that makes them curious?

Afterwards, students briefly compare their observations with a partner.

Ask:

"Did everyone notice exactly the same things?"

Use their responses to highlight that careful observation can help us discover new information even in familiar surroundings.

**Activity 3** — Questions From Our Walk (5–7 min)

After returning to school, each pair writes down one question inspired by something they observed.

**Examples:**

- What kind of tree did we see?
- Why is that road sign located there?
- What birds live in our area?
- Why is there litter in one particular place?
- What is the history of that building?
- How could this area be made safer or more pleasant for walking?

Explain that learning often begins with noticing something and asking a question about it.
Walking therefore provides opportunities not only for physical activity but also for curiosity and real-life learning.

**Activity 4** — Respect Our Walking Environment (5 min)

Ask students to identify responsible behaviours that people should demonstrate while walking in nature or through their community.
Create a quick class list.
Possible ideas may include:

- use pedestrian crossings where available;
- stay with the group;
- respect other pedestrians;
- avoid damaging plants;
- do not disturb animals;
- do not drop litter;
- respect public property;
- follow road-safety rules;
- help keep shared spaces clean.

Reflection and Closure (5 min)
Students complete one of the following:

- "Something I noticed today that I had never noticed before was…"
- "Something I became curious about was…"
- "Walking helped me learn because…"
- "One way I can respect my local environment while walking is…"

Conclude with the message:
When we walk, we do more than move our bodies. We can observe, question, discover and learn from the real world around us.

**Teacher Note**

The route should be checked in advance and selected according to students' age, mobility and safety needs.
The activity is about observation rather than identifying every plant, animal, building or object correctly.

Teachers do not need to provide immediate answers to every question. Students' questions can become starting points for later research.

Encourage students to respect nature, public spaces and members of the community encountered during the walk.

Where appropriate, observations from the walk can be connected to Geography, Biology, Science, History, Environmental Education or other curriculum areas.

**Formative Assessment**

Assessment can be based on:

- active participation;
- quality of observations and questions;
- cooperation with a partner;
- safe walking behaviour;
- respect for nature and the community;
- ability to explain how walking can support learning.

**Optional Follow-Up**

***My Local Discovery***

Students choose one observation or question from the walk and carry out a short investigation at home or in class.

They complete:

During our walk I noticed: _____

My question was: _____

What I discovered: _____

Something else I would like to know: _____

**Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)**

**Topic:** Walk, Breathe, Focus: Movement Before Learning and Exams

**Duration:** 40–45 minutes

**Class:** Secondary School (students aged 12–14)

**Location:** Classroom and school grounds/safe outdoor walking area

**Objective**

Students will be able to:

1. Explain how a short walk may support relaxation, concentration and readiness for learning.
2. Recognise personal signs of stress or mental tiredness.
3. Practise walking combined with simple breathing and awareness techniques.

Identify situations in which a short walk could become a useful healthy strategy.

**Lesson Flow**

**Warm-up** – When My Brain Needs a Break (5 min)

Ask students:

"How do you know when you have been studying or concentrating for too long?"

Collect examples such as:

- difficulty concentrating;
- feeling restless;
- reading the same sentence repeatedly;
- tiredness;
- irritability;
- worrying about a test;
- wanting to check the phone constantly.

Explain that mental tiredness is normal and that taking an active break can sometimes help us return to a task feeling calmer and more prepared.

**Activity 1** — Before the Walk: My Focus Check (5 min)

Students privately rate themselves:

My concentration right now: ____ / 5

My energy right now: ____ / 5

How relaxed I feel: ____ / 5

Then give students a short concentration task appropriate to their age, such as remembering a short list of words, solving a simple puzzle or reading a short paragraph and answering two questions.

The activity should not be graded. Explain that it is simply part of today's experiment.

**Activity 2** — Walk, Breathe and Notice (15 min)

Take students outside for a comfortable group walk.

For the first few minutes, students walk normally and quietly.

Then guide them through simple awareness prompts:

Notice your steps.

How do your feet feel when they touch the ground?

Notice your breathing.

Without forcing or changing it dramatically, become aware of your natural breathing rhythm.

Notice your body.

Are your shoulders relaxed or tense?

Look around you.

Notice the colours, sounds and movement around you.

Students should not be expected to achieve a particular emotional state. The purpose is simply to pay attention to their body, breathing and surroundings while moving.

During the final part of the walk, students may talk quietly with a partner.

**Activity 3** — After the Walk: Ready to Learn? (7 min)

On returning to the classroom, students again rate:

My concentration now: ____ / 5

My energy now: ____ / 5

How relaxed I feel now: ____ / 5

Repeat a short concentration task similar to the first one.

Ask students to compare their own experience rather than competing with classmates.

Discuss:

- Did you feel different after walking?
- Was it easier, harder or about the same to concentrate?
- Did your energy change?
- Did walking quietly feel different from walking while talking?

Emphasise that individual responses may differ.

**Activity 4** — My Healthy Study-Break Plan (5–7 min)

Students imagine the following situation:

"You have been studying for an examination for a long time. You are becoming tired and finding it difficult to concentrate."

Ask them to create a simple healthy break plan.

I notice that I need a break when:

_____

Instead of staying at my desk, I could:

_____

I could walk for approximately:

_____

Afterwards, I would:

_____

Students may include walking around the block with a parent, walking in a garden, taking a short outdoor break or another safe form of movement appropriate to their circumstances.

Reflection and Closure (5 min)

Ask students to complete:

"One thing I learned about movement and concentration today is…"

and

"One situation in which I could try a short walk is…"

Finish with the key message:

A short walk can be a simple active break. Walking gives the body an opportunity to move and may help us return to learning feeling calmer, refreshed and more ready to concentrate.

**Teacher Note**

Avoid presenting walking as a guaranteed solution to examination stress or concentration difficulties. Encourage students to observe their own responses and discover whether walking is useful for them.

The activity should remain calm and non-competitive. Concentration tasks are for reflection and should not be graded or used to compare students.

Students should not be asked to publicly disclose anxiety, stress or personal difficulties.

The walking activity can be adapted to the school grounds if leaving the premises is not practical.

**Formative Assessment**

Assessment can consider:

- participation in the walking activity;
- ability to identify signs that a mental break may be useful;
- completion of the before-and-after reflection;
- understanding of the relationship between movement, relaxation and readiness for learning;
- creation of a realistic personal study-break strategy;

safe and responsible participation.

**Optional Follow-Up**

***Try It at Home***

Before one homework or revision session, students record:

How focused do I feel before studying? ____ / 5

After an appropriate period of studying, they take a short, safe walking break where possible.

They then record:

How focused do I feel after my break? ____ / 5

Did the walking break help me? Why or why not?

_____

_____

## Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)

**Topic:** Walking Together: Communication, Cooperation and Belonging

**Duration:** 40–45 minutes

**Class:** Secondary School (students aged 12–14)

**Location:** School grounds or a safe local walking route

**Objective**

Students will be able to:

1.Recognise walking as an opportunity for positive social interaction.

2.Practise respectful communication and active listening while walking.

3.Cooperate with different classmates in a relaxed, non-competitive activity.

4. Explain how movement with others can contribute to social and emotional well-being.

**Lesson Flow**

**Warm-up** – Why Walk Together? (5 min)

Ask students:

"How is walking with another person different from walking alone?"

Collect a few responses.

Students might mention conversation, friendship, safety, sharing observations or simply enjoying someone's company.

Explain that well-being is not only physical. Feeling connected to other people and having opportunities to communicate are also important.

Today's walk therefore focuses on movement and connection.

**Activity 1** — Walk and Talk (10 min)

Organise students into pairs.

Students begin walking at a comfortable pace.

Give them a simple discussion prompt:

"What is something you enjoy doing when you have free time?"

Student A speaks for approximately one minute while Student B listens.

Then they switch roles.

Before beginning, establish three listening rules:

- Do not interrupt.
- Pay attention to what your partner is saying.
- Ask at least one respectful follow-up question.

After a few minutes, change partners where practical and provide another neutral prompt, such as:

- What is one place you would like to visit?
- What outdoor activity do you enjoy?
- What is something interesting you have learned recently?

What makes a good friend or teammate?

Students should not be required to discuss sensitive or personal subjects.

**Activity 2** — Silent Walking Partners (5 min)

Students continue walking with a partner, but this time they remain quiet for approximately two minutes.

Their task is to observe the environment together.

Afterwards, each partner identifies one thing they noticed.

Ask:

"Did being quiet change what you noticed?"

Explain that spending time with others does not always require constant conversation. Walking can provide

both social connection and quiet shared experiences.

**Activity 3** — Cooperation Challenge (10 min)

In small groups, give students a simple observation challenge to complete while walking.

For example, the group must find:

- something representing nature;
- something representing safety;
- something representing community;
- something representing movement;

something that everyone in the group finds interesting.

The group must agree together on its five choices.

The purpose is not to finish first. Students must practise:

- listening to everyone's ideas;
- taking turns;
- reaching an agreement;
- staying together;
- respecting different opinions.

**Activity 4** — Building a Walking Community (5 min)

After returning, ask groups:

"What behaviours made walking together enjoyable and respectful?"

Create a class Walking Together Code.

For example:

When we walk together, we…

- stay with our group;
- respect everyone's walking pace;
- listen to one another;
- include everyone;
- follow safety rules;
- respect people in the community;
- respect nature;
- help one another when appropriate.

Display the code for future walking lessons.

Reflection and Closure (5 min)

Students complete one sentence:

- "Walking with someone can support well-being because…"
- "A good walking partner is someone who…"

- “One communication skill I practised today was…”
- “One thing our group did well was…”

Conclude with the message:

Walking can connect us not only with our bodies and our environment, but also with other people. Moving together provides opportunities to talk, listen, cooperate and develop a sense of belonging.

**Teacher Note**

Pairing and grouping should be managed carefully so that students are not repeatedly allowed to choose only close friends. The lesson can provide an opportunity for positive interaction with different classmates. However, students' comfort and existing interpersonal circumstances should be considered when forming pairs.

Discussion prompts should remain neutral and age-appropriate and should not require students to disclose sensitive personal information.

The teacher should reinforce that walking pace and physical ability are not being assessed. Groups should adapt so that all members can participate comfortably.

Positive social behaviour, inclusion and cooperation are more important than completing every challenge.

**Formative Assessment**

Assessment can be based on:

- active participation;
- respectful listening and communication;
- cooperation with different classmates;
- inclusion and support of group members;
- safe behaviour during the walk;

ability to explain the relationship between walking, communication and social well-being.

**Optional Follow-Up**

***Walk With Someone***

Students are encouraged, where appropriate, to take a safe walk outside school with a family member or another trusted person.

Afterwards, they reflect:

Who did I walk with? _____

What did we talk about or notice together?

_____

How did I feel before the walk? _____

How did I feel afterwards? _____

One thing I enjoyed about walking with another person was:_____.

# Chapter 4: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

## *1. 1. PART A: Theoretical Background*

The environmental problems we face demand, more than ever, a development model that links nature preservation with individual health, ensuring the quality of life for present and future generations. In this context, it is imperative that schools assume an active role in educating conscious citizens, who recognize that their health directly depends on the balance of ecosystems and the preservation of the environment.

Environmental education and health promotion are inseparable pillars of citizenship education. Due to their cross-curricular nature, these areas can be addressed with students in various ways. These topics are part of the curriculum—in subjects such as Natural Sciences, Geography, or Citizenship and Development—or through strategic partnerships with leading organizations (World Wildlife Fund, Eco-Schools, Quercus, and the Directorate-General for Education).

In Portugal, there is the Environmental Education Framework for Sustainability from the DGE, a guiding document for environmental education in schools. Additionally, the Educational Project of the Terras de Larus School Grouping is one of the most important documents guiding the educational community toward achieving the established goals regarding the promotion of good practices in nature and environmental preservation. Thus, the objective is for students to develop skills in environmental education. Classroom activities, projects, and initiatives will contribute to the personal development, environmental awareness, and healthy growth of students. They are expected to learn how to use knowledge to interpret and evaluate surrounding realities, formulate and debate arguments, and sustain positions and choices—skills considered fundamental for active participation in informed decision-making in a democratic society regarding human impacts on the environment.

**The general objectives of the plan to be developed with students are as follows:**

- Deepen knowledge about sustainable development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- Understand the importance of preserving Biodiversity;
- Identify pollutants, threats to ecosystems, and good practices for their protection;
- Understand the importance of water as an essential resource for the existence of life on the planet;
- Adopt behaviors aimed at the preservation of water and oceans;
- Participate in environmental volunteer actions for the preservation of oceans and coastal areas (beach cleanups, river cleanups, etc.);
- Distinguish between renewable and non-renewable energies and the environmental impact of their production;
- Learn about different energy sources, as well as the advantages and disadvantages resulting from their use;
- Adopt behaviors aimed at energy sustainability;
- Understand the causes of climate change;

- Understand the environmental impacts resulting from climate change;
- Develop awareness of the need to adopt behaviors aimed at adaptation and mitigation in the face of climate change.

To achieve these objectives, a curriculum plan was drawn up to be implemented throughout the school year as an optional subject or elective area related to environmental and health topics. This plan, presented below, spans two academic semesters.

## GUIDE FOR OPTIONAL COURSE - ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

**1st SEMESTER**

### THEME A - FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS, POLLUTION, AND HEALTH IMPACTS

**1. Environmental pollution – what is it and who produces it?**

**Theoretical Framework:** Pollution is the introduction of substances or energy into the environment that cause negative effects on ecosystems and human health. Identification of anthropogenic sources (industry, transport, agriculture) and natural sources.

**Objectives:**

O1. Define pollution and classify the main polluting agents.

O2. Understand the impact of pollution on public health and quality of life.

O3. Recognize the importance of community action and the prevention of natural and technological risks.

**2. The effects of pollution on health**

**Theoretical Framework:** Direct relationship between the quality of air, water, and soil and the emergence of human pathologies (respiratory diseases, cardiovascular conditions, neoplasms, and endocrine disorders).

**Objectives:**

O1. Recognize pollution as one of the main causes of respiratory diseases.

O2. Identify various types of diseases caused by polluting agents.

O3. Recognize the importance of avoiding situations of pollution and health risks.

**Activities to be developed with students**

Field Action: Organization of the Cleanup Brigade in coordination with the Eco-Schools program to mark World Cleanup Day.

External Session: Hosting a lecture/workshop with the WWF or local civil protection on resilience and environmental disaster reduction.

**3. A cleaner community: selective waste collection for a healthy planet**

**Theoretical Framework:** Circuits of urban waste recovery, the importance of source sorting, and the role of citizens in sustainable local waste management.

**Objectives:**

O1. Learn to identify types of waste.

**Activities to be developed with students:**

In the classroom or with the Cleanup Brigade, sort types of waste and place them in the corresponding recycling bin (paper, plastics/packaging, or glass).

**4. New objects become waste. But can waste become new objects?**

**Theoretical Framework:** Principles of Circular Economy vs. Linear Economy. Waste hierarchy (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) and eco-design.

**Objectives:**

O1. Analyze waste production in the school and local community.

O2. Explain the processes of recycling and material reuse.

O3. Propose sustainable urban solutions to improve community health.

**Activities to be developed with students:**

Study Visit: Guided tour of a regional Waste Processing and Recycling Center.

Practical Work: Audit of the school's recycling bins within the framework of the Eco-Schools environmental audit.

Student Activity: 'Making new from old' — producing new objects by reusing materials.

**5. Genetic heritage – the importance of conserving natural resources and species diversity**

**Theoretical Framework:** Biodiversity as a guarantee of ecosystem stability and ecosystem services. Genetic heritage conservation services and endangered species.

**Objectives:**

O1. Recognize the importance of conserving natural resources and species diversity.

**Activities to be developed with students:**

Screening of a film or documentary on the topic, followed by a debate.

## 2nd SEMESTER

## THEME B - GLOBAL SCALE, BIODIVERSITY, AND ENERGY TRANSITION

**6. Major environmental problems in our society and worldwide**

**Theoretical Framework:** Climate change, deforestation, drinking water scarcity, ocean acidification, and ozone layer depletion.

