

# On the Road Trip of Life:

## What are your Potholes, Detours, Scenic Rest Stops?

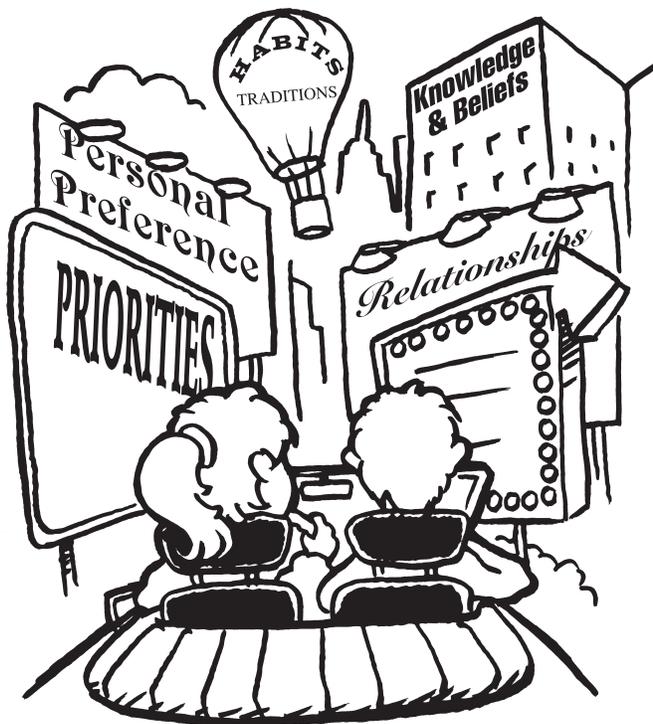
### Lesson Overview

**O**ur food choices and activity habits are influenced by our personal preferences, priorities and values, habits and traditions, knowledge and beliefs, relationships, and the environments in which we work, play, and live. This lesson examines these influences and how to maximize the positive and counteract the negative. The influence of the media and advertising is the focus of the next lesson.



### Destination: Directing our choices toward wellness

- Students will recognize what influences their personal eating and activity behaviors.
- Students will understand how those influences impact their choices and ultimately their health.
- Students will create strategies to maximize the positive influences and minimize the negative influences.



### Itinerary

To take the "Shortcut" in 30 minutes, follow this route in class:

- Ignition (5 minutes)
- Driver's Ed (10 minutes, omit tallies and simply cover content)
- Test Drive (10 minutes)
- Take the Keys (5 minutes)

To take the "Standard Trip" in 40-50 minutes, follow this route:

- Ignition (5 minutes)
- Driver's Ed (20 minutes)
- Test Drive (10-15 minutes)
- Take the Keys (5 minutes)

To take the "Extended Trip" in 90 minutes or two class periods, follow this route, or complete two lessons:

- Learner's Permit (allow up to 10 minutes)
- Ignition (5 minutes)
- Driver's Ed (20 - 30 minutes)
- Test Drive (30 minutes)
- Alternate Route (if used, substitute for part of time above)
- Take the Keys (5 minutes)
- Take the Wheel (10 or more minutes, just begin assignment)



## Packing for the Journey:

- Explain pre-class assignment and assign in advance of class.
- Select "route" to take and activities and examples to use.
- Create overhead transparencies or prepare to use power point slide show.
- Obtain visual aids, if desired.
- Obtain video(s) to view as alternate/additional activity.
- Copy student handouts to match your selected activities.
- Student Assessment
- Select follow-up activit(ies) for students to complete.



## Your Teaching Road Map . . .

### Give Students a Learner's Permit

Provide students with the pre-class handout "On the Road Trip of Life: What's Your Itinerary?" The purpose of this assignment is for the students to assess those things that personally influence their eating and activity choices. Instruct the students to keep this record on the same day. It can be done as an extension of the after-class assignment from the previous lesson in which the students keep 3 days of diet and activity records. You may need to photocopy each side twice to provide students with two pages for diet records and two pages for activity records.

# Put the Key in the Ignition: What drives you?



Why do you **eat** what you eat? Why do you **do** what you do?  
Have you ever thought about what influences those choices?

When you kept your one day eating and activity records, you had to consider the reasons behind your eating and activity choices. Was it hard to decide what the reasons were for your choices? In most cases were there multiple reasons?

