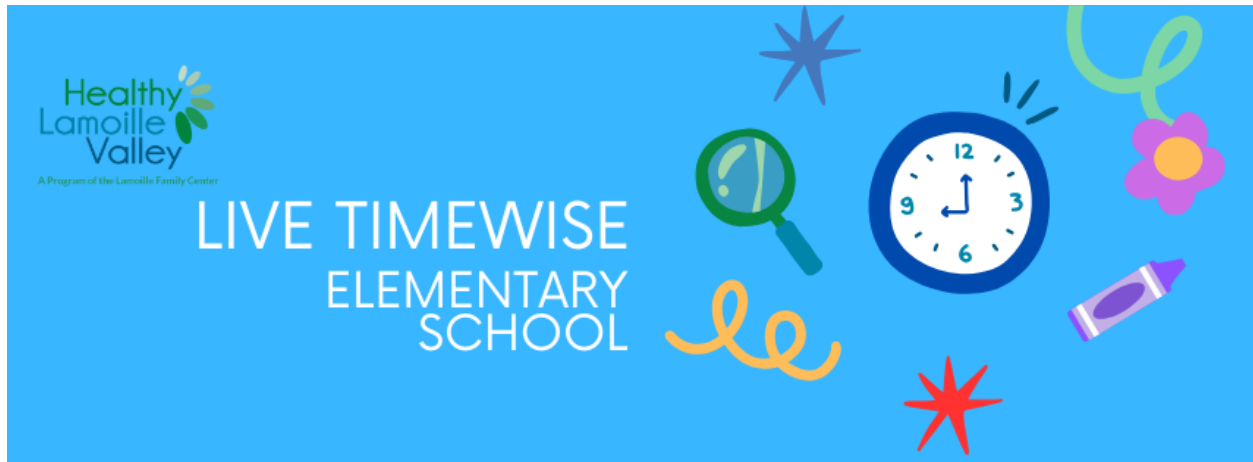




Session 3: Your Life, Your Decisions

Everyone has free time—but we all spend it differently! Free time gives us the chance to explore who we are, what matters to us, and how we want to spend our lives. This topic helps students reflect on what motivates them, how they make choices, and how they can grow into active decision-makers. It also helps them think about planning, barriers, identity, and stereotypes while learning to set meaningful goals and advocate for themselves. We'll also explore healthy and fun things to do, and how to overcome challenges or feelings that get in the way.

Subtopics

1. Why Do I Do That? Motivation & Feelings
2. Who Chooses? Choice & Self-Advocacy
3. Is It Good for Me? Healthy & Unhealthy Free Time
 - a. **Contact Healthy Lamoille Valley for additional resources regarding youth substance misuse prevention
4. What's My Goal? Planning & Dreaming
5. Can I Try That? Overcoming Stereotypes & Barriers

Books for reading or display for these topics

- [Oh, The Places You'll Go](#) by Dr. Seuss
- [Be You!](#) by Peter H. Reynolds
- [You Are Enough: A Book About Inclusion](#)
- [Happy Dreamer](#) by Peter H. Reynolds
- [The Pink Refrigerator](#) by Tim Egan

Subtopic 1: Why Do I Do That?

Motivation & Feelings

Sometimes we do things because we have to, like brushing our teeth. Sometimes we do them because we *want* to. And sometimes we do things because of what someone else thinks or just because there's nothing else to do. Let's think about why we do what we do—and how it feels.

Student goals:

- Understand “have to,” “want to,” and other motivation for our choices.
- Practice naming feelings connected to activities.
- Identify things they enjoy doing.

Timeframe

Flexible timing/ adaptable format: Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple sessions.

Example Conversation Starters

- “What do you *have* to do every day?”
- “What do you love to do when you get to choose what you do?”
- “What happens when you're bored?”

Activity Options

Game: Act or Draw It Out (Motivation Guessing)

Opening activity:

- Have students think about an activity and why they do that activity based one of the following motivations:
 - Want to
 - Have to
 - What Someone Else Thinks (this is nuanced, Influence of friends and family/relationships could be positive or negative)

- Nothing else to do
- For a purpose (like to get better at something or for a specific reason, to learn a new skill or meet people)
- Ask individual students to act out the activity they were thinking about (at home or at school or an activity, in the community, feeding a pet, playing tag, cleaning up toys)
- Students guess the activity and the motivation or have simple labels (color code for motivations)
- Ask: “How might that make someone feel?”
 - Note: Could have primary and secondary motivations
 - Does anyone else do the same activity but have another motivation? Which? How would acting that out be different? Ask them to consider riding a bike. Sometimes kids want to ride a bike because they really enjoy it. Other times they ride a bike because they have to in order to get somewhere; it is their transportation.
- Debrief

Expansion: Create a “Yesterday diary”

Use columns that say:

1. What did I do?
2. Why did I do it?

Check out the [TimeWise Workbook](#) Journal Pages 8-9 for an idea or use the Workbook Journal Page

Have students complete the yesterday diary and reflect on it individually and then as a group.