**Objectives:**

O1. Recognize the importance of using renewable energies for the preservation of our planet.

**Activities to be developed with students:**

Implement lesson plans related to renewable energy and respective activities proposed in the lesson plans. (attached)

**7. Main sources of pollution at local, national, and global levels**

**Theoretical Framework:** Comparative diagnosis of the origins and dispersion of pollutants at micro (local) and macro (global) scales.

**Objectives:**

O1.Identify the causes and consequences of major global environmental problems.

O2. Relate local pollution to its planet-scale impacts.

**Activities to be developed with students:**

Collaborative construction of models for alternative energy sources (solar, wind, hydro, and biomass) promoting the study of decarbonization.

**THEME C - NORMS, GOVERNANCE, AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP**

**8. European standards for environmental quality**

**Theoretical Framework:** European environmental legislation (European Green Deal, air and water quality directives). Environmental quality indices.

**9. Decisions regarding the prevention/reduction of pollution source impacts on individual and family life**

**Theoretical Framework:** Family ecological footprint, responsible consumption, energy efficiency, and sustainable mobility.

**Objectives:**

O1. Know the regulatory framework and environmental quality standards of the European Union.

O2. Adopt and promote behaviors leading to a reduced ecological footprint within the family environment.

**Activities to be developed with students:**

Awareness Campaign: Preparation and implementation of practical activities aimed at the school community regarding carbon footprint.

Exhibition: Presentation of models created throughout the year during Earth Day celebrations.

**10. Governmental and non-governmental structures involved in environmental protection**

**Theoretical Framework:** The role of the Ministry of the Environment, Portuguese Environment Agency (APA), local municipalities, and ENGOs (e.g., WWF, Quercus, GEOTA) in safeguarding the territory.

**Objectives:**

O1. Distinguish the responsibilities of governmental bodies and ENGOs in environmental protection.

O2. Understand the intrinsic and functional value of biodiversity.

O3. Recognize the importance of forest habitats in climate regulation and air purification.

O4. Assess the importance of marine and coastal ecosystems for global equilibrium.

**Activities to be developed with students:**

External Action: Beach cleanup campaign in a coastal area near the school, including waste categorization.

Eco-Schools: Exhibition of final projects and review of metrics achieved by the Cleanup Brigade.

Study Visit: Field trip to a regional Protected Area for sampling and identification of native species.

Construction of models representing the preservation of natural ecosystems (e.g., native forest vs. deforested

area).

**11. Celebrating Commemorative Days:**

⇒ World Cleanup Day (September) & International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction (October 8)

⇒ International Day of Forests (March 21)

⇒ World Health Day (April 7)

⇒ Earth Day (April 22) & International Day for Biological Diversity (May 22)

⇒ World Environment Day (June 5) & World Oceans Day (June 8)

## 4. 2 LESSON PLANS – SCIENCE / GEOGRAPHY / ENGLISH – 8TH GRADE

| | |
|---|---|
| **School Year**: Grade 8<br>**No of lessons**:4 lessons of 50-minute block periods; school trip (morning); prepare exhibition (morning) | **Topic:** Earth Sustainability (Science); Economic Activities (Geography); Environment (English)<br>**Subtopic**: Natural Resources: renewable energy resources (Science and geography); environmental problems and protection (English)<br>**Lessons objectives**: learn about different renewable energies; understand the importance of using different renewable energies to contribute to the planet sustainability; identify environmental problems<br>**Learning outcomes**: understand the importance of using Biomass. |

| Topic / Subtopic | Lessons objectives | Learning outcomes | Concepts | Activities/ Strategies | Assessment | Material Resources |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Renewable energy resources<br><br>Environmental problems | Identify forms of renewable energies<br><br>Understand the importance of using forms of renewable energies to the sustainability of the planet.<br><br>Understand the use of potential energy of biogas | By the end of the lessons, students will be able to:<br><br>- Define *renewable energy*<br>- Recognize renewable energy sources, such as biomass.<br>- Explain how organic waste is used to produce energy | Renewable resources and non - renewable resources<br><br>Biomass energy | - **Brainstorming**<br>As an introduction/ motivation to the topic, have students brainstorm their personal experiences and encourage enthusiasm and curiosity.<br>This will enable students to recognize the biomass energy, its sources, advantages and disadvantages and situation in Portugal.<br>- Taking note of the advantages of biomass energy use.<br>- Watching a video as an introduction to the topic of recycling. | - Oral participation and contributions during brainstorming<br><br>- Involvement in the school trip<br><br>- Quality of the participation in the activities<br><br>- Critical thinking<br>- Creativity<br><br>- Students' interest | Computer and projector<br><br>Video about the importance of recycling (links) https://www.amarsul.pt/o-futuro-do-planeta-nao-e-reciclavel/anuncio-de-tv/<br><br>(Watch the advertisement "A Terra não é reciclável" and a video about the mission of Valorsul). |

| Topic / Subtopic | Lessons objectives | Learning outcomes | Concepts | Activities/Strategies | Assessment | Material Resources |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Identify environmental problems and protection | - Learn about the advantages and disadvantages of the use of biomass.<br>- Identify the importance of biomass for energy production in Portugal<br><br>- Recognize different environmental problems and protection | Pollution, climate change, global warming, greenhouse effect, rise in sea levels, deforestation | - Watching a video and analyzing a document from Amarsul. Further discussion about the importance of biomass in Portugal.<br>⇒ School trip to Amarsul<br><br>- Post a reflection on the school trip and environmental protection at the school website. (Portuguese and English).<br>- Posters exhibition about the mission of Valorsul (End of the school year party).<br>- Speaking and writing interaction activities about the video "Mother Nature" | - Oral participation and contributions during brainstorming<br>- Involvement in the school trip<br>- Quality of the participation in the activities<br>- Critical thinking<br>- Creativity<br>- Students' interest | https://www.amarsul.pt/pt/areas-de-negocio/produtos/energia-eletrica/<br>Bus<br>Posters of Amarsul<br>Watch a video "Mother Nature" and speaking/ writing interaction about it Nature Is Speaking – Julia Roberts is Mother Nature \| Conservation International (CI) - YouTube |



**Cleaning up day**





# LESSON PLAN – SCIENCE – 8TH GRADE

| | |
|---|---|
| **School Year**: Grade 8<br>**No of lessons**:4 lessons of 50-minute block periods | **Topic:** Earth Sustainability<br>**Subtopic**: Natural Resources: renewable energy resources.<br>**Lessons objectives**: learn about different renewable energies; understand the importance of using different renewable energies to contribute to the planet sustainability.<br>**Learning outcomes**: understand the importance of using solar and wind energy. |
| | **Lessons' summary:**<br>Energy resources and renewable energies – the importance of using them. Solar and wind energy. Watching a video and taking a quiz about the topic. Making models. |

| Topic / Subtopic | Lessons objectives | Learning outcomes | Concepts | Activities/ Strategies | Assessment | Material Resources |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Earth Sustainability / renewable energy resources | Describe different ways of exploring the natural resources, mentioning the main transformations of the natural resources.<br><br>Tell the differrence between renewable natural resources and non- renewable natural resources.<br><br>Identify forms of renewable energies.<br><br>Understand the importance of using forms of renewable energies to the sustainability of the planet. | By the end of the lessons, students will be able to:<br><br>- Define *renewable energy*<br><br>- Recognize renewable energy sources, such as sunlight and wind.<br><br>- Explain how the renewable energy sources are used to obtain solar and wind energy<br><br>- Learn about the advantages and disadvantages of the different renewable energy sources.<br><br>- Identify forms of energy used in Portugal | Natural resource<br><br>Renewable resources and non-renewable resources<br><br>Renewable and non- renewable energies<br><br>Solar energy<br><br>Wind energy<br><br>Sustainability<br><br>Wind turbines<br><br>Solar panels | - **Brainstorming**<br>As an introduction/motivation to the topic, have students brainstorm their personal experiences and encourage enthusiasm and curiosity.<br>This will enable students to recognize different sources of renewable energy and their importance.<br>**- Taking note of the different forms of using solar and wind energy in Portugal**<br>- Watching videos as an introduction to the topic of **solar and wind energy**<br>**- Taking a Quizz** about sustainable energy forms | - Oral participation and contributions during brainstorming<br><br>- Students' interest<br><br>- Quality of the participation in the activities<br><br>- Critical thinking<br>- Creativity<br>- Completion and success in the game<br><br>- Involvement in the practical activity<br><br>- Assessment of | Computer and projector<br>Video about different renewable energies – solar and wind (links) https://ensina.rtp.pt/artigo/carregar-baterias-com-as-energias-renovaveis-dos-acores/<br><br>https://ensina.rtp.pt/artigo/les-avertis/<br><br>Quizz link<br>Materials for the practical activity |

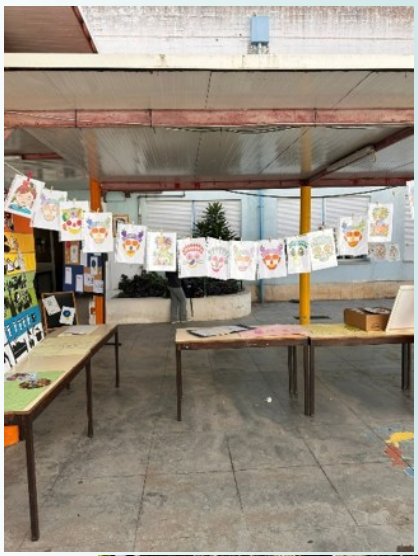
| Topic / Subtopic | Lessons objectives | Learning outcomes | Concepts | Activities/Strategies | Assessment | Material Resources |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Earth Sustainability / renewable energy resources | | | | - **Taking a Quizz** about sustainable energy forms<br><br>- **Practical activity: making models related to** solar and wind energy **(to be built later with the students)**.<br>The models will be displayed at the World Environment Day exhibition. | - Assessment of the students' success in understanding the contents included in the tasks | |

## 4. 3. *From our activities…*

**Food Day – Dia da Alimentação**





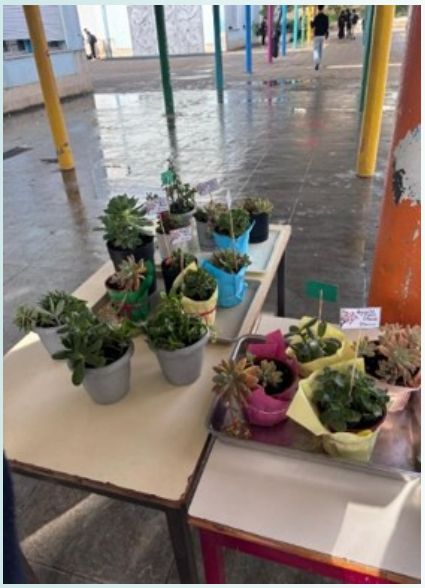
**Pedagogical school garden**







**Forest Month – celebration at school/ Mês da Floresta**








**Forest Month – outside school / Mês da Floresta – no local**









# 4. 4. OTHER ACTIVITIES TO BE DEVELOPED WITH STUDENTS INTEGRATED INTO THE SCHOOL'S EDUCATIONAL PROJECT

**In addition to the activities presented in this Guide, other activities will also be promoted as part of the Annual Activities Plan and the Educational Project of the School Cluster, such as:**

- Eco-Schools Programme;
- Participation in the Clean-Up Brigade;
- Participation in the Educational Garden;
- Participation in sessions related to the Health Education Project;
- Participation in sessions organised by the school's psychologists;
- Construction of models related to the preservation of ecosystems;
- Construction of models related to the use of alternative energy sources, such as solar, wind, hydroelectric and biomass energy.
- Commemoration of days dedicated to the preservation of the environment and nature;
- Implementation of the lesson plans attached to this document;
- Organisation of sessions with WWF or other environmental organisations.

**Activities outside the school will include:**

- Educational visits to protected areas;
- Educational visits to waste treatment and recycling facilities;
- Beach clean-up campaigns in areas near the school.

## ECO-SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

The Eco-Schools Programme is an international educational project promoted by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), with the support of the European Commission. In Portugal, this Programme is organised by the Blue Flag Association of Environmental Education (ABAAE).

The Eco-Schools Programme aims to encourage the development of activities that contribute to changing environmental behaviours, having an impact on the school and the community, and contributing to an improvement in quality of life.

**The following activities will be carried out:**

- Eco Valor Programme: collection of paper/cardboard and plastic for recycling; dedicated collection containers in all classrooms of AETL; partnership with AMARSUL and CMS
- Escola Eletrão Project: collection of batteries, light bulbs and electrical appliances; dedicated containers at the main school; collection of electronic equipment and large electrical appliances twice per school year; partnership with Escola Eletrão
- "Used Clothes Are Not Finished Yet" Project: collection of used clothes; dedicated container at the main school; partnership with ABAAE

- Coffee Capsule Collection Project: collection of coffee capsules; dedicated container at the main school; partnership with CMS
- Eco Escovão Project: collection of used toothbrushes; dedicated containers in all AETL schools; partnership with CMS
- Canetão Project: collection of pens, markers and glue tubes; dedicated container at the main school; partnership with Staples
- Recycled Materials: creation of various projects/objects using recycled materials; Pre-School and Primary Schools
- Commemoration of World Food Day
- Commemoration of World Tree Day and the International Day of Forests
- Educational Visit to the Samouco Salt Pans – Alcochete
- Webinars on Educational Gardens and Composting

## Useful links for research:

**• W.W.F – World Wide Fund for Nature** **
https://www.worldwildlife.org/
• ABAE – Blue Flag Association of Europe**
http://www.abae.pt/
**• Alto Tejo Studies Association**
http://www.altotejo.org/
**• ASPEA – Portuguese Association for Environmental Education**
http://www.aspea.org/
**• CEAI**
**- Iberian Avifauna Studies Centre**
http://www.ceai.pt/
**• FAPAS**
**- Fund for the Protection of Wild Animals**
http://www.fapas.pt/
**• GEOTA**
**– Group for Territorial Planning and Environmental Studies**
http://www.geota.pt
**• Grupo Lobo – Association for the Conservation of the Wolf and its Ecosystem**
http://lobo.fc.ul.pt/
**• LPN – Portuguese League for the Protection of Nature**
http://www.lpn.pt
- **OIKOS – Association for the Defence of the Environment and Heritage of the Leiria Region**

**http://www.oikos.pt/**

- **Quercus – Portuguese Association for Nature Conservation**

**http://www.quercus.pt**

- **ASPEA – Portuguese Society for the Study of Birds**

**http://www.spea.pt/**

- **Seixal Municipal Council**

**https://www.cm-seixal.pt/objetivos-de-desenvolvimento-sustentavel/2023/acoes-desenvolvidas**

- **Eco-Schools Programme**

**https://ecoescolas.abaae.pt/**

**Bibliography**

**- Portuguese Environment Agency (2015)** – National Programme for Climate Change (PNAC 2020/2030). Retrieved on July 4, 2016, from http://sniamb.apambiente.pt/infos/geoportaldocs/Consulta_Publica/DOCS_QEPIC/150515_PNAC_Consulta_Publica.pdf http://sniamb.apambiente.pt/infos/geoportaldocs/Consulta_Publica/DOCS_QEPIC/150515_PNAC_Consulta_Publica.pdf

**- Environmental Education Framework for Sustainability** – Directorate-General for Education.

**- Seixal Municipal Council.**

**-Eco-Schools Programme.**

# Chapter 5

# ABUSE OF ADDICTIVE BEHAVIORS AND TOXIC SUBSTANCES

## 5.1. Vulnerability generated by addictive behaviors

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

Vulnerability generated by addictive behaviors refers to the physical, emotional, and social risks that can appear when a person develops an unhealthy dependence on certain activities or substances.

**Examples include:**

-Excessive device use (phones, social media, video games): can lead to sleep problems, anxiety, reduced concentration, and social isolation;

-Pathological gambling: may cause financial difficulties, stress, depression, and problems with family or friends;

-Extreme sports practiced irresponsibly: can increase the risk of serious injuries and may create a dependence on adrenaline;

-Consumption of toxic substances (alcohol, tobacco, drugs, or inhalants): can harm physical and mental health, lead to addiction, and negatively affect school, work, and relationships.