**Our food choices and activity habits are influenced by** (slides or overheads):

■ **our personal preferences** – what we like

*Someone give an example of a food they ate because they like it.  
Someone else describe an activity they did because they like it.*

■ **our priorities and values** – what is important to us

We might value saving time or money. We might value gourmet food.  
We might value gaining strength and muscle tone, etc.  
Can someone give an example of a food or activity choice they made that was influenced by *something they value as important?*

■ **our habits and traditions** – what we do just because we always have

Maybe you always have pizza on Friday nights at your house or turkey for Thanksgiving.  
Maybe you always walk your dog after school . . .  
Can someone give an example of an eating or activity *habit or tradition* they have?

■ **our knowledge and beliefs** – what we think is best for us

Perhaps you choose to drink milk with each meal because you believe you need calcium to build strong bones during this time in your life. We might choose a vegetarian diet based on a belief that it is wrong to eat animal products or that it is healthier to eat a plant-based diet.  
Can someone give an example of an activity choice that is influenced by something you *know or believe?*

■ **our relationships** – what is in balance with people we spend time with

Examples of this are making time to eat with family or friends or eating what they offer you to eat.  
Or, you may participate in a sport or recreational activity to be with others.  
Raise your hand if you spent time *eating with others? being active with others?*

■ **and the environments in which we work, play, and live.**

These environments include our homes, our school, and our community.

This lesson will examine these influences and how to maximize the positive and counteract the negative.  
The influence of the media and advertising will be the focus of the next lesson.



Provide students with the handout: "What are your Potholes?" (pages 113-114). Explain the instructions for tallying and computing percentages of the selected influences. They will need to use their completed eating and activity records. For the activity tally section, have them consider "required" activities to be those that are necessary (like sleeping, getting dressed, going to class, etc.) Have students work in small groups and do the computations individually for themselves and collectively as a group. If time is short, simply have them do it individually.

Let's take a look at your eating and activity records and the tallies you made of the reasons for your choices. Let's start on the eating side. How many times did you eat because you were *hungry*? Every time you ate? Most times? Never?  
(Allow for sharing.)

**Ideally, most of the times we eat during the day we are hungry.** That's because when we eat in response to our signals of hunger and satiety it helps keep us in energy balance. Our bodies tell us *when* and *how much* to eat. Our job is to listen to those signals. But, even though hunger is generally the force behind getting *something* to eat, other reasons come into play in our choice of *what* to eat, unless of course, we have no choice. We'll look shortly at what those reasons are for *what* we choose to eat.

But first, let's look at other reasons for eating. Look at the times you ate when you *weren't* particularly hungry. What were the reasons for eating then?

Was it an **appetite** for some particular food to eat, a **craving** for something just because you love eating it? Have you ever noticed how you can be full at the end of a meal, where you simply couldn't eat another bite of your main dish, but then a waiter comes out with a dessert cart or your grandma brings out something scrumptious, and all of a sudden you want something more to eat? And, not just anything to eat, you want "Death by Chocolate," or you fill in the blank. That is the difference between appetite and hunger as a driving force for eating.

If you recorded times you ate when you weren't hungry, was it ever **in response to a mood**, like boredom, loneliness, stress or anxiety? Or, was it because **food was available**; maybe someone offered you something to eat, or food was a part of a particular event, or food was simply in close proximity to you at the time, like a candy dish near where you study or snack foods at a party? We certainly eat for many reasons other than because we're hungry.

If you often eat for reasons other than hunger, those influences might be like potholes or detours on your road to healthy eating. You might want to look later at strategies to minimize the impact of those influences.



**Now let's look at the reasons for our food choices.** We're hungry, so we look for something to eat. Why do we choose to eat what we do? What do you think is the number one reason?

**First, we eat what we like.** We like what *tastes* good to us, what we find *appealing* (it looks good, smells good, and goes with other foods we are eating), and we eat what we are familiar with (those foods that are a part of our culture and traditions, foods we are in a habit of eating). Survey after survey of why people eat what they eat find that the number one reason is taste – we eat what tastes good to us. What was the percentage of foods you ate that you *liked*? Did anyone eat lots of things they *didn't like*?