Subtopic 2: Who Chooses?

Choice & Self-Advocacy

Sometimes we pick what to do—and sometimes adults in our lives (parents/guardians or teachers) decide for us. Today we're going to talk about how we make choices, and how to speak up about things we like or want to do or try.

Student Goals:

- Understand that kids often make choices under the guidance of adults.
- Learn to express what they enjoy or don't enjoy.
- Practice self-advocacy with respectful words.

Timeframe

Flexible timing/adaptable format: Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple sessions.

Opening:

Make a picture that shows what kind of kid you are in your free time.

Example Conversation Starters

- "Who picks your after-school activities or camps and how often you have them?"
- "Do you like what you do? Would you change anything?"

Activity Options

Discussion:

- "Would you rather pick your activity, or let someone else choose it for you? and Why?"

Draw Your Ideal Afternoon/Weekend

- What do you love to do? What would it look like if you got to choose your afternoon or weekend? A Yes Day (show the trailer from the movie Yes Day- and discuss)

Discussion and Role Play: Suppose you were not allowed to do the activity you want to do, how would you negotiate with your adult what you want to do? Have students come up with things they might say to advocate for themselves.

Take-Home Prompt:

- “Ask an adult to name something *they* liked to do as a kid—and share something you’d like to do together or try!”

Subtopic 3: Is It Good for Me?

Healthy vs. Unhealthy Choices

Some things we do help us grow, feel strong, or have fun in a good way. Some things don't make us feel great after. Today we'll talk about healthy fun—and fun that might not be the best for us.

We talked about benefits in Session 2. All those benefits are healthy for us.

Student Goals:

- Talk about how activities affect our body and feelings.
- Learn what “positive risk” means (trying something new in a good way).
- Practice noticing if something helps or hurts our well-being.

Timeframe

- **Flexible timing/ adaptable format:** Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple sessions.

Example Conversation Starters

- “What’s something you do that helps your body?”
- “What’s something that helps your heart or mood?”
- “What is a risk that’s fun and safe?”
- “What’s something someone might do in their free time that could be harmful to them or others?”

Activity Options

Sort Game:

Use cards or pictures of activities.

Sort into:

- *Healthy for me* (e.g., biking, laughing, painting)

- *Maybe not so healthy* (e.g., too much screen time, not moving, being mean to others)

Story/Draw Prompt:

Draw or tell a story about something that made you feel strong, happy, or proud.

Have students share and discuss

Start early conversations about substance misuse prevention (as students get older add more content and discussion and refusal skills workshops).

*Contact Healthy Lamoille Valley for more support with positive youth development and youth substance misuse prevention.

Subtopic 4: What's My Goal?

Planning & Dreaming

Sometimes we just do stuff because we're bored. Some kids have too many things scheduled and feel stressed. Others feel like there's nothing to do and end up doing things they don't care about. Either way, it's important to find a balance and choose things that feel meaningful or exciting.

Student Goals:

- Understand what a goal is.
- Think about what they want more of or less of.
- Practice making a simple plan to achieve a desired goal.

Timeframe

Flexible timing/ adaptable format: Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple sessions.

Example Conversation Starters

- "What's something you'd love to try?"
- "What would you like *more* of in your free time?"
- "How can you make a plan to do that?"

Activity Options

Mission Challenge:

Pick a class goal or individual goal or "mini mission" for the week (e.g., try a new game, ask a grown-up to help with a plan).

Goal-Focused Self-Portrait:

Draw yourself **doing something you'd like to do more of** in your free time (a dream or a goal) or write it down.

Create a class collage of all goal-focused statements or self-portraits titled:

“We Are More Than Just What We Do in School!” OR “Who We Are in Our Free Time”

Subtopic 5: Can I Try That?

Overcoming Stereotypes & Barriers

We've talked about planning but what happens if things get in the way of doing activities you want to do? Sometimes people think certain activities are only for a certain gender, or only for certain people. That's not true! Everyone should be able to try new things. Those are barriers to trying out new things, and there are other barriers or roadblocks as well. It is important to examine and think about potential roadblocks to determine if they are real or just perceived and we can figure out how to overcome the barriers. Sometimes there are other roadblocks. Some of the barriers are real and sometimes perceived.

Student Goals:

- Notice stereotypes and how they make us feel.
- Talk about real and imagined barriers.
- Practice cheering for each other.

Timeframe

Flexible timing/ adaptable format: Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple sessions.

Example Conversation Starters

- "Have you ever wanted to try something but felt nervous to do so?"
- "What would you try if nobody judged you?"
- "How can we help others feel included?"

Activity Options

Barrier Busters:

Kids write or draw something they want to try. Then brainstorm with the group: What might stop you or get in the way? How can we help?

Use recess or other real life examples:

- Ask someone new to play with you
- Try a new game at recess or a new after school activity
- Sit with someone new at lunch

Share Out: With each activity shared have other students think about if they, too, would like to try to activity mentioned.