**Factors that lead to risky behavior among young people**

Peer pressure and the desire for social acceptance play a major role in the adoption of early risky behaviors. During adolescence, the frontal lobe—the area responsible for long-term decision-making, impulse control, and risk assessment—is still developing. This biological stage explains a natural tendency toward experimentation and an underestimation of negative consequences, aspects frequently exploited by aggressive marketing for tobacco, e-cigarettes, or digital platforms.

**Prevention methods:**

-Developing healthy hobbies and interests.

-Maintaining a balanced daily routine.

-Talking openly with family, friends, or trusted adults about problems.

-Learning to manage stress in positive ways.

-Seeking professional help if addictive behaviors become difficult to control.

,,A strong child is not the one who follows the crowd, but the one who makes smart decisions for their health and future. Choosing No-Drugs, No-Smoking, No-Vaping means self-respect and caring for your future.''

*-Unknown-*

**Bibliography**


- **Mihai, C. (2020)** The Psychology of Addictions: From Understanding to Recovery. Trei Publishing House. (A seminal work in Romania for understanding the neurobiological and behavioral mechanisms of addictions).
- **Mitrofan, I. (2015)** Psychopathology and Psychotherapy of Addictive Behaviors. SPER Publishing.

Publishing. (Provides a detailed analysis of both chemical and behavioral addictions, offering a clinical perspective).

**World Health Organization (WHO). (2023)** Preventing Substance Use and Addictive Behaviors in Youth: Guidelines and Global Perspectives. WHO Regional Office for Europe. (An essential international guide based on scientific evidence regarding effective prevention strategies in school and family settings).

## ***PART B: Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)***

**Lesson Topic:** Prevention of consumption of harmful substances (vulnerability generated by addictive behaviors)

**Grade:** 7th

**Time:** 50 minute

**"We are not rich through the things we possess, but rather through the things we can live without"**

**IMMANUEL KANT**

Personality is a bio-psycho-socio-cultural system, a set of mental processes, functions, and activities in constant interaction and developed across different hierarchical stages. Behavior represents the totality of an individual's external manifestations. But every person interacts with others, forming a group, sometimes called a class of students. In this class interpersonal relationships are born, which can sometimes be characterized by sympathy or cooperation, and at other times by antipathy or conflict.

We are different both physically or psychologically, but also in behavior. Conduct can be determined internally, by ideas and thoughts, by affective experiences, but also externally through the behavior of others.

Behavior can be beneficial, prosocial, positive, or antisocial, negative. The negative one is often determined by the consumption of harmful, toxic substances.

**The proposed activity will support students to:**

- identify harmful substances for health and behavior;
- describe and analyze personal or acquaintances' experiences regarding this theme;
- understand the causes and effects of consuming harmful substances such as: tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs;
- compare the performance of people with a healthy lifestyle with the results of those intoxicated by drug use;
- work as a team using brainstorming.

**Materials:** writing paper, worksheets, pens, flip-chart paper, markers, diagrams, and panels, advertising materials.

**Lessson procedure:**

***Activity 1***

Organizing the students into teams.

***Activity 2***

Completing the worksheets,

*Team 1 (6 students) will work to complete the tasks of the worksheets regarding the prevention of tobacco consumption:

Worksheet 1-Effects of smoking;

Worksheet 2-Tips for quitting smoking;

Worksheet 3-Smoking caricature.

* Team 2 (10 students) will work to complete the tasks of the worksheets regarding the prevention of alcohol consumption:

Worksheet 1-Effects of alcohol consumption;-

Worksheet 2-Reasons why young people consume alcohol;

Worksheet 3-Mark the following statements as true or false;

Worksheet 4-Moments experienced by alcoholics;

Worksheet 5-Thoughts addressed to a friend who consumes alcohol.

*Team 3 (10 students) will work to complete the tasks of the worksheets regarding the prevention of drug consumption:

Worksheet 1-Why do young people consume drugs?;

Worksheet 2-Practicing the ability to say NO;

Worksheet 3-Mark the following statements as true or false;

Worksheet 4-Thoughts for a friend who is using drugs;

Worksheet 5-Anti-drug slogans.

***Activity 3***

Each team will appoint a student who will explain how the worksheets are completed ,tasks to the entire class.

***Activity 4***

The teacher presents the synthesis of the important aspects using the arranged diagrams and panels.

***Activity 5***

The activity is analyzed through feedback questions, using positive motivation to strengthen desirable, beneficial behavior and to eliminate or prevent negative, destructive behavior.

***Activity 6***

The teacher distributes advertising materials to the students.

***Activity 7***

**Activity analysis:**

The teacher asks the students to answer the following questions:

*What seemed easy, or difficult in today's activity?

*How does the proposed theme help you in life?

*Was it difficult to identify peers or friends/acquaintances in these situations?

*Activity 8*

**Assessment:**

Imagine you are members of the anti-drug team in school. What word or slogan will you use to encourage students not to touch these harmful substances?

## 5.2 Excessive use of devices: between benefits and addiction

## Social Media Addiction

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

Nowadays, devices are an important part of our lives. Almost every teenager uses a phone, laptop, tablet or a game console every day. These devices have many benefits because they help us learn, communicate and relax. We can search for information, do homework, watch educational videos, learn new skills and talk with friends from different places.

However, using devices too much can become a problem. Some teenagers spend many hours online and forget about other important activities. They may spend less time with their family, do less sport or lose interest in their hobbies.

Too much screen time can also cause tired eyes, lack of sleep and problems with concentration.

Another problem is addiction to social media and online games. Some people feel nervous when they cannot use their phone. They always want to check messages, watch videos or receive more likes. Sometimes, the desire to become popular online can make people do dangerous things. For example, some teenagers have tried to take extreme selfies near trains or in dangerous places because they wanted many likes.

They did not think about the risks, and some accidents had tragic results. This shows that a photo or a few likes are never more important than safety and life.

Devices can also create pressure. Many young people compare themselves with others online and feel unhappy because they think their life is not perfect. We should remember that many things on the internet are edited and do not always show reality.

Technology is useful when we use it correctly. We should take breaks, spend time outside, do sports, read books and meet friends face to face. It is important to control the time we spend on devices and not let technology control us. In conclusion, devices have many advantages, but excessive use can create problems. The best choice is to find a balance between the digital world and real life.

**Bibliography:**

**Sohn, S. et al. (2021).** Excessive Smartphone Use Is Associated With Health Problems in Adolescents and Young Adults. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*

**Haidt, J., & Twenge, J. M. (Multiple works spanning 2018–2024).** Research on digital media exposure and adolescent mental health decline

## ***PART B: Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)***

**Lesson Topic: My interesting devices**

**Grade:** 7th grade

**Time:** 50 minutes

**Aims:**

**1.**Integration into the daily schedule of routines concerning self-discipline and a healthy lifestyle

**2.**A reflective and constructive attitude toward one's own digital consumption habits.

**Methods :**

Heuristic conversation, brainstorming, case study, group debate, self-assessment questionnaire.

**Materials:**

Worksheets, post-it notes, projector.

**Lesson procedure:**

**1.Warm-up**

Ensuring a calm and optimal environment for the start of the lesson.

Preparing necessary materials (worksheets, writing instruments).

**2. Lead in**

The teacher writes two words on the board: **"Help"** and **"Chain".** A short question is addressed: *"How can a phone or tablet be an extraordinary tool and invisible chain at the same time?"*

**Activity 1– Benefits vs. Risks**

**Frontal activity (Brainstorming):** Students are divided in two large teams based on the ideas written on the board;

**Team "Benefits":** Responds to what it is useful for (quick information, school projects, connection with family, educational apps).

**Team "Addiction / Risks":** Responds to what happens with excessive use (wasting time, eye strain, lack of sleep, isolation, irritability).

**Activity 2**

Students are divided into small groups (4-5 students).We have 5 groups and each one receives a note:

*"Radu is 12 years old. He turns on the phone immediately after school and only stops at midnight, playing or scrolling through social networks. The next day at school he is tired, he cannot concentrate, he forgot to do part of his homework and he had an argument with a classmate who bothered him while he was playing."*

**Tasks for groups:**

Identify the signs that Radu has transitioned from usage to possible addiction.

Write on two post- it notes: one piece of advice for Radu and one clear rule that he can set for himself.

**Activity 3**

**Self-assessment**:

Students receive an anonymous mini-worksheet with the question: *"How many hours per day do you spend watching the screen outside of school?"* and they honestly answer if they feel that the phone controls them (internal awareness questionnaire, inspired by online safety campaigns like Ora de Net).

**Activity 4**

**Assigning homework**

General observations on students' participation in the discussions.

**Optional/reflective homework:** Creating a "contract with myself" for the next week, which should contain a single disconnection rule (e.g., no screen one hour before bedtime or leaving the phone in the living room during homework).

## 5.3 Ways to Reduce Device Dependency

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

Reducing digital device dependency requires targeted behavioral shifts, intentional environment design, and mindful routines to regain agency over time and cognitive focus.

**Cognitive Restructuring and Habit Architecture**

The dynamic underlying device overuse relies heavily on intermittent variable rewards, the psychological mechanism behind notifications and social media feeds. Overcoming this pattern requires changing how devices are accessed rather than relying solely on willpower.

**Friction Implementation:** Increasing physical and digital friction reduces automatic checking behaviors.

Strategies include switching screens to grayscale, removing high-dopamine applications, and disabling non-essential notifications.

**Time-Restricted Access:** Designating technology-free zones (such as bedrooms or dining areas) and time windows (the first and last hour of the day) establishes structural boundaries that prevent habitual exposure.

**Analog Replacement:** Replacing digital utilities with single-purpose physical alternatives—such as analog alarm clocks, paper notebooks, and physical books—decouples routine tasks from screen usage.

**Environmental and Social Interventions**

Environment design plays a central role in mitigating context-triggered device use. Aligning social settings and personal spaces to support offline engagement helps sustain long-term behavioral changes.

**Environmental Cue Removal:** Keeping devices out of sight during focused work or interpersonal interactions decreases cognitive load, as the physical presence of a smartphone draws attention even when unused.

**Intentional Alternative Engagement:** Replacing screen time with structured offline activities, such as movement, creative pursuits, or direct social interactions, satisfies the baseline need for stimulation and connection.

**Bibliography:**

**Alter, A. (2017).** Irresistible: The Rise of Addictive Technology and the Business of Keeping Us Hooked. Penguin Press.

**Kushlev, K., & Dunn, E. W. (2015**). Checking email less frequently reduces stress and increases well-being. Computers in Human Behavior, 53, 220–228.

**Newport, C. (2019).** Digital Minimalism: Choosing a Focused Life in a Noisy World. Portfolio.

**Ward, A. F., Duke, K., Gneezy, A., & Bos, M. W. (2017)**. Brain drain: The mere presence of one's own smartphone reduces available cognitive capacity. Journal of the Association for Consumer Research, 2(2), 140–154.

## ***PART B: Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)***

**Grade:** 7th–8th Grade

**Activity Topic: Screen Addiction – Finding Balance in the Digital Age**

**Activity Type:** Lesson for Developing Healthy Attitudes and Behaviors

**Time** 50 minutes

**Teacher's techniques:** Whole-class instruction, individual work, and group work

**Location:** Classroom

### I. GENERAL COMPETENCIES

- Developing responsible behaviors that promote physical and mental health.
- Developing students' ability to critically analyze the impact of technology on their personal lives.

Promoting healthy and balanced digital habits.

### II. SPECIFIC COMPETENCIES

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

- analyze the effects of excessive screen use on physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development;
- compare technology use before and after the COVID-19 pandemic;
- identify effective strategies for preventing screen addiction;

develop a personal plan for maintaining a healthy balance in technology use.

### III. OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES

At the end of the activity, students will be able to:

**O1.** Describe the changes in screen use before and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

**O2.** Identify at least five negative effects of excessive screen exposure.

**O3.** List at least five recommendations provided by specialists for the healthy use of technology.

**O4.** Develop a personal plan to reduce the amount of time spent in front of screens.

**O5.** Explain the importance of maintaining a healthy balance between online and offline activities.

### IV. TEACHING STRATEGIES

**Teaching Methods and Techniques**

- Heuristic discussion
- Brainstorming
- Problem-based learning

•Case study

•Cooperative learning

•Individual reflection

Debate

**Teaching Resources**

•Multimedia projector / PowerPoint presentation

•Worksheets

•Flipchart or whiteboard

•Markers

Sticky notes

**Assessment Methods**

•Systematic observation

•Self-assessment

•Evaluation of group work products

Oral feedback

**V. LESSON PROCEDURE**

**1. Organizational Stage (3 minutes)**

The teacher:

•greets the students and checks attendance;

•prepares the teaching materials;

creates a positive classroom atmosphere that encourages communication and active participation.

**2. Warm-up Activity (5 minutes)**

The teacher asks the following thought-provoking question:

**"What would your life be like for 24 hours without a mobile phone, the Internet, a tablet or a computer?"**

Students give short answers, while the teacher writes the key words on the board:

•boredom;

•freedom;

•anxiety;

•relaxation;

•social interaction;

•difficulty;

creativity.

A brief discussion follows about technology dependence and its impact on everyday life.

**3. Introducing the Topic and Learning Objectives (2 minutes)**

The teacher introduces the lesson topic:

**"Screen addiction – Finding balance in the digital age."**

The learning objectives and expected competencies are then presented to the students.

**4. ACQUIRING NEW KNOWLEDGE (15 minutes)**

The teacher presents the essential information related to screen use and its effects on adolescents' health and development.

**Screen Use Before and After the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Research has shown significant changes in children's and adolescents' digital habits over the past few years.

- **Before the COVID-19 pandemic:** children and adolescents spent approximately **2–3 hours per day** using digital devices.
- **During the pandemic:** daily screen time frequently exceeded **4 hours**, mainly due to online learning, social interaction and entertainment.

**After the pandemic:** screen use has decreased slightly but remains considerably higher than it was before 2020.

The teacher emphasizes that although technology played an essential role during the pandemic, many young people have continued spending excessive amounts of time on digital devices.

**Effects of excessive screen use**

**Effects on physical health**

Excessive screen exposure may contribute to:

- a sedentary lifestyle;
- obesity and weight gain;
- sleep disorders;
- digital eye strain;
- reduced levels of physical activity.

Long periods of screen use without adequate breaks may also lead to poor posture, neck pain, headaches and musculoskeletal discomfort.

**Effects on cognitive development**

Excessive use of digital devices may result in:

- difficulty concentrating;
- reduced attention span;
- lower academic achievement;
- impaired memory and learning abilities.

Constant exposure to fast-paced digital content may also reduce students' ability to focus on sustained academic tasks.

**Effects on emotional well-being**

Overuse of technology has been associated with:

- anxiety;
- irritability;
- depressive symptoms;
- difficulties with emotional self-regulation.

Students who spend excessive time online may become increasingly dependent on social media feedback, online gaming or digital entertainment to regulate their emotions.

**Effects on social development**

Excessive screen time may lead to:

- reduced face-to-face communication;
- social isolation;
- poorer interpersonal and communication skills.

The teacher emphasizes that **technology itself is not harmful**; rather, problems arise when it is used excessively, without limits or as a substitute for real-life relationships and healthy daily activities.

**5. GROUP ACTIVITY – "The digital balance plan" (15 minutes)**

Students are divided into **four groups**.

**Group 1**

Develop practical rules for limiting daily screen time.

Examples:

- setting daily screen-time limits;
- keeping devices away during meals;
- avoiding phones while studying.

**Group 2**

Identify enjoyable alternative activities, such as:

- sports and physical exercise;
- reading books;
- creative hobbies;
- volunteering;
- spending time outdoors with friends and family.

**Group 3**

Prepare recommendations for improving sleep hygiene by reducing screen exposure before bedtime.