**Second, most of the time we choose foods we like that are *also* available and convenient.**

Although, sometimes if we're really craving something, we'll go hunting for it or go to extra trouble to fix it. But most of the time, we eat what's easy to get and prepare. For example, lots of people like carrots, but hate peeling them. So, producers got smart and started selling carrots peeled and cut into small pieces and called them "baby carrots." Sales of carrots increased dramatically. Think about how much of a grocery store is devoted to already prepared or easy-to-prepare foods. We like foods that are available and ready to eat. For example, recent studies have shown that when free fruit is offered to school children, they gobble it up. So, having tasty, healthy choices available is a big influence to eating those foods. How often were the foods you ate *available* and *convenient*? Most of the time? What did you eat that wasn't?

Not only does the availability of food influence our decision to eat a food, (and can even turn "on" our sensations of hunger when we see the food), but **the amount of food available has an impact on how much we eat.** Studies show that if we are offered larger portions, we eat more food. As portion sizes have grown in this country, so have our weights and our waistlines. Do you generally "*clean your plate*"? Do you usually order the *larger* or *smaller* portions? Do you usually eat something until it is gone (bowl of popcorn, bag of chips, pizza, etc.)?

**Third, other people influence our food choices.** We eat foods our parents buy and fix for us. We eat foods that are "cool" in our group of friends. We eat foods that we see advertised. How often did *other people* influence your food choices? Who? Did they *support* or *sabotage* healthy food choices?

**And, we eat foods that make us feel good and, hopefully, that will help us be healthy, now and in the future.** The more we learn about and experience the health benefits of practicing healthful eating behaviors, the more motivated we will be to make those choices. Benefits teens list most often for motivating them to eat healthy foods are improved alertness and concentration, and more energy for daily activities. How often was *health* one of the reasons for your food choices?



## **How does our environment influence our food choices . . .**

- at home? (availability of healthy vs "junk" foods, cooking equipment)
- at school? (school lunch, open/closed campus for lunch, vending)
- in our community? (number and type of restaurants, stores, signs)

Flip your paper over now to your activity record and the tallies you made of your activity choices. **How much control do you have over how you spend your day?** Are *most* of your activities structured and scheduled to the minute? Or, do you have quite a bit of leisure time that you can choose what to do?

How many of your activity choices were **not** required or necessary; they were purely optional? What are the reasons for your choice of activities when you have control over your time? What activities do you prefer and why?

(Allow for sharing.)

Look at your actual activity record. How much of your day are you physically active and how much are you engaged in sedentary activities? **Why are you active or inactive?**

Probably because of the reasons on the list we looked at initially:  
our personal preferences, values, traditions, beliefs, relationships, and the environment in which we live.

Our activities that we have some control over include those we choose for recreation or sport, the jobs we choose, and the way we choose to get from place to place. Look at your tallies for these three different ways to categorize your activities. How often each day do you do of each of these three types of activities?

What are some examples of recreational activities that are inactive? active?

What are some examples of jobs that are inactive? active?

What are ways to get from place to place that are inactive? active?

## **How does our environment influence how active or inactive we are . . .**

- at home? (number of TV's and computers, equipment/space for activity)
- at school? (stairs/elevators, physical education classes, recreational and competitive sports programs)
- in our community? (parks, sidewalks, bicycle paths, recreational centers)



## Steering clear of potholes and detours

Turn your handout over. In your small group, select one category of influences on our eating and activity choices. (Option to give student groups their choice of category or have each group “draw” a category by chance from cards with the different categories of influences written on them.)

Discuss and describe:

- an example of a positive influence on eating choices
- an example of a negative influence on eating choices
- an example of a positive influence on activity choices
- an example of a negative influence on activity choices

For teacher reference, here are examples in each category:

Influence Categories	Positive Influence on Eating	Negative Influence on Eating	Positive Influence on Activity	Negative Influence on Activity
<b>Personal Preferences</b>	I like eating salads with raw vegetables.	I dislike the taste of milk.	I like to participate in team sports.	I hate to sweat.
<b>Priorities and Values</b>	I look for good buys on food to save money.	I prefer sleeping late to eating breakfast.	Physical fitness is important to me.	I prefer watching TV to being active.
<b>Habits and Traditions</b>	My mother always serves vegetables with dinner.	I get a candy bar and soda from the vending machine after school daily.	My family takes back-packing vacations.	My family watches TV all evening every night.
<b>Knowledge and Beliefs</b>	I believe I need 3-4 servings of milk a day.	I believe I shouldn't eat carbohydrates.	I believe I need to do weight-bearing exercise.	I don't really think getting exercise is that important.
<b>Relationships with Others</b>	My friends buy healthy foods for lunch.	My family rarely eats meals together.	My sister and I like being active together.	My friends like playing computer games.
<b>Environments of Home, School and Community</b>	Our school lunch has healthy options every day.	My parents keep lots of high calorie snack foods at home.	We have sidewalks in our neighborhood and a park nearby.	Our school does not offer PE more than 1 year.

Write a brief statement of advice to fellow students regarding each of these positive influences (motivators) and negative influences (barriers).

Pick your favorite and write it on the board for the entire class to see. If you want to be creative, feel free to add an illustration.

Have class “vote” on the best advice.



## Alternate Routes

1. Select and show a video from the list of resources.
2. Have students debate any of the following issues or think of others related to the positive and negative influences on eating and activity choices:
  - Should daily physical education be mandatory nationwide?
  - Should community development plans be required to include sidewalks, parks, bike paths, and/or other public spaces encouraging activity?
  - Does our school need more opportunities for recreation and sport for all students?
  - Does our school offer too many low-nutrient, high-calorie foods and snacks in the cafeteria and from vending, school stores or concessions?
  - Should high school campuses be closed or open during lunch?
  - Should restaurants be required to offer healthy choices and provide nutrition information on all menu offerings?
3. Do one of the "Take the Wheel" activities in class.

# Take the Keys



-  **The road to wellness is filled with potholes and detours, as well as smooth roads and shortcuts. Positive influences and motivators help us live healthy lives. But, negative influences are barriers to good health.** Be on the lookout for these things along your way and recognize how they influence your progress. Then you'll be able to go in the direction you want to go.
-  **We are more likely to practice healthy eating and activity habits when they are "desirable" to us and are convenient; when they fit our lifestyle and environment, and our beliefs and values.** This might include finding tasty ways to prepare healthier foods, having a healthy breakfast ready in the refrigerator before going to bed, offering milk and 100% juices in the vending machines at school, or finding new ways to be more active.
-  **We are more likely to steer clear of eating and activity habits that are less-healthy if we are able to counteract the negative influences that lead us to make these choices.** This might include asking our parents to buy more fruits and vegetables and keeping them in the refrigerator ready to eat, or setting the alarm 30 minutes earlier to allow time for breakfast, or taking the television out of our bedroom, or signing up for a Tai-Bo class with a friend.



## Take the Wheel

Provide students with the take-home assignment: "On the Road Trip of Life: What are your Potholes, Detours, Scenic Rest Stops?" (page 115) and/or "A Closer Look at *my* Road Conditions" (page 116). Go over options. If time allows, begin assignment.



## Driver's Test: On the Road Trip of Life

Answers to assessment:

1. a
2. c
3. d
4. b
5. e



# Driver's Test:

## On the Road Trip of Life

- 1. Which of the following influences food choices the *most*?**
  - a. whether we like the food
  - b. whether we can afford the food
  - c. whether the food is convenient
  - d. whether the food is healthy
  
- 2. Which of the following is an example of an *environmental* influence on food choices?**
  - a. preference for spicy flavors
  - b. the mood we are in
  - c. which restaurants are nearby
  - d. knowing that olive oil is monounsaturated
  
- 3. What is influencing your food choice when you search in the back of the freezer to find the Rocky Road ice cream?**
  - a. beliefs
  - b. convenience
  - c. cost
  - d. appetite
  
- 4. Which of the following is what people state most often as the barrier to participating in physical activity?**
  - a. expense of exercise equipment
  - b. lack of time
  - c. don't enjoy being active
  - d. no programs available
  - e. all of the above
  - f. none of the above
  
- 5. Which of the following is a way to overcome a negative influence?**
  - a. modify your environment
  - b. solicit the help of others
  - c. make something you consider "undesirable" more desirable
  - d. make something inconvenient more convenient
  - e. all of the above
  - f. none of the above



# Your Spare Tire: Teacher Resources

## For further reading:

O'Dea, JA. **Why do kids eat healthful food? Perceived benefits and barriers to healthful eating and physical activity among children and adolescents.** *JADA* 2003, 104(4):497-500.