Possible recommendations include:

- avoiding screens at least one hour before going to sleep;
- reading a book instead of using a mobile phone;
- charging electronic devices outside the bedroom.

**Group 4**

Develop strategies for reducing dependence on smartphones and social media.

Examples include:

- unnecessary notifications;
- limiting social media use;
- scheduling daily "screen-free" periods;
- engaging in offline recreational activities.

Each group prepares a **poster** summarizing its recommendations and presents it to the class.

**6. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS (5 minutes)**

Each group presents its poster and explains the recommendations they developed.

The teacher facilitates a brief class discussion based on the following question:

**"Does technology bring us closer together or push us further apart?"**

Students are encouraged to:

- express their opinions respectfully;
- support their ideas with relevant arguments;
- listen actively to different perspectives;
- reflect on their own digital habits.

The teacher emphasizes that technology can strengthen communication and learning when used responsibly, but excessive use may negatively affect personal relationships and overall well-being.

**7. KNOWLEDGE CONSOLIDATION AND FINAL REFLECTION (3 minutes)**

Each student individually completes the following sentence:

**"Starting today, I will try to..."**

Possible responses include:

- spend less time on my phone;
- read more books;
- be more physically active;
- avoid using my phone before bedtime;
- spend more time with family and friends;
- participate in outdoor activities more often.

The teacher invites several students to share their reflections and encourages them to set realistic and achievable personal goals.

**CONCLUSIONS(3 minutes)**

The teacher summarizes the key ideas of the lesson:

- The COVID-19 pandemic significantly increased the amount of time children and adolescents spend using digital devices.
- Excessive screen time may negatively affect physical, cognitive, emotional and social health.

- Technology is an essential part of modern life, but it should be used responsibly and in moderation.
- Families, schools and students all play an important role in developing healthy digital habits and maintaining a balanced lifestyle.

The lesson concludes by reinforcing the idea that **technology should be a tool that improves our lives rather than something that controls them**.

**HOMEWORK(3 minutes)**

**"My Screen Time Diary"**

For the next **seven days**, students are asked to keep a **Screen Time Diary** in which they record:

- the number of hours spent using digital devices each day;
- the purpose of screen use (schoolwork, entertainment, communication, gaming, etc.);
- the offline activities they engaged in;
- one concrete action they took each day to reduce their screen time.

At the end of the week, students should reflect on their digital habits and evaluate whether they succeeded in creating a healthier balance between online and offline activities.

## 5.4 Gambling, Extreme Sports, and Children's Vulnerability to Addictive Behaviors

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

In contemporary society, children and adolescents are increasingly exposed to behaviors with addictive potential, facilitated by technological development and rapid access to information. Among these, gambling and the uncontrolled practice of extreme sports represent major areas of concern for professionals in healthcare, psychology and education. These activities share the ability to produce intense sensations, stimulate the brain's reward systems and contribute to the development of repetitive and compulsive behaviors.

Childhood and adolescence represent critical stages of human development, characterized by the progressive maturation of cognitive, emotional and social functions. During these stages, mechanisms of self-control, risk assessment and decision-making are not yet fully developed, which increases vulnerability to risky behaviors and addictions. Research in neuroscience has demonstrated that adolescents are more prone to sensation-seeking and risk-taking behaviors than adults.

Gambling is one of the most widespread forms of behavioral addiction worldwide. The expansion of online platforms, constant internet accessibility and the intensive promotion of sports betting have significantly increased adolescents' exposure to gambling activities. Specialists believe that early experiences with gambling can negatively affect the emotional, social and behavioral development of children and adolescents.

Adolescents are attracted to gambling for multiple reasons. The promise of quick financial rewards, the illusion of control over outcomes, peer influence and the intense emotional stimulation associated with gambling represent important factors in the development of gambling-related behaviors. In many cases,

young people fail to fully understand the financial, psychological and social risks associated with these activities.

Statistical data published during the period 2025–2026 confirm the magnitude of this issue. The official report "Young People and Gambling 2025" revealed that approximately 59% of young people aged 11 to 17 had been exposed to gambling activities, while nearly half had participated in at least one form of gambling during the previous twelve months. Furthermore, approximately 30% of adolescents reported spending their own money on gambling activities, with significantly higher rates observed among boys. The same report demonstrated that nearly 80% of adolescents are frequently exposed to gambling advertisements and promotional content. Social media platforms, streaming services, and mobile applications represent the primary channels through which gambling content is promoted, contributing to the normalization of these behaviors among young people.

Specialists argue that these mechanisms activate the same neural pathways involved in behavioral addictions and may contribute to the development of problematic gambling behaviors later in life. Adolescents who frequently engage with such systems demonstrate a significantly higher risk of developing gambling disorders during adulthood. The consequences of gambling addiction are extensive and affect both mental health and social and academic functioning. Studies have associated problematic gambling with anxiety, depression, increased impulsivity, attention difficulties, poor academic performance, and family conflicts. In severe cases, financial problems and antisocial behaviors may also emerge.

Extreme sports represent another area that strongly attracts children and adolescents. Activities such as extreme climbing, high-altitude jumping, high-speed racing, aerial sports, and other high-risk activities provide intense sensations and elevated levels of adrenaline. For some adolescents, participation in these activities may become a continuous pursuit of stimulation and excitement. Neuropsychology specialists explain that adolescents' reward systems respond more intensely to novel and risky experiences, which may encourage the repetition of such behaviors.

Although extreme sports practiced under controlled conditions can provide important physical and psychological benefits, their uncontrolled practice or the imitation of dangerous behaviors promoted through digital media may lead to serious consequences. Social media platforms and online video content frequently promote behavioral models based on excessive risk-taking. Children's and adolescents' vulnerability is influenced by numerous biological, psychological, and social factors. These include impulsivity, sensation-seeking behavior, emotional difficulties, low self-esteem, peer pressure and inadequate parental supervision.

In addition, adverse childhood experiences and mental health problems may significantly increase the risk of developing addictive behaviors.

Specialists in pediatrics, psychology, and education recommend the implementation of comprehensive prevention programs beginning in early childhood. Risk education, emotional skills development and the promotion of critical thinking represent essential components of these interventions.

Family involvement plays a fundamental role in preventing addictions. Open communication, appropriate supervision, the establishment of clear boundaries, and the provision of healthy behavioral models

contribute significantly to reducing children's and adolescents' vulnerability.

Schools also play an important role in developing life skills, promoting mental health and identifying risky behaviors at an early stage. Collaboration among families, schools, healthcare professionals and communities represents one of the most effective prevention strategies.

In conclusion, current scientific evidence demonstrates that adolescents represent one of the most vulnerable populations regarding behavioral addictions. Increased access to online gambling, the influence of social media and the pursuit of intense sensations contribute to the amplification of these risks. Preventing these behaviors requires a multidisciplinary approach based on education, supervision, emotional support and the development of healthy habits capable of ensuring the balanced and harmonious development of children and adolescents.

**Bibliography:**

**Valenciano-Mendoza, M., et al. (2023).** *Clinical Correlates of Sports Betting: A Systematic Review*

**Nelson, S. E., & LaPlante, D. A. (2023).** *All in: a scoping review of the association between gambling and athletic participation*

**Richard, J., & King, D. (2023).** *Journeys Towards Harm Among Young Adult Sports Bettors*

## ***PART B: Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)***

**Lesson Topic:** Gambling, Extreme Sports and Children's Vulnerability to Addictive Behaviors

**Grade:** $7^{th}$–$8^{th}$

**Lesson Type:** Teaching–Learning and Attitude Development Lesson

**Time:** 50 minutes

**I. GENERAL COMPETENCIES**

- Identifying the factors that influence physical and mental health.
- Developing the ability to critically analyze risky behaviors.

Fostering responsible attitudes toward addiction prevention and health promotion.

**II. SPECIFIC COMPETENCIES**

At the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- define the concept of **behavioral addiction**;
- identify the vulnerability factors affecting children and adolescents;
- explain the mechanisms that contribute to the development of addictive behaviors;
- analyze the impact of gambling and extreme sports on health;

formulate prevention and protection strategies.

**III. OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES**

During the lesson, students will be able to:

**IV. TEACHING STRATEGIES**

**Teaching Methods and Techniques:** heuristic conversation, brainstorming, explanation, problem-based learning, case study, debate, individual reflection

**Forms of Organization:** whole-class instruction, individual work, group work, pair work

**Teaching Materials:** PowerPoint presentation, multimedia projector, worksheets, whiteboard/flipchart, markers, educational videos

**V. RESOURCES**

**Time Resources:** 50 minutes

**Material resources:** computer, multimedia projector, worksheets, course materials

**Human resources:** teacher, students

**VI. LESSON PROCEDURE**

| Lesson Stage | Time | Teacher's Activity | Students' Activity | Methods | Assessment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Organizational Moment** | 2 min | Checks attendance and prepares the teaching materials. | Prepare for the lesson. | Conversation | Systematic observation |
| **Capturing Attention** | 5 min | Presents images and advertisements promoting sports betting, together with videos of extreme sports. Asks: **"Why do you think these activities are so appealing to teenagers?"** | Express their opinions and answer the question. | Brainstorming | Oral assessment |
| **Announcing the Topic and Objectives** | 3 min | Introduces the lesson topic and presents the learning objectives. | Write down the lesson topic. | Explanation | Observation |
| **Initial Exploration** | 8 min | Divides the class into two groups: **Gambling** and **Extreme Sports**. Each group identifies the perceived benefits and the potential risks of the assigned topic. | Work collaboratively and present their conclusions. | Group work | Participation assessment |
| **Teaching New Knowledge** | 15 min | Presents scientific information about adolescents' vulnerability, the neurobiological mechanisms of addiction, and current statistical data. | Listen actively, ask questions, and participate in discussions. | Explanation, Guided discussion | Oral assessment |
| **Case Study and Debate** | 10 min | Presents a case study and moderates the class discussion. | Analyze the case and propose possible solutions. | Case study, Debate | Formative assessment |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Consolidation and Systematization** | 5 min | Summarizes the main ideas presented during the lesson. | Draw conclusions and synthesize key concepts. | Discussion | Feedback |
| **Assessement** | 2 min | Evaluates students' participation and concludes the lesson with final remarks. | Complete a short self-reflection activity. | Reflection | Self-assessment |

## VII. SCIENTIFIC CONTENT OF THE LESSON

### 1. Vulnerability of Children and Adolescents

Childhood and adolescence are developmental stages characterized by significant cognitive, emotional, and social growth. During this period, the brain regions responsible for self-control, risk evaluation, and decision-making are still developing. Neuroscientific research indicates that adolescents have a greater tendency to seek intense sensations and engage in risk-taking behaviors than adults.

### 2. Gambling and Behavioral Addiction

Gambling is one of the most common forms of **behavioral addiction**. The rapid expansion of online gambling platforms and the intensive promotion of sports betting have significantly increased adolescents' exposure to gambling-related activities.

The main factors contributing to its appeal include:

- the promise of quick financial rewards;
- the illusion of control over outcomes;
- peer influence;
- intense emotional stimulation;
- constant accessibility through digital platforms.

**Current Statistics (2025–2026)**

- **59%** of young people aged **11–17** have been exposed to gambling-related activities.
- Nearly **50%** have participated in at least one form of gambling during the previous 12 months.
- Approximately **30%** have spent their own money on gambling.
- Nearly **80%** are frequently exposed to gambling advertisements and promotional content.

### 3. Consequences of Gambling

Gambling addiction can have serious consequences for adolescents, affecting multiple aspects of their lives. These consequences include: anxiety, depression, increased impulsivity, attention and concentration difficulties, poor academic performance, family conflicts, financial problems, antisocial behavior.

In severe cases, gambling addiction may lead to social isolation, emotional distress and long-term mental health problems. The negative effects often extend beyond the individual, impacting family relationships,

friendships and overall quality of life.

**4. Extreme Sports and Risk-Taking Behaviors**

Extreme sports provide intense experiences and high levels of adrenaline. When practiced under appropriate supervision and safety conditions, they can contribute positively to physical fitness, self-confidence, resilience and emotional well-being.

However, unsupervised participation or the imitation of dangerous activities promoted on social media may result in serious injuries and encourage repetitive risk-seeking behaviors. Adolescents are particularly susceptible to online challenges because they are often motivated by peer approval, popularity, and the desire for social recognition.

For this reason, it is essential to distinguish between **organized extreme sports**, practiced under professional guidance, and **dangerous online challenges**, which often expose young people to unnecessary risks.

**5. Vulnerability Factors**

Several factors may increase the likelihood of developing addictive behaviors among children and adolescents. These include: impulsivity, sensation seeking, emotional difficulties, low self-esteem, peer pressure, insufficient parental supervision, adverse childhood experiences, mental health problems.

The presence of one or more of these factors does not necessarily lead to addiction. However, the combination of several risk factors significantly increases vulnerability, particularly in the absence of appropriate family and social support.

**6. Prevention of Addictive Behaviors**

Experts recommend the following preventive strategies:

- providing early education about the risks associated with addictive behaviors;
- developing emotional regulation and coping skills;
- promoting critical thinking and responsible decision-making;
- encouraging open communication within the family;
- establishing clear rules and healthy boundaries;
- involving schools in health education and prevention programs;

strengthening cooperation among families, schools, mental health professionals, and the wider community.

Effective prevention requires a comprehensive approach in which parents, teachers, counselors and healthcare professionals work together to help adolescents develop healthy lifestyles and make informed decisions.

**VIII. CASE STUDY**

**Problem Situation**

**A 15-year-old adolescent regularly follows social media influencers who promote sports betting and extreme online challenges. Over time, the teenager begins spending money on online betting and starts imitating dangerous behaviors presented on digital platforms.**

**Questions for Discussion:**

1. What risk factors can be identified in this situation?
2. What consequences might arise from these behaviors?
3. How can the family involve?
4. What role should the school play?

Which preventive measures could be implemented?

**IX. ASSESSMENT**

**Assessment Items**

1. Define **behavioral addiction**.
2. List **three vulnerability factors** that increase adolescents' susceptibility to addictive behaviors.
3. Mention **two consequences** of gambling addiction.
4. Explain **the influence of social media on risky behaviors** among adolescents.

Propose **two effective prevention strategies** that could reduce the risk of developing addictive behaviors.

**X. CONCLUSIONS**

Adolescents represent one of the most vulnerable groups regarding the development of behavioral addictions. Exposure to online gambling, the influence of social media and the natural tendency to seek exciting and novel experiences significantly increase the likelihood of engaging in problematic behaviors.

Effective prevention requires continuous education, parental supervision, emotional support and close collaboration among families, schools, mental health professionals and the community. By promoting healthy lifestyles, critical thinking, emotional resilience and responsible decision-making, young people can be better equipped to resist harmful influences and make informed choices that support their long-term well-being.

**ANNEX 1 – WORKSHEET**

**Topic: Gambling, Extreme Sports, and Vulnerability to Addictive Behaviors**

**Exercise 1 – Complete the Definitions**

Behavioral addiction is:

Gambling is:

Extreme sports are:

**Exercise 2 – Identify the Risk Factors**

**Tick the factors that may increase adolescents' vulnerability to addictive behaviors:**

□ Impulsivity

□ Well-developed critical thinking

□ Peer pressure

□ Low self-esteem

□ Adequate family support

□ Emotional difficulties

□ Insufficient parental supervision

 Adverse childhood experiences

**Exercise 3 – Analyze the Situation**

**Case Study**

**Andrew**, an eighth-grade student, regularly follows influencers who promote sports betting and videos featuring dangerous online challenges. During the past few months, he has started spending money on online betting and has attempted to imitate some of the risky behaviors shown on the Internet.

**Answer the following questions:**

1.What risk factors can you identify?

---

2.What consequences might result from these behaviors?

---

3.How could Andrew's family get involvrd?

---

4.What role could the school play in this situation?

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**Exercise 4 – Personal Reflection**

Complete the following sentence:

**"To prevent addictive behaviors, I believe it is important to..."**

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## 5.5 Strategies for reducing addiction to games and extreme sports

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

Although video gaming and extreme sports appear to be completely different fields, they share similar neurobiological mechanisms in triggering addiction: sensation seeking, a massive surge of dopamine and adrenaline, and the need to escape reality.

Our brain is divided into two worlds: the world of "here and now" (managed by serotonin, oxytocin, and endorphins) and the world of the future and possibilities (driven exclusively by dopamine). Dopamine is not the molecule of pleasure obtained, but the molecule of anticipation and desire.

From dopamine's perspective, what you already have is no longer interesting; all that matters is what you can get next. It fuels creativity, ambition, but also infidelity or chronic dissatisfaction. When you buy a new

item, dopamine explodes during the searching and buying phase, but drops sharply as soon as you own the object.

Reducing compulsive behaviors requires an integrated approach, combining psychological, educational, and technological strategies.

**1. Psychological and therapeutic strategies**

Addressing the underlying causes behind addictive behavior is essential for long-term recovery.

**- Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT):** Helps the individual identify triggers and replace dysfunctional thought patterns (e.g., "I need to play one more round to feel valuable" or "I need that jump to feel alive").

**- Stress management and emotional regulation:** Developing alternative coping mechanisms (meditation, mindfulness, breathing techniques) to manage anxiety or boredom without resorting to screens or extreme risks.

**- Group counseling and support groups:** Sharing experiences with peers facing similar challenges reduces stigma and provides an emotional safety net.

**2. Educational and awareness strategies (Prevention)**

Early prevention, especially among youth, is the most effective method for combating addictions.

**Digital and media literacy programs:** Educating students and young people on neuro-marketing techniques and gamification used by developers to keep users hooked (e.g., loot boxes, daily rewards). Neuro-marketing studies the brain's responses to marketing stimuli. Gamification uses game elements (points, leaderboards) in ordinary activities to increase interest.

**Risk management education in sports:** Promoting a "safety first" culture in extreme sports. Athletes must be taught to differentiate between calculated bravery and blind adrenaline chasing driven by compulsive motives. Adrenaline (or epinephrine) is a hormone and neurot4ransmitter secreted by the adrenal glands in acute stress, panic, or dangerous situations, serving to trigger the "fight or flight" response by accelerating heart rate, increasing blood pressure, and mobilizing energy reserves.

**Family and community involvement:** Workshops for parents on recognizing early signs of addiction (isolation, neglect of hygiene, irritability) and establishing clear home rules.

**3. Technological strategies and control tools**

Technology can be used as an ally to limit addictive behaviors.

| VIDEO GAMES | EXTREME SPORTS |
|---|---|
| • Digital Wellbeing apps | • Smart biometric sensors |
| • Built-in time limiters | • Heart rate and adrenaline tracking wristbands |
| • Microtransaction blocking | • Digital safety logs |

**Voluntary self-exclusion:** Utilizing platforms that allow players to lock access to their accounts for specified periods (weeks/months).

**Biofeedback monitoring in sports:** Using wearable devices to remain conscious of when the body enters overload or when the desire for risk exceeds physical safety limits.

**4. Healthy alternatives and redirecting energy**

An addiction cannot simply be "erased"; it must be replaced with constructive behavior that offers similar satisfaction.

**Gamification of real life (Habitica, etc.):** Turning daily tasks or studying into goals with fictional rewards, providing the brain with necessary dopamine through productive activities.

**Transition to controlled adventure sports:** Redirecting the need for adrenaline from uncontrolled extreme sports to structured, instructor-guided disciplines (e.g., indoor rock climbing, trail mountain biking, orienteering).

**Volunteering and community projects:** Engaging in social or environmental activities provides a strong sense of belonging and purpose, diminishing the need for virtual validation or life-threatening risks.

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## PART B: Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)

**Lesson Topic:** "Beyond the Screen and Adrenaline: How Do We Regain Control?

**Grade:** Grades 7th grade

**Lesson Type:** Teaching–Learning and Attitude Development Lesson

**Time:** 50 minutes

***Aims:***

O1. To identify the difference between a healthy passion (gaming/sports) and an addiction.

O2. To recognize design traps (neuro-marketing) used to keep players connected.

O3. To apply at least two concrete strategies for self-regulating time and emotions.

**Procedure**

*1. Icebreaker: "The Dopamine Graph" (10 min)*

**Activity:** Brainstorming & Mentimeter (or on the board).

**What we do:** Teacher asks students: "What do you feel in your body when you win a tough match in your favorite game or when you speed down the street on a bike/scooter?" The teacher writes down key words (heartbeats, joy, super energy).

**Conceptual anchoring:** Introduce the concept of dopamine simply (the brain's reward chemical). Teacher explains that both games and dynamic sports trigger the same "lightbulbs" in the brain, but problems arise when we need larger doses just to feel something.

*2. Exploring Traps: "Why is it Hard to Stop?" (15 min)*

**Method:** Teamwork (Cube Method or Case Analysis).

**Task:** Split the class into two main groups to analyze how their emotions are targeted:

**Gaming group (digital traps):** Analyzes loot boxes, daily streaks (rewards for daily logins), aggressive notifications. Guided conclusion: Games are specifically designed by psychologists to form habits that make us not want to stop.

**Sports/Adventure group (blind risk):** Analyzes social media pressure (TikTok/Reels) to perform increasingly dangerous stunts for views. Guided conclusion: The need for online validation can make us confuse bravery with recklessness.

*3. Practical workshop: "Strategies in your pocket" (15 min)*

The teacher presents 3 lines of defense, adapted into accessible tools for 7th graders:

**1. Technological control (safety wall):** Quick Setup. "Digital Wellbeing" Challenge: Students open their phones to check screen time. Show them how to set a daily 1h 30m limit for gaming apps and block notifications during homework.

**2. Psychological tchnique (Breathing Pause):** Emotional Regulation. "The 5-Minute Rule": When feeling a frantic urge to play one more match (despite it being late) or do something risky on the street, stop for 5 minutes, take deep breaths, and change the room/activity. If the urge remains just as strong after 5 minutes, only then act. Most of the time, the impulse fades.

**3. Redirection (Real Alternatives):** Dopamine Replacement. Transition from networks/risk to community: Give examples of apps that gamify real life (e.g., Habitica) or joining structured clubs (indoor climbing, volunteering, scouts), where adventure follows strict safety rules.

*4. Reflection and conclusion: "Contract with myself" (10 min)*

Each student receives a slip of paper (or fills out a short Google Form) with a personal commitment, either anonymous or public:

**The app/activity I will limit this week: _____**

**What I will do instead (an offline alternative): _____**

**Closing message:** "Our goal today wasn't to say games or bikes are bad. They are wonderful if you control them. The problem is when the screen or the need for adrenaline starts controlling you. You are the ones holding the joystick of your own lives!"

## 5.6. Drugs. How the consumption of drugs, tobacco, and alcohol influences well-being Vaping- the new addiction

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

We talk about how the consumption of drugs, tobacco (including vapes), and alcohol influences our "well-being." When you hear "well-being," simply think of three things: how you feel in your body, how calm your mind is, and how you get along with those around you (friends, parents). Let's look at what actually happens in real life.

**1. The initial illusion: "Instant happiness"**

Nobody starts smoking, drinking, or using substances because they want to harm themselves. Usually, it starts out of curiosity or the desire to seem "cool" in a group.Initially, these substances trick the brain. They provide a false sense of relaxation or courage.

For example, some believe a cigarette or vape relieves stress before a test.

The truth? It is just a trick that lasts a few minutes. The substance does not solve the problem (the test is still there); it merely puts the brain to sleep for a moment.

**2. How tobacco steal your energy**

Many ads or social media posts try to show colorful vape screens or smoke as signs of independence. In reality, here is what happens to your well-being:

**Your body runs out of breath:** Nicotine (the substance inside them) constricts blood vessels. This means your heart works twice as hard, and during gym class or running for the bus, you will get winded much faster.

**Stress increases, not decreases:** The brain gets used to nicotine quickly. When you go a few hours without smoking, you become irritable, nervous, and unable to concentrate. So, instead of relaxing you, the cigarette itself becomes the source of your stress.

**Vaping- the new addiction.**

Books analyze the rise of vaping as a fast-moving nicotine epidemic driven by appealing flavors, high-tech designs, and strategic corporate marketing. Authors look at this trend from three main viewpoints:

**1. Corporate strategies and youth marketing.** Investigative books like "Big Vape" by Jamie DuCharme and "The Devil's Playbook" by Lauren Etter show how electronic cigarette companies targeted a new generation. They explain that sleek, easily hidden devices combined with high-concentration nicotine salts quickly locked young users into chemical dependency.

**2. Behavioral psychology and addiction recovery.** Recovery and educational books address the mental trap of e-cigarettes. In "Allen Carr's Easy Way to Quit Vaping," authors expose the illusion that vaping relieves stress, showing that the device actually triggers the very anxiety and withdrawal it claims to fix. For younger audiences, educational books like Julia Cook's "I Am Vape" personify the habit to illustrate how peer pressure and candy-like flavors trick teenagers into addiction.

**3. Health impacts and policy debates.** Scientific and medical texts examine the physical consequences of

the habit. Works like "Vaping Health Effects" by Victor Healey document how chemical aerosols and heavy metals impact developing lungs and brains. Meanwhile, clinical perspectives like Dr. Colin Mendelsohn's "Stop Smoking Start Vaping" debate the controversy of using e-cigarettes as a harm-reduction tool for adult smokers while trying to prevent youth access.

**3. Alcohol: theft of control and the "aftermath"**

Sometimes at parties, alcohol seems to bring fun. However, it functions like a black screen over your brain.

**Losing your compass:** Alcohol numbs the part of the brain that tells you what is dangerous and what is not. You might say mean things to good friends, get into fights, or do things that will make you feel dreadfully embarrassed the next day.

**Sleep and energy ruined:** Even if you fall asleep quickly after drinking, the brain does not rest at all. The next day you wake up tired, with headaches, and lacking motivation. That is the exact opposite of "well-being."

**4. Drugs: the brain's forced reset**

Illicit drugs are the most aggressive. They do not just trick the brain; they "abuse" it by dumping massive amounts of happiness chemicals all at once.

**The crash afterwards:** Once the short-term effect wears off, a freefall follows. You feel extremely sad, scared, empty inside, or exhausted. Many young people end up isolating themselves from friends and having severe arguments with parents.

**Rapid addiction:** A 7th grader's brain develops very quickly. If attacked with such substances, it alters itself and begins requiring the substance just to function normally. At that point, well-being disappears completely.

**How do we achieve REAL well-being? (Without dangerous shortcuts)**

If you feel stressed, bored, or like you don't fit in, don't look for shortcuts that rob you of control. Here is what actually works:

**Sports and physical activity:** Running, playing soccer, dancing, or cycling causes your brain to produce the exact same happiness chemicals as games or sweets, but in a natural, healthy way. You will feel proud of yourself, not guilty.

**Real friends:** A true friend likes you for who you are, not because you hold a vape or do silly things to impress others.

**Talk to someone:** When things get hard and you feel overwhelmed by grades, school, or problems, talk to a trusted adult (parents, homeroom teacher, school counselor). A shared problem loses half its weight.

**Bibliography:**

**Jamie DuCharme** "Big Vape”

**Lauren Etter** "The Devil's Playbook"

**Allen Carr** “ Easy Way to Quit Vaping”

**Julia Cook's** "I Am Vape"

**Victor Healey** "Vaping Health Effects"
**Dr. Colin Mendelsohn'** "Stop Smoking Start Vaping"

## PART B: Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)

**Lesson topic: Well-Being vs. Substances**
**Grade:** 7th grade
**Lesson type:** Teaching–Learning and Attitude Development Lesson
**Time:** 50 minutes
**Lesson procedure:**
*1. Opening Challenge: "The Promise in the Ad" (10 min)*
**Teacher actions:** Write three words on the board: RELAXATION, FUN, POPULARITY.
**Class discussion:** "When you see a colorful vape, a bottle of alcohol in movies, or hear about illegal substances, what are you actually being promised through these three words?"
**Conclusion:** They all promise "instant happiness." Let's see what we actually get in reality.
*2. Team Activity: "Myth vs. Reality" (20 min)*
The teacher divides the class into 3 teams, giving each a short worksheet. Each team reads their assigned "Myth" and explains the "Reality" in their own words.
**Team 1 (Vape/Tobacco):** Myth: "Vaping relaxes me when I'm stressed about grades." | Reality: It doesn't relieve stress; it makes you addicted to nicotine. When you don't smoke, you get even more nervous. Plus, it ruins your stamina in sports.
**Team 2 (Alcohol):** Myth: "Alcohol makes you brave and brings fun to parties." | Reality: It blocks your self-control. It makes you say or do things that will make you dreadfully embarrassed the next day.
**Team 3 (Drugs):** Myth: "Just once won't hurt anyone; it's just an experience." | Reality: They act like a robbery on the brain. They steal natural happiness and leave you scared, sad, and isolated from friends.
*3. Game: "What Do You Do Instead?" (15 min)*
The teacher presents real-life situations, and students brainstorm healthy alternatives (without shortcuts):
**Situation A:** You are extremely stressed before an evaluation. What do you do instead of watching vape videos or overthinking? (Sample answers: listen to a favorite song, take deep breaths, take a short walk in the yard).
**Situation B:** At a birthday party, someone pressures you to try alcohol to be "cool." What do you say? (Sample answers: "No thanks, I'm having fun as it is," "I need my energy for tomorrow's game").
*4. Closing Message (5 min)*
Each student writes down a single rule for themselves on a small slip of paper: "I am the boss of my body because..." (e.g., "...because I want to excel at soccer" or "...because I want to be free").
**Takeaway thought:** True well-being means being free and remaining in control. Don't let any substance be the boss of your mind!

## PART B: Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)

**Lesson Topic: Well-Being vs. Substances**

**Grade:** 7th grade

**Lesson Type:** Teaching–Learning and Attitude Development Lesson

**Time:** 50 minutes

**Lesson procedure:**

*1. Opening Challenge: "The Promise in the Ad" (10 min)*

**Teacher actions:** Write three words on the board: RELAXATION, FUN, POPULARITY.

**Class discussion:** "When you see a colorful vape, a bottle of alcohol in movies, or hear about illegal substances, what are you actually being promised through these three words?"

**Conclusion:** They all promise "instant happiness." Let's see what we actually get in reality.

*2. Team Activity: "Myth vs. Reality" (20 min)*

The teacher divides the class into 3 teams, giving each a short worksheet. Each team reads their assigned "Myth" and explains the "Reality" in their own words.

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**Team 3 (Drugs):** Myth: "Just once won't hurt anyone; it's just an experience." | Reality: They act like a robbery on the brain. They steal natural happiness and leave you scared, sad, and isolated from friends.

*3. Game: "What do you do instead?" (15 min)*

The teacher presents real-life situations, and students brainstorm healthy alternatives (without shortcuts):

**Situation A:** You are extremely stressed before an evaluation. What do you do instead of watching vape videos or overthinking? (Sample answers: listen to a favorite song, take deep breaths, take a short walk in the yard).

**Situation B:** At a birthday party, someone pressures you to try alcohol to be "cool." What do you say? (Sample answers: "No thanks, I'm having fun as it is," "I need my energy for tomorrow's game").

*4. Closing message (5 min)*

Each student writes down a single rule for themselves on a small slip of paper: "I am the boss of my body because..." (e.g., "...because I want to excel at soccer" or "...because I want to be free").

**Takeaway thought:** True well-being means being free and remaining in control. Don't let any substance be the boss of your mind!

## 5.7 Vulnerable categories for drug use; myths, prejudices, and stereotypes regarding the consumption of toxic substances

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

In society (on TV, the internet, or in adult conversations), there are many myths, prejudices, and stereotypes—pre-packaged, incorrect ideas that people believe without verifying.

**5.7 Who is vulnerable? (Myths vs. Truth)**

A common stereotype is that substance users come only from poor families, violent backgrounds, or are students with low grades who refuse to learn.

The truth? Toxic substances do not check IDs, look at report cards, or ask how much money your parents make. Anyone can become vulnerable during a difficult time.