Neumark-Sztainer, D., Story, M., Perry, C., Casey, MA. **Factors influencing food choices of adolescents: Findings from focus-group discussions with adolescents.** *JADA* 1999, 99(8):929-937.

## Web Sites:

### **The Vegetarian Resource Group**

<http://www.vrg.org>

### **Cultural and Ethnic Food Guide Pyramids**

<http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/etext/000023.html>

### **Cultural and Ethnic Food and Nutrition Education Materials**

<http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/pubs/bibs/gen/ethnic.html>

The National Institutes of Health has a Portion Distortion quiz at their web site: <http://hin.nhlbi.nih.gov/portion>

Another interactive web site about portion size is called, "Super Size Surprise" <http://www.inteilhealth.com> (click on interactive tools)

## Videos/Resources:

***Bugs for Breakfast: Food and Culture***, 19 minute video from The Learning Seed. This video challenges students to think about the effects of culture on their food choices. [www.learningseed.com](http://www.learningseed.com)

***Everybody's Ethnic: Your Invisible Culture***, 21 minute video from The Learning Seed. This video encourages students to understand what culture is and to be respectful of other cultures. [www.learningseed.com](http://www.learningseed.com)

***The Way We Eat: What Food Means***, 19 minute video from The Learning Seed. This video seeks to answer the question: "Do you live to eat or eat to live?" [www.learningseed.com](http://www.learningseed.com)





# On the Road Trip of Life:

## What are your Potholes, Detours, Scenic Rest Stops?



Many things influence our eating and activity choices. These influences can be both positive and negative. Follow the instructions below to fill in the table for yourself and for your group or class.

	Me:		My group:	
	#	%	#	%
How often . . .				
I ate because I was hungry:	_____	_____	_____	_____
I ate something just because I wanted it:	_____	_____	_____	_____
I ate in response to a mood:	_____	_____	_____	_____
I ate because food was there:	_____	_____	_____	_____
How often my food choice was. . .				
a food I liked:	_____	_____	_____	_____
a food that was convenient:	_____	_____	_____	_____
influenced by other people:	_____	_____	_____	_____
selected for health:	_____	_____	_____	_____
How often my activity choice was. . .				
an optional, <i>not</i> a "required" activity:	_____	_____	_____	_____
for recreation/sport:	_____	_____	_____	_____
to perform a job or chore:	_____	_____	_____	_____
to get from one place to another:	_____	_____	_____	_____

- Begin by adding up the **number of times you ate** in the 24 hours you kept your diet record. Each meal or snack counts as one time.  
# of times I ate: \_\_\_\_\_ # of times my group ate: \_\_\_\_\_
- For each eating event, decide **whether or not you were hungry** before you started eating. Add up the number of times you ate when you were hungry and divide by the total number of times you ate. To get the percentage, multiply by 100. Decide how many eating events occurred because you **wanted a particular food**. Divide that number by the total number of times you ate and multiply by 100. Do the same thing for eating that occurred **in response to a mood** (such as boredom or loneliness) and **because food was there**.
- Now count up your total **number of food choices**. Each eating event will have one or more food choices listed.  
# of food choices I made: \_\_\_\_\_ # of food choices my group made: \_\_\_\_\_
- For each food choice, decide if it meets any one of the four criteria listed above (each food choice can qualify in one or more areas), and total the number of food choices for each category. Divide those numbers one at a time by your total number of food choices and multiply by 100 to get the percentage.
- Add up the **number of activities** you engaged in (there should be one activity per line on the table) in the 24 hours you kept your activity record.  
# of activities I did: \_\_\_\_\_ # of activities my group did: \_\_\_\_\_
- For each activity, decide if it meets any one of the four categories listed above (each activity can qualify in one or two areas), and total the number of activities for each category. Many activities won't fit any of those categories. Divide the number in each category by the total number of activities and multiply by 100 to get the percentage.

## Steering clear of potholes and detours

1. In your small group, select one category of influences on our eating and activity choices: our personal preferences, our priorities and values, our habits and traditions, our knowledge and beliefs, our relationships, and the environments in which we work, play, and live.