Here are the 4 biggest myths to debunk:

**Myth 1: "Only kids from troubled families become addicted" — Reality:** Vulnerability is not about money. Often, young people from wealthy, well-off families become victims because they have enough pocket money to buy substances (like expensive vapes or others) or because they feel lonely and misunderstood at home.

**Myth 2: "If you are strong and have willpower, nothing happens to you" — Reality:** This is a major trap. Toxic substances alter brain chemistry from the very first uses. It has nothing to do with "how strong you are." An adolescent's brain is still developing, so it becomes addicted much faster than an adult's. You cannot fight a substance that resets your brain with willpower alone.

**Myth 3: "Substance users are bad people and should be punished/avoided" — Reality:** This is a dangerous prejudice. A person trapped in addiction is not a "bad person"; they are a sick person who needs medical and psychological help. Labeling and isolating them makes it even harder for them to ask for help, worsening the problem.

**Myth 4: "It can't happen to me; I'm just experimenting" — Reality:** Everyone who became addicted started with the exact same phrase: "I'm just testing it out, I can stop whenever I want." Nobody plans to become addicted.

**Who is ACTUALLY vulnerable?**

Vulnerability isn't visible on someone's face or clothing. Those most exposed are young people experiencing the following:

**A desperate need for acceptance:** Feeling that if you don't do what the rest of the group does (vaping, drinking, or trying things), you will end up alone without friends.

**Hidden stress and anxiety:** Students who seem perfect and get top grades, but are internally overwhelmed by parental expectations or exams and seek a quick way to "forget."

**Boredom and lack of purpose:** Having no hobbies, sports, or passions that bring joy, leading to a search for an artificial "spark" from toxic substances.

**Bibliography**

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**Corrigan, P. W.** (2014). *The Stigma of Disease and Disability: Understanding Causes and Coining Solutions*. American Psychological Association.

**Goffman, E.** (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Prentice-Hall.

## PART B: Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)

**Lesson Topic** Beyond Appearances: Who Falls into the Substance Trap? (Myths vs. Reality)

**Grade:** 7th grade

**Lesson Type:** Teaching–Learning and Attitude Development Lesson

**Time:** 50 minutes

***Aims:***

O1. To differentiate between a myth (misconception) and reality regarding addictions.

O2. To understand that anyone can become vulnerable, regardless of grades or money.

O3. To develop empathy and stop labeling peers who are struggling.

**Lesson ptrocedure:**

*1. Icebreaker: "True or False?" Game (10 min)*

The teacher reads 3 statements aloud and asks students to raise their hands if they think it is True or False:

1. "Only children from poor families end up using substances."
2. "If you have strong willpower, you can try anything once without harm."
3. "Substance users are bad people and should be punished."

The teacher introduces the topic: "Today we will see why all 3 statements above are actually FALSE. We will debunk the myths and stereotypes surrounding drugs and vapes."

*2. Main Activity: "The Label" Roleplay (20 min)*

**Step 1:** The teacher invites 3 volunteers to the front of the class. Without them seeing, a label is taped to each volunteer's back: Label 1: "Class Top Student", Label 2: "Back-bench Rebel", Label 3: "Popular Girl".

**Step 2:** Classmates interact with the three for 3 minutes, mimicking behaviors targeted at those labels.

**Step 3 (The Big Reveal & Debunking):** The teacher stops the game and asks: "Which of these three young people is most vulnerable to falling into substance abuse?"

**Guided conclusion:** All three are equally vulnerable! Toxic substances don't look at report cards or clothes. The top student might use due to massive stress; the popular girl due to the pressure to appear perfect; the rebel out of a desire for group acceptance. Vulnerability is internal, not external.

*3. Practical Workshop: "Myth detector" (15 min)*

| MYTH / STEREOTYPE | REALITY |
|---|---|
| "Substance use is a choice; you stop whenever you want." | Substances alter brain chemistry from first uses. It becomes a DISEASE. |
| “Substance users are bad people” | They are suffering individuals who need HELP (medical, psychological), not labels. |

**Quick discussion:** "How does a person struggling with a problem feel if everyone calls them an 'addict' or avoids them? Will they ask for help, or hide even more?" (Students realize that labeling worsens the problem).

*4. Conclusion and reflection: "Exit ticket" (5 min)*

Each student receives a small piece of paper to answer a single question anonymously: "What can you, as a classmate, do if you notice a friend seems sad, isolated, or boasts about trying dangerous things?"

**Closing message from teacher:** "The world is full of prejudices. Be the generation that thinks freely. Don't judge a classmate by appearances. If you see someone in danger, don't isolate them—reach out to help, or let me or a trusted adult know. Help offered in time saves lives!"

## 5.8 Healthy choices and addiction prevention

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

In the context of health education, the prevention of addictions (both to toxic substances and to behaviors such as gaming or gambling) must go beyond simple warnings. 7th grade students go through a critical period of neuroplasticity during which the brain's “reward system'” is extremely reactive to intense stimuli. Primary prevention therefore aims to cultivate autonomy and self-regulation skills, providing students with the necessary resources to make conscious choices, even under social pressure.

**Why Are we vulnerable?**

To understand the importance of healthy choices, students must comprehend the mechanism of “fast rewards”. Psychoactive substances and addictive behaviors (such as social media likes or online gaming) flood the brain with dopamine. Over time, this overstimulation leads to a decrease in the sensitivity of brain receptors, making everyday activities feel dull.

**A healthy choice** actually means investing energy in activities that produce ‘'sustainable dopamine’': the learning process (the joy of understanding and mastering new concepts), sports, creative passions, or real social interactions. Unlike artificial rewards, these activities build long-term self-confidence because they result from personal effort and contribute to forming a solid identity.

Beyond the risks analyzed, it is essential for students to know what truly protects them. We can call these protective factors **the habits that work in our favor in daily life.** They are not strict rules, but daily choices that maintain brain function and emotional balance, safeguarding adolescents from the urge to seek refuge in addictions.

**1. Sleep hygiene and emotional regulation: a rested brain is in control**

Sleep allows the area of the brain responsible for planning and self-control to regenerate. Without adequate

rest, an adolescent becomes far more vulnerable, acting impulsively and becoming prone to falling into the trap of addictions—which promise immediate pleasure but deprive them of the energy and clarity needed to pursue their own goals.

**2. Physical activity as preventive therapy**

Regular physical exercise not only improves cardiovascular health but also helps regulate brain chemistry. Sports provide real, tangible feedback: effort leads to visible results (better physical conditioning), which develops a sense of self-efficacy. To support brain chemistry regulation (dopamine, serotonin, endorphins), sports can be grouped according to the student's emotional needs:

**Team sports (For Social Connection)**

**Examples:** Basketball, football (soccer), volleyball, handball.

**Why they are recommended:** They combat isolation (a major risk factor for addiction). The student learns to collaborate, manage collective failure, and celebrate shared success, building a strong sense of belonging.

**Feedback:** Visible through the score and the role played within the team.

**“Flow” and focus sports (For Stress Management)**

**Examples:** Swimming, cycling, middle-distance running, martial arts (judo, karate, aikido).

**Why they are recommended:** These allow for a state of “flow” (total immersion in the activity), where the brain disconnects from daily worries. Martial arts, in particular, emphasize discipline, self-control, and respect for self and opponent.

**Feedback:** Visible through improved times, distance covered, or advancement in belt/ ranks.

**3. Nutrition and the microbiome**

Modern neuroscience research has uncovered a fascinating fact: the gut is not merely a digestive system, but is often termed the “second brain”. The link between the digestive and nervous systems is bidirectional (the gut-brain axis), meaning that gut health directly influences mood, energy levels, and stress tolerance. Adolescence is a period when many young people resort to ‘'comfort food'’ (snacks, energy drinks, processed sweets) as a quick way to achieve well-being. Unfortunately, this creates a vicious cycle:

**Systemic inflammation:** Processed foods (high in additives, refined sugar, and trans fats) induce inflammation that can cross the blood-brain barrier, altering brain chemistry.

**Glycemic rollercoaster:** Sugar causes a rapid surge in energy followed quickly by a dramatic crash in blood glucose, triggering irritability, anxiety, and “brain fog”.

**Vulnerability to addictions:** When an adolescent feels anxious or irritable due to an unbalanced diet, their brain becomes desperate for an escape, seeking external rewards (more sugar, screen time or substances) because inflammation has impaired its capacity for self-regulation.

**4. Resistance strategies: developing life skills**

Adolescence (ages 13–14) is the stage when the peer group becomes an individual's primary ’'compass''. The need to belong is so powerful that many young people choose to ignore their own values or health risks just to avoid social isolation. In this context, developing life skills is not a luxury, but a strategic survival necessity.

**A. Assertiveness: the art of maintaining yourown direction**

Assertiveness is the ability to communicate your boundaries clearly, firmly, and respectfully, without being aggressive or submissive. For a 7th grader, being assertive means ‘'taking control of your own actions''.

**Clarity (‘'No, period' technique”):**

Adolescents tend to apologize excessively (“'I wouldn't want to, I don't know, I'm not allowed, maybe another time...”). This hesitant language invites persistence from others. Assertiveness requires clarity: a calm “No thanks, I don't do that” is sufficient. The longer the justification, the more “reasons” the group has to convince you otherwise.

**Firmness (“Broken record” technique):**

Sometimes a refusal is not accepted on the first try. Firmness involves repeating the refusal in the same calm tone without engaging in logical arguments with someone who refuses to listen to logic. “I understand, but I said I don't want to”—repeating the message shows that the decision is final.

**Alternatives (“Redirection” technique):**

Groups often propose risky behavior out of boredom. An adolescent with strong social skills can immediately propose an alternative: “That doesn't appeal to me, but if you want, we could do [X]’ (e.g., a video game session, hanging out somewhere else, or a sports challenge). This transforms the youth's role from '”he one who refuses” to “the one proposing fun”.

**B. Critical thinking: beyond the shiny packaging**

Adolescents are prime targets for aggressive marketing that no longer sells “a product”, but rather “a lifestyle”. They must learn to “decode'”messages in social media (TikTok, Instagram, YouTube).

**Dismantling “Cool & Safe” myths**

**Vaping:**

Promoted through fruity flavors and minimalist design, suggesting harmlessness.

Critical Analysis: “If it's harmless, why does it contain nicotine (a rapidly addictive drug) and chemicals whose origin I cannot verify?”

**Gambling (including loot boxes):**

Packaged as “games of chance” or “bonuses”.

Critical Analysis: “Which is the mathematical probability of winning? Who actually profits from this game?'

**Identifying emotional manipulation:**

Marketing frequently uses 'FOMO' (Fear Of Missing Out). Adolescents must understand that any advertisement making them feel “inadequate”' unless they consume a product is a form of manipulation. The golden question every child should ask is: “Who profits financially from my decision to do this, and what do I have to lose in the long term?'

**5. The role of the social environment and community support**

Addiction thrives in isolation and shame. An effective school-based prevention strategy involves:

**Creating a climate of trust:** The teacher becomes a non-judgmental guiding reference adult.

**Parent education:** Prevention continues at home by keeping open communication channels.

**Access to Resources:** Raising awareness of school counseling services, helpline numbers, or specialized centers so students realize seeking help is a step toward solving a problem, not a failure.

**6. Conclusions: Freedom as Responsibility**

Being free does not mean doing whatever you want, but having control over your own decisions. Addiction is, by definition, a loss of freedom, as the individual becomes a slave to a compulsion that dictates their behavior. Ultimately, healthy choices are the tools through which a young person preserves their ability to choose who they want to become in the future.

**Bibliography**

**Gabor Maté,** *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction,* Herald Publishing, 2022;

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**Daniel Goleman**, *Emotional Intelligence*, Curtea Veche Publishing, 2008;

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https://www.digital-clinics.com/podcast/podcast-7---adictia-arata-o-durere-foarte-mare-o-trauma-profunda/ ;

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## PART B: Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)

**Lesson Topic** My choice, my future. addiction-free

**Grade:** 7th grade

**Lesson Type:** Teaching–learning and attitude development lesson

**Time:** 50 minutes

**General Objective**

To develop students' capacity to adopt a healthy and balanced lifestyle by practicing critical thinking and decision-making skills, aiming to prevent engagement in addictive behaviors and maintain long-term well-being.

**Specific Competencies (CS)**

**CS1:** Analyzing factors that influence health status and lifestyle decisions.

**CS2:** Exercising critical thinking in interpreting media and social messages related to health.

**CS3:** Applying assertive communication and problem-solving techniques in situations of peer pressure.

**CS4:** Responsibly evaluating the consequences of personal choices on one's future.

**Operational Objectives (O)**

**O1:** Identify the mechanisms through which addictions restrict personal freedom.

**O2:** Practice assertiveness techniques (refusal skills).

**O3:** Critically analyze the "packaging" under which addictions are promoted.

**Lesson procedure:**

**Stage 1: Icebreaker – "The Myth Detector" (10 minutes)**

**Activity: The teacher writes 3 statements on the board, e.g.:**

"Vaping is just flavored water."

"If I play/gamble just a little, I can't become addicted."

"Drugs are illegal only to stop us from having fun."

**Dynamics:** Students stand up. If they agree with a statement, they move to the left side of the classroom; if not, to the right.

**Short debate:** The teacher invites 1–2 students from each side to support their opinions.

**Purpose:** To create an open climate where students' opinions matter without being judged.

**Stage 2: Teamwork – "Freedom detectives" (20 minutes)**

The class is divided into 4 teams. Each team receives an "Investigation File" (worksheet) on one of the following topics:

**Team 1:** "Screens & Dopamine" (How does the algorithm trick us?)

**Team 2:** "Toxic Marketing" (How are vaping and gambling packaged?)

**Team 3:** "Peer Pressure" (Assertive refusal strategies)

**Team 4:** "What Protects Us?" (Internal resources – sports, sleep, hobbies)

**Task:** Each team must write the following on a flipchart or A3 paper:

**1.** One main "myth" debunked.

**2.** One practical strategy to avoid falling into the trap.

**3.** An "Independence Slogan" (e.g., "I control the phone, it doesn't control me!").

**Stage 3: Presentation & "The survival guide" (10 minutes)**

Each team presents their conclusion. (maximum 2 minutes per team).

The teacher synthesizes the ideas into a "Survival guide" visible to everyone (e.g., a compiled list on the board).

**Stage 4: Conclusion & feedback questionnaire (10 minutes)**

**A. Prompt for Padlet / Interactive Board**

*"If you could send a short message to your future self 10 years from now about how to keep your freedom of choice, what would it be?"*

**Alternative (if device access is unavailable):** Sticky notes placed on a "Decision tree" posted on the classroom door.

**B. Quick Questionnaire (Google Forms or Paper)**

What new thing did you learn today? (Short answer)

Which is the most effective refusal technique you will use?

Options:

"No, thank you" |

"I have something else to do"

Changing the subject

On a scale from 1 to 5, how confident do you feel saying "NO" to a risky proposal?

What health-related topic would you like us to explore next?

**Annex 1: Worksheet – "Freedom Detectives"**

**Team 1: "Screens & Dopamine" (How does the algorithm trick us?)**

**Task**: Understand why we cannot put our phones down.

**Myth to debunk**: "I'm on TikTok just to relax."

(Reality: The algorithm delivers rapid content to keep you locked inside the application for as long as possible).

**Practical Strategy:** "Disabling unnecessary notifications" or "The 30-minute screen-free rule before sleep."

**Slogan:** "I am an user, not the algorithm's product!"

**Team 2: "Toxic Marketing" (How are vaping & gambling packaged?)**

**Task**: Identify how manufacturers make us believe that something harmful is actually "cool".

**Myth to Debunk**: "Vaping is just flavored water; it's not dangerous like cigarettes."

(Reality: It contains chemicals and nicotine that damage developing lungs and brains).

**Practical Strategy:** "Product Labeling" (Look beyond bright colors and flavors to see the underlying chemicals).

**Slogan:** "Flavors attract, chemistry destroys. Don't be a puppet!"

**Team 3: "Peer Pressure" (Assertive refusal strategies)**

**Task:** Learn how to say "NO" to friends without feeling or appearing "weird".

**Myth to Debunk:** "If I refuse, my friends will laugh at me or exclude me from the group."

(Reality: True friends respect your decisions; if they don't, it might be time to find new groups).

**Practical Strategy:** "Refuse and Walk Away" (Say "No, thanks" and immediately change the location or topic without engaging in long arguments).

**Slogan:** "You choose who you associate with. You are free to say NO!"

**Team 4: "What protects us?" (Internal resources)**

**Task**: Identify the "superpowers" you already possess that keep you safe from addictions.

**Myth to debunk:** "I don't need sleep/sports; I can focus fine without them."

(Reality: Without brain "maintenance", we become more vulnerable to temptations).

**Practical strategy:** "Scheduling one daily genuine pleasure activity" (sports, drawing, reading, going outside).

**Slogan:** "Balance is my power. I invest in myself, not in addictions!"

**How are results presented?**

Each group draws three distinct sections on their flipchart / A3 paper:

**1. "**Myth vs. Truth" (Debunking section)

**2. "**Escape Plan" (Practical strategy)

**3. "**Free Voices" (Slogan)

Example:

Visual example layout for Ssudents (on worksheet/board):

**MYTH vs TRUTH**

**STRATEGY**

**SLOGAN** MYTH: “Vaping is just water”

TRUTH: ”It’s perfumed poison”

I tell them: "No, thanks, I care about my lungs!”

“Don’t be a puppet for advertising”

## 5.9. Legislation regarding the sale, trafficking, and consumption of addictive toxic substances

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

Combating the illicit trafficking and consumption of addictive substances is a strategic priority at both the European Union (EU) level and the national level. This involves a balanced approach between supply reduction (law enforcement and control measures) and demand reduction (prevention, treatment, and social reintegration).

**European Union legislative framework**

The European Union does not possess a single unified criminal law framework across all member states; however, it coordinates efforts through common strategies and regulations that harmonize substance control.

**1. EU Drugs strategy (2021–2025) and action plan**

This strategy represents the medium-term vision document guiding member state policies. Unlike purely punitive approaches, the current strategy promotes a balance between three main pillars:

**Supply reduction:** Intensifying cross-border cooperation between police forces and customs agencies.

**Demand reduction:** Promoting evidence-based health services, emphasizing prevention, treatment, and harm reduction (e.g., needle exchange programs, substitution therapies).

**Addressing related issues:** Tackling the link between drug trafficking and other forms of organized crime, including money laundering and corruption.

**2. European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA)**

The transformation of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) into the European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA) via Regulation (EU) 2023/1322 marks a paradigm shift. The new agency possesses expanded competencies, including:

**Early Warning System (EWS):** The capability to rapidly identify new substances appearing on the European market and assess the public health risks they pose.

**Trend Monitoring:** Analysis of consumption patterns and new trafficking routes through standardized data collection from all member states.

**Scientific Support:** Providing expertise to inform national policies, ensuring that legislative decisions are grounded in empirical evidence rather than solely political criteria.

**3. Control of drug precursors: Regulations (EC) No 273/2004 and No 111/2005**

This legislation targets chemical substances that have legitimate applications in the chemical, pharmaceutical, or fragrance industries, but which can be diverted for the illicit synthesis of drugs (e.g., ephedrine, acetic anhydride).

**Control mechanism:** The legislation mandates a strict transaction monitoring system, requiring economic operators to hold special licenses and report any suspicious orders.

**Public-private cooperation:** The regulations oblige companies to collaborate with law enforcement authorities to prevent leakage from legal channels into illicit trade.

**4. Management of new psychoactive substances (NPS)**

Given the ability of clandestine laboratories to modify the chemical structure of drugs to evade legal bans, the EU adopted Regulation (EU) 2017/2101. This framework enables:

**Accelerated assessment procedures:** Substance risk assessments are conducted much faster, leading to EU Council decisions banning the substance across the entire Union territory.

**Continuous monitoring:** Establishment of a shared database where national authorities can swiftly input suspicious substances identified in their laboratories.

**5. Police and judicial cooperation (Europol and Eurojust)**

European legislation facilitates joint operational action through:

**Europol:** Supports member states via intelligence-led policing to dismantle transnational drug cartels operating in major European ports (e.g., Antwerp, Rotterdam).

**Eurojust:** Ensures judicial cooperation by enabling the coordination of criminal investigations conducted simultaneously across multiple member states, facilitating the issuance of European Investigation Orders and European Arrest Warrants for traffickers.

**Bibliography**

**National Anti-Drug Agency (ANA),** *National Reports on Drug Situation,* available at ana.gov.ro

**Official Gazette of Romania**, *Law No. 143/2000* on preventing and combating illicit drug trafficking and consumption (as amended).

**Official Gazette of Romania**, *Law No. 339/2005* on the legal regime of narcotic and psychotropic plants, substances, and preparations.

**Official Journal of the European Union**, *Regulation (EC) No 273/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council.*

**Council of the European Union**, *EU Drugs Strategy (2021–2025).*

## PART B: Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)

**Lesson topic** Counseling and guidance / Extracurricular activity

**Grade:** 7th grade

**Lesson Type:** Teaching–learning and attitude development lesson

**Time:** 50 minutes

**I. General Objective**

Fostering responsible behavior and a proactive civic attitude toward the risks associated with the consumption and trafficking of toxic substances, by understanding the role of laws and state institutions in protecting public health.

**II. Specific Competencies**

**SC1.** Students will be able to explain, in their own words, how rules and laws act as a "shield" for individual and community safety;

**SC2.** Students will demonstrate the ability to filter messages regarding toxic substances, refusing peer pressure or temptations based on misinformation;

**SC3.** Students will identify key institutions and correctly access their platforms to obtain reliable information;

**SC4.** Students will apply risk analysis procedures (e.g., evaluating an uncertain situation and notifying the authorities), demonstrating a sense of responsibility toward peers and the community.

**Specific Objectives**

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

- Understand that laws exist to protect their health;
- Recognize that toxic substances are not "games" and carry serious legal implications;
- Identify official sources of accurate information

**Lesson procedure**

**1. Organizational phase:** Attendance check, material preparation, PowerPoint presentation setup, worksheets, and evaluation questionnaires.

**2. Hook / lead-in:** Imagine your life is an extremely high-performance smartphone. What security apps or settings would you install to ensure you don't get viruses or that the system doesn't crash due to major errors?

**Board notes:**

Installing a firewall (a cybersecurity system designed to monitor and control network traffic) = Laws that block access to toxic substances.

Installing antivirus = Accurate information from reliable sources (e.g., ANA).

Privacy settings = Refusing peer pressure.

**Conclusion:** The law acts as a global firewall preventing dangers from entering our community's "system".

**3. Presentation of new content:** Presentation of legislation regarding the sale, trafficking, and

**4. Learning Activity:** Students receive a worksheet with news items or viral messages and must determine whether those messages represent “Safety” or “Danger / Misinformation”, specifying which institution or law protects them. (The worksheet contains only “the news”; the analysis is for teacher )

***"A new substance has appeared in 3 countries simultaneously. This new substance is not on the banned list, so it is legal and safe."***

**Analysis:** FALSE. Even if it is not on the list yet, EUDA uses the Early Warning System (EWS) to monitor it and ban it rapidly.

***"Europeans have nothing to do with drugs; each country does whatever it wants."***

**Analysis:** FALSE. The EU Drugs Strategy coordinates all countries, and Europol helps catch traffickers crossing borders

***"If I am at school and see something suspicious, I shouldn't tell anyone so I don't look like a “snitch'"***

**Analysis:** FALSE. Informing an adult is an act of civic responsibility, not “snitching”

***"If a website or influencer says a substance is natural, it means it doesn't contain dangerous chemicals."***

**Analysis:** FALSE. “Natural” does not mean harmless. Many psychoactive substances are created through complex chemical manipulations. EUDA (EU Drugs Agency) scientifically analyzes risks, and their official data is the only source we should rely on, not online recommendations.

***"Police in my country have no way to catch a trafficker bringing goods from the Netherlands or Belgium."***

**Analysis:** FALSE. European judicial cooperation through Eurojust allows prosecutors and judges from multiple countries to work jointly on the same investigation. Through Europol, information flows instantly, and European Arrest Warrants apply across borders.

***"Substances used to manufacture perfume or detergent can be bought by anyone in any quantity without the state knowing."***

**Analysis:** FALSE. EU drug precursor legislation (Regulations 273/2004 and 111/2005) obliges companies to report any suspicious or unusual transaction. A strict licensing and monitoring system prevents the “leakage” of these substances into illicit laboratories.

***"If new drugs constantly emerge, the state is always one step behind and can do nothing to stop them."***

**Analysis:** FALSE. The EU adopted Regulation 2017/2101 specifically to close legal loopholes. Risk assessment procedures have been accelerated so that as soon as a new substance is identified as a threat, it can be banned swiftly across the entire EU.

**5. Assessment / Evaluation Questionnaire**

**Quiz: “Are You an Informed Citizen?” (Can be administered in digital or printed format)**

1. What role does the European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA) play in our safety?

**A)** It tests substances on students.

**B) It identifies risks and issues early warnings for public health. (Correct)**

**C)** It sells authorized substances.

2. What are “drug precursors”?

**A) Legal chemical substances used in industry that can be diverted for the illicit manufacture of drugs. (Correct)**

**B)** Undercover police officers stationed around schools.

**C)** The names of new messaging apps.

3. How does Europol assist European Union member states?

**A)** By organizing youth parties.

**B) By coordinating police efforts to dismantle transnational organized crime groups. (Correct)**

**C)** By drafting criminal laws for each individual country.

4. What does the “Early Warning System” (EWS) mean?

**A)** A system that alerts us when it rains.

**B)** A notification alert for video games.

**C) The capability to rapidly identify new and dangerous substances appearing on the market. (Correct)**

5. If someone offers you an unfamiliar”"natural” substance, what should you do?

**A)** Accept it; if it's natural, it's safe.

**B) Firmly refuse and inform a trusted adult or the authorities. (Correct)**

**C)** Try a small amount just to see how your body reacts.

6. What is the main purpose of laws regarding toxic substances?

**A)** To restrict our fun.

**B) To protect our health and that of the entire community. (Correct)**

**C)** To fill police files with paperwork.

7. What does Eurojust do in international drug investigations?

**A) Facilitates cooperation between judges and prosecutors from different countries. (Correct)**

**B)** Sells weapons to law enforcement.

**C)** Monitors students' social media accounts.

8. Why is it important to use official sources (e.g., ana.gov.ro) for information?

**A)** Because they are the only websites with nice colors.

**B) Because they provide evidence-based scientific information, not rumors or misinformation. (Correct)**

**C)** Because they don't consume mobile data.

9. “Notifying authorities about a danger is a sign of cowardice.” This statement is:

**A)** True.

**B) False; it is an act of civic responsibility and courage. (Correct)**

10. What is the European Union doing to manage New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)?

**A)** Doing nothing; ignoring them.

**B) Adopting fast-track procedures to ban them across the entire EU as soon as a risk is identified. (Correct)**

**C)** Legalizing them to monitor them more easily.

## 5.10. Governmental and non-governmental structures involved in combating drug use

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

Managing addictions among young people is a complex challenge where the partnership between school, family, and specialized institutions is vital. In Romania, the support system is divided between public (governmental) authorities and private or associative (non-governmental) initiatives.

**1. Governmental (Public) Structures**

These represent the official first line of intervention, monitoring, and public policy coordination.

◊ **ANPCDDA (National Agency for Policies and Coordination in the Field of Drugs and Addictions):** A structure under the Ministry of Internal Affairs (reorganized from the former ANA - National Anti-Drug Agency). It coordinates the national network consisting of:

◊ CPECA (Anti-Drug Prevention, Evaluation, and Counseling Centers): Located in every county and sector of Bucharest, offering free and confidential psychological evaluation and case management for youth.

◊ **Ministry of Health (via Psychiatric Hospitals and Pediatric Psychiatry Departments):** Provides emergency intervention in cases of overdose (Emergency Receiving Units - UPU) and medical detoxification (physical elimination of the substance from the body). Emergency hospitalization for minors is handled in child neuropsychiatry departments.

◊ **Ministry of Education (via CJRAE / CMBRAE):** County Centers for Resources and Educational Assistance coordinate school counselors. They are the primary specialists in schools who can observe behavioral changes and offer initial supportive counseling and guidance toward medical structures.

◊**DGASPC (General Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection):** Intervenes in cases where substance use imminently jeopardizes the safety of a minor or when the family environment is abusive/ neglectful, providing social case management.

**2. Non-Governmental Structures (NGOs and Private Clinics)**

Because state resources for long-term rehabilitation (post-detoxification) are often limited, the non-governmental sector plays a crucial role in long-term therapy and reintegration.

**"Zi de Bine" Association & Voila Hospital:** Created C.R.E.A.A.TI.V., the first public center for long-term residential recovery and rehabilitation dedicated exclusively to minors dealing with addictions (located in Câmpina).

**ALIAT Association (Alliance for the Fight Against Alcoholism and Drug Addictions):** One of the most experienced organizations in Romania. They operate clinics and day centers in several cities (Bucharest, Suceava, etc.) offering therapy, youth support groups, and specialized counseling programs for parents.

**Estuar Foundation:** Active in mental health, running programs targeted at adolescents (such as the #TineriFărăVicii campaign), providing practical guides and free psychological counseling services.

**Residential therapeutic communities (e.g., Blue Cross / Crucea Albastră, Teen Challenge):** Centers specialized in long-term recovery, often based on international models of mutual support, discipline, and psychological/spiritual counseling (some offering specific programs for youth or young adults).

**3. Access to information and immediate support lines**

If you need immediate help or confidential guidance, you can use the following channels:

| Support Channel | Contact / Details | Purpose |
|---|---|---|
| Anti-Drug Helpline (Linia Verde Antidrog) | 0800 870 070 (National Toll-Free) | Free telephone information and counseling provided by specialists. |
| Child Helpline (Telefonul Copilului) | 116 111 | Free emotional support for children, youth, and parents (including addiction and social circle issues). |
| Single Emergency Number | 112 | Call strictly in cases of medical emergency (overdose, coma, extreme aggression, or severe hallucinations). |
| Official Portals | edu.ro and ANPCDDA platforms | Hosts the new methodological guides officially launched in partnership by the Ministry of Education and anti-drug structures. |

**4. Action guide for teachers and parents**

**Core principle:** Addiction is a mental health and medical issue, not a moral weakness or a problem to be solved through punishment. The approach must be non-punitive and based on building a relationship of trust.

**For teachers (In the school environment)**

**Observe without judging:** Watch for warning signs (sudden drop in grades, absenteeism, radical mood changes, isolation, sudden changes in friend groups). The teacher's role is to observe, not to diagnose.

**Involve the school counselor:** Discreetly discuss the case with the school psychologist or counselor, protecting the student's identity to avoid generating stigma.

**Partnership with the family:** Notify parents tactfully, approaching the discussion as an ally who wants the best for the child, not as an accuser.

**For Parents (In the Family Environment)**

**Avoid panic or aggressive reactions:** Violent confrontation or harsh punishments will cause the adolescent to isolate themselves even further or hide their substance use.

**Seek specialized evaluation:** Do not attempt to solve addiction "within the family." Visit the nearest CPECA center or a addiction-specialized psychotherapist for a proper assessment of the consumption level (experimental, abuse, or established dependence).

**Provide long-term support:** Medical detoxification (in hospital) usually lasts between 7 and 14 days and only cleanses the body of the substance. Psychological recovery (post-consumption therapy) lasts months or even years and requires the active involvement of the entire family.

**Bibliography:**

Below is a structured bibliography comprising official sources, the legislative framework, methodological guides, and resources from mentioned organizations:

**1. Official Sources and Legislative Framework**

**Ministry of Internal Affairs / National Agency for Policies and Coordination in the Field of Drugs and Addictions (ANPCDDA):** National Reports on the Drug Situation in Romania (annual analytical documents on youth consumption trends, ESPAD studies); Good Practice Guides and the national network of CPECA Centers. Online source: infodrog.ro.

**Ministry of National Education:** Joint Order of the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Internal Affairs, and Ministry of Health approving the National Framework Action Plan for school safety and prevention of psychoactive substance use in schools; National strategies regarding CJRAE/CMBRAE management in providing psycho-pedagogical assistance to minors.

**Parliament of Romania:** Law No. 143/2000 on preventing and combating illicit drug trafficking and consumption (with subsequent amendments and additions regarding new psychoactive substances).

**2. Methodological Guides and Resources for Educators and Parents**

**Ministry of Health & ALIAT Association:** Guide to interventions aimed at adolescents at risk of substance use or problematic consumption; Informational materials for parents: "How to talk to adolescents about drugs". Online source: aliat-ong.ro.

**Estuar Foundation:** Educational campaigns and brochures for youth (e.g., #TineriFărăVicii Project – Guide for raising awareness about addictive behavior risks and substance/technology dependencies). Online source: estuar.org.

**Zi de Bine Association & Voila Psychiatric Hospital:** Project documentation and launch materials for the C.R.E.A.A.TI.V. Center (Center for Recovery and Evaluation of Addictions among Children and Adolescents). Online source: zidebine.ro.

**3. International Reference Resources (Adapted for Romania)**

**EMCDDA / EUDA (European Union Drugs Agency):** European Drug Prevention Quality Standards (EDPQS) – guidelines underpinning programs implemented in Romanian schools by school counselors and NGOs.

**World Health Organization (WHO):** International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) – Chapters on mental and behavioral disorders due to psychoactive substance use and behavioral addictions (e.g., gambling, gaming disorder).

## PART B: Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)

**Lesson Topic** "My World Without Addictions: Freedom and Choices"

**Grade:** 7th / 8th Grade (Ages 13–15)

**Lesson Type:** Teaching–Learning and Attitude Development Lesson

**Time:** 50 minutes

**General Competencies**

Development of socio-emotional skills and critical thinking regarding the risks associated with substance abuse and excessive technology use.

Practicing refusal behaviors (assertiveness) in situations involving peer pressure.

**`Operational Objectives**

By the end of the activity, students will be able to:

1. Define the concept of addiction and differentiate substance addictions (alcohol, tobacco, drugs, vaping) from behavioral addictions (gaming, social media, screen time).

2. Identify at least 3 negative effects of addictions on physical health, emotional well-being, and social relationships.

3. Apply the assertive refusal technique (the formula: "Say NO and offer an alternative") in real-life scenarios.

**2. Teaching strategy**

**Teaching methods & procedures:** Heuristic conversation, Brainstorming, Group work, Role-play, Clustering technique (Mind mapping).

**Instructional materials / media:** Flipchart / Whiteboard, markers, group worksheets, colored post-it notes.

**Organizational forms:** Frontal (whole class), small groups (4–5 students), individual work.

**3. Activity implementation & steps**

**Step 1. Icebreaker & Warm-up (5 minutes)**

*[Method: Introductory game / Heuristic Conversation]*

Short game: "The Ball of Yarn" / "The Spider's Web". Students stand in a circle and pass a ball of yarn to one another while stating a personal hobby.

Teacher highlights the web created: "What happens when a thread becomes too tight or restricts our movements?"

Transition to topic: How an apparently harmless habit turns into an addiction that limits our freedom.

**Step 2. Topic definition & brainstorming (10 minutes)**

*[Method: brainstorming / conceptual classification]*

Teacher writes the word "ADDICTION" in the center of the board.

Students write what this term means to them on post-it notes and stick them on the board.

Conceptual clarification: Addictions are divided into two categories on the board: Substance Addictions (Nicotine/Vaping, Alcohol, Drugs, Energy Drinks) and Behavioral Addictions (Gaming, Social Media, Gambling).

**Step 3. Group Activity: Case Studies (20 minutes)**

*[Method: Group Work / Case Study / Problem-Solving]*

Students are split into 4 groups. Each receives a card with a real-life scenario.

Group 1 (Vaping/Smoking): Andrei (14) starts vaping because everyone in his group does and he doesn't want to feel left out.

Group 2 (Gaming/Screen Time): Matei plays video games until 3 AM, leading to dropping grades and aggressiveness toward parents.
Group 3 (Energy Drinks): Elena drinks 2-3 energy drinks daily to cope with school and extracurricular activities.
Group 4 (Social Media): Ioana checks her phone every 2 minutes and panics if she lacks internet access.
Task for each group: Identify causes, write 2 short-term and 2 long-term effects, and formulate concrete advice/solution for the character.

**Step 4. Role-Play: Assertive Refusal (10 minutes)**

*[Method: Role-Play / Assertive Communication Practice]*

Teacher presents the golden rule of assertive refusal: [Clear NO] + [Short Reason] + [An Attractive Alternative]. Example: "No thanks, I don't vape. It makes me cough. Let's go to the soccer field instead!"
Two representatives from each group role-play short scenarios (one offers a substance/excessive gaming invitation, the other refuses assertively).

**Step 5. Conclusions & Evaluation (5 minutes)**

*[Method: Self-Reflection / Final Synthesis]*

Exit Ticket: Every student completes a card with: "My passion that makes me feel free (and NOT addicted) is..."
Key Summary Message: Addiction promises freedom or fun, but delivers control over your choices. True freedom means being able to choose to stop at any time.

**4. Annexes: Student Worksheets**

**Self-Assessment Guide: Is it a simple habit or an addiction?**

**Ask yourself these 4 questions (The 4 C's Test):**

**Control:** Do you find it difficult to stop the activity once you have started?
**Continuation:** Do you continue doing it even though you know it causes harm (at school, with family, to your health)?
**Craving:** Do you think obsessively about it when it is not within reach?
**Consequences:** Have you given up on friends, sports, or other passions for this activity?

.

## 5.11 Access to Information, Counseling, and Medical Services for Youth Abusing Addictive Behaviors and Harmful Substances

***PART A: Theoretical Background***

Substance use disorders (SUD) and behavioral addictions—including problem gaming, gambling, and harmful digital media use—represent critical public health issues affecting adolescents and young adults worldwide.

Youth involvement in addictive behaviors compromises neurodevelopment, academic attainment, physical health, and social stability. Ensuring equitable and timely access to reliable information,

professional counseling, and comprehensive medical treatment is essential to mitigating long-term harms.

Adolescent addiction treatment requires specialized frameworks distinct from adult models. Interventions must address the evolving neurodevelopmental landscape, peer dynamics, and severe structural and socio-cultural barriers to care.

Adolescence and early adulthood (ages 12–25) constitute a unique developmental period characterized by high neuroplasticity, heightened novelty-seeking behavior, and incomplete development of executive functioning capacities in the prefrontal cortex. These neurobiological factors increase vulnerability to impulsive behaviors and chemical dependencies.

The spectrum of addictive behaviors in youth encompasses two primary categories:

**Substance use disorders (SUD):** Misuse of alcohol, cannabis, synthetic cannabinoids, prescription opioids, stimulants, nicotine/vaping products, and illicit drugs.

**Behavioral / non-substance addictions:** Pathological gaming, gambling, compulsive social media consumption, and internet use disorders that activate similar brain reward pathways.

**Access to information & preventive education**:Health literacy serves as the primary line of defense. However, youth frequently encounter conflicting, exaggerated, or inaccurate information via social networks and peer groups.

**Key channels for effective information dissemination:**

**Digital &mobile health (mHealth) platforms:** Youth prefer anonymous, easily navigable, and interactive digital resources, including mobile applications, SMS help lines, and verified social media campaigns.

**School-based prevention curricula:** Evidence-based programs integrated into school systems focus on social-emotional learning, peer pressure resistance, and factual risk education rather than scare tactics.

**Community & peer-led initiatives:** Trained peer educators reduce stigma and facilitate trust, encouraging early identification and referral to professional help.

**Counseling and psychosocial interventions:**

Counseling forms the cornerstone of adolescent addiction recovery. Effective psychological interventions must be tailored to developmental maturity and family dynamics.

**Core therapeutic modalities:**

**Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT):** Identifies maladaptive thought patterns, coping mechanisms with triggers, and emotional regulation techniques. Focuses on reduction in substance cravings and improved problem-solving skills.

**Motivational interviewing (MI):** Person-centered, non-judgmental exploration of ambivalence toward behavior change. Results in increased intrinsic motivation and treatment compliance.

**Family-based therapies (MDFT / FFT):** Addresses family relational dynamics, parental monitoring, and communication styles. Facilitates sustained long-term recovery and reduced family conflict.

**Medical Services and Integrated Healthcare:**

For severe substance use disorders, psychological support must be augmented by clinical medical intervention. Integrated care models co-locate mental health and medical treatments to address dual diagnoses

(e.g., addiction co-occurring with depression, anxiety, or ADHD).

**Core medical components**

**Screening and brief intervention (SBIRT):** Routine screening in primary care and emergency departments using validated tools (e.g., CRAFFT, ASSIST) enables early detection.

**Medication-assisted treatment (MAT):** Pharmacotherapies such as Buprenorphine or Naltrexone for opioid dependency, and nicotine replacement therapies for severe vaping/smoking disorders.

**Inpatient & residential detoxification:** Medically supervised detoxification environments for severe withdrawal management, ensuring physical safety and transition to outpatient care. **Youth**

**Addiction interventions in the romanian context:**

To address the rising prevalence of substance abuse (such as synthetic drugs, psychoactive substances, and vaping) and behavioral addictions (gambling and digital dependence) among Romanian youth, a multi-tiered national strategy is required.

**Key institutional and structural actions in Romania:**

**Strengthening medical and rehabilitation infrastructure:** Expanding specialized pediatric addiction centers within county and regional hospitals. Currently, Romania faces a shortage of residential treatment facilities tailored specifically for minors, making the creation of dedicated adolescent psychiatric and rehabilitation units an urgent priority.

**Institutional reform and public health re-orientation:** Modernizing the role of the Anti-Drug Agency (NAA / ANA) and public health directorates (DSP) by replacing punitive messages with evidence-based prevention, harm reduction, and confidential counseling services.

**School-based early intervention frameworks:** Integrating mandatory health and addiction prevention modules within the national school curriculum, supported by school counselors, educational psychologists (CJRAE), and trained school nurses.

**Accessible digital and telehealth services:** Establishing free, 24/7 anonymous national helplines and mobile application platforms tailored for Romanian youth, providing direct access to psychological support without fear of legal penalization or social exposure.

**Community and NGO partnerships:** Promoting partnerships between governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to develop community recovery centers, peer-support groups, and family counseling networks.

**Barriers to service accessibility:**

Despite the availability of evidence-based models, systemic barriers prevent youth from seeking or continuing care:

**Stigma and fear of legal / Social consequences:** Youth fear criminalization, parental notification, social rejection, or school expulsion.

**Legal and confidentiality constraints:** Ambiguity regarding adolescent consent laws and parental rights often deters youth from seeking medical advice.

**Socioeconomic & geographic disparities:** High costs, lack of insurance coverage, and shortages of

specialized adolescent addiction specialists in rural or underserved regions.

**Strategic recommendations for policy & practice:**

To strengthen support systems and expand access for vulnerable youth, policymakers and healthcare leaders should prioritize the following actions:

1. Expand youth-friendly, confidential health services with clear legal protections for adolescent self-consent.
2. Integrate digital mental health resources and telehealth into standard adolescent clinical care.
3. Enhance inter-agency collaboration between public health, educational systems, and youth justice programs.
4. Allocate sustainable funding for community-based peer support networks and family therapy programs.

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## PART B: Lesson Plan (1 teaching period)

**Lesson Topic** Youth Addictive Behaviors, Healthcare Access, and the Romanian Support System

**Grade:** 7th / 8th Grade (Ages 13–15)

**Lesson Type:** Teaching–learning and attitude development lesson

**Time:** 50 minutes

**Learning Objectives:**

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Differentiate clearly between substance use disorders and non-substance behavioral addictions.
2. Identify at least three accessible counseling and medical support channels available for adolescents

for adolescents internationally and within Romania.

3. Analyze common systemic and social barriers that prevent young people in Romania from seeking medical and psychological help.

4. Formulate supportive strategies to guide peers toward professional help in Romania in a non-judgmental, confidential manner.

**Materials and equipment:**

Projection board or digital display for presenting key discussion points and national helpline contact details.

Student reflection sheets and index cards for anonymous question submission.

Printed or digital reference guides detailing Romanian youth counseling helplines, CJRAE resources, and specialized health centers.

**Procedure:**

**Activity 1: Introduction (Time: 8 Minutes)**

The teacher begins by presenting two contrasting real-world scenarios regarding adolescent stress and coping mechanisms. One scenario describes healthy emotional management, while the other illustrates reliance on vaping and excessive digital gaming. Students are invited to share brief observations on how young people navigate stress and at what point a habit transitions into an addictive behavior.

**Activity 2: Direct instruction and conceptual framework (Time:15 Minutes)**

The teacher introduces core concepts using plain language. First, the teacher explains the neurobiological vulnerability of the adolescent brain, highlighting why prefrontal cortex development makes youth susceptible to impulsive behaviors. Second, the teacher presents the spectrum of addictive behaviors, contrasting substance use (alcohol, nicotine, synthetic drugs) with behavioral addictions (gaming, gambling). Third, the teacher outlines the essential pillars of support globally and specifically within Romania, introducing national resources such as school counseling services (CJRAE), public health directorates, emergency medical assistance, and dedicated national helpline services.

**Activity 3: Interactive small group activity - Case Studies (Time:15 Minutes)**

Students form small discussion groups of four. Each group receives a specific case scenario contextualized for a teenager experiencing an addictive behavior alongside fear of social stigma, parental reaction, or lack of confidentiality. The groups are tasked with answering three key questions:

What specific barriers in our local or national environment prevent this teenager from reaching out?

Which institution or service (school counselor, national helpline, specialist physician) is most appropriate for initial contact?

What practical steps can friends take to support this individual safely and confidentially?

**Activity 4: Group discussion and synthesis (Time:7 Minutes)**

A spokesperson from each small group shares their primary insights with the entire class. The teacher summarizes key findings on the board, emphasizing that seeking medical and counseling help in Romania is a legal right and a sign of resilience rather than weakness, while clarifying confidentiality protections for minors.

**Activity 5: Closure and Evaluation (Time:5 Minutes)**

To conclude the session, the teacher conducts a brief reflection activity called 'One Thing I Learned, One Action I Can Take.' Students write their responses anonymously on index cards and hand them in upon exiting. The teacher distributes a physical or digital guide listing verified Romanian helpline contacts, CJRAE support resources, and local medical consultation channels.

**Assessment Strategies**

Formative assessment is conducted through active observation of student engagement during group case discussions on national support scenarios. Summatively, the teacher evaluates the anonymous exit cards to gauge whether learning objectives were successfully met and to address any remaining student questions in follow-up sessions.

## *From our activities...*

















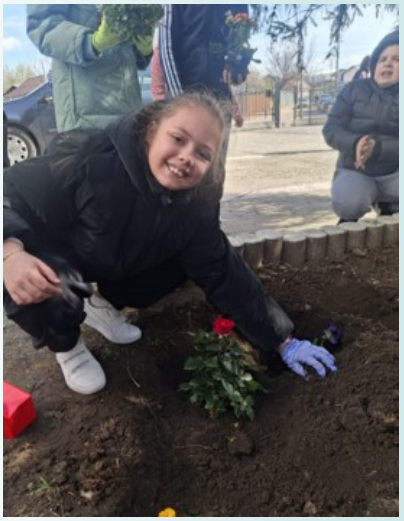





Fluturașii sărbătoriți


I care...
for my TOMORROW
2024 - 2026





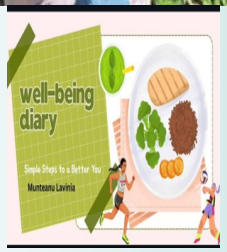



My Health Journal








well-being
diary
Simple Steps to a Better You
Munteanu Lavinia

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