Our category: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Discuss and describe:

- an example of a positive influence on eating choices:
  
- an example of a negative influence on eating choices:
  
- an example of a positive influence on activity choices:
  
- an example of a negative influence on activity choices:

3. Write a brief statement of advice to fellow students regarding each of these positive and negative influences:

- optimize this positive influence on eating choices:
  
- overcome this negative influence on eating choices:
  
- optimize this positive influence on activity choices:
  
- overcome this negative influence on activity choices:

4. Pick your favorite and write it on the board for the entire class to see. If you want to be creative, feel free to add an illustration.

# On the Road Trip of Life:

## What are your Potholes, Detours, Scenic Rest Stops?

### The Key of Direction

The road to wellness is filled with obstacles and detours as well as smooth roads and shortcuts. Positive influences, or motivators, help us along the way. We need to maximize their impact on our eating and activity choices. Negative influences are barriers to good health. We need to minimize their impact. We must clearly see these motivators and barriers along our way and recognize how they influence our progress so we can proceed in the direction we want to go.

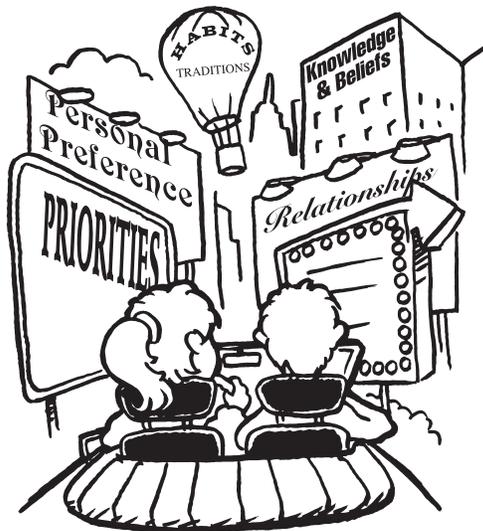


### The Influence of Culture

Learn more about the influence of culture on food choices and/or activity behaviors. Select a culture and research its common practices, beliefs and traditions. If possible, interview someone from that culture for a personal viewpoint. Write a brief report about their culture, eating habits and/or recreational or sports activities. Describe how these eating and activity choices impact the health of people from this culture. Option: Fix a meal for your family from that culture.

### The Vegetarian Choice

What is vegetarianism? Why do people choose that diet? Research the types of vegetarian diets and reasons for choosing to eat vegetarian. Write a brief report of your findings. Describe the benefits and challenges of a vegetarian diet. A good web site to start your research is the Vegetarian Resource Group: <http://www.vrg.org>.



### The Impact of "Portion Distortion"

Research how portion sizes have changed over the past several decades. Write a brief report that gives at least 5 examples of increases in portion size. Describe how this increase in portion size affects caloric intake and weight.

### Modify Your Environment

Work individually or with a group of other students to make a positive change in one of the following environments:

#### School

- Work with your food service director to promote healthy foods in the cafeteria and/or limit sales of less-healthy choices.
- Campaign for healthier choices in vending machines, concession stands, or student-run stores and fund-raising.
- Promote more frequent physical education classes, more opportunities for recreational sports, more access to competitive sports, etc.

#### Community

- Lobby your local government for more sidewalks, parks, bike paths, recreational centers, etc.
- Encourage local restaurants to include healthy choices on their menus and help promote their sales.

#### Home

- Do a "kitchen inventory." Stock up on tasty and convenient healthy choices and limit the number of less-healthy options.

## A Closer Look at *my* "Road Conditions"

Select an area you identified in the last lesson on your "Maintenance Check List" that you feel "needs major work." Describe your current level of "performance" and what you'd like to achieve (your goal for that area). Fill in the table describing any applicable positive and negative influences on that behavior. What current motivators and barriers are in your "road to wellness"? Consider how you can maximize the positive and minimize the negative. Pick one strategy and try it out for one week. Report on your progress.

Area: \_\_\_\_\_

Current level of performance:

Goal:

Influence Categories	Positive Influence (Motivators)	Negative Influence (Barriers)
Personal Preferences		
Priorities and Values		
Habits and Traditions		
Knowledge and Beliefs		
Relationships with Others		
Environments of Home, School and Community		

Strategies to maximize positive influences:

Strategies to minimize negative influences:

What I plan to do this week: