LESSON 11

Substance Use and Addiction

Ages 12–15

Lesson 11. Substance Use and Addiction

Ages

12–15

Learning Objectives

Cadets and JCRs will be able to:

- Describe why people use substances (Activities 1 and 2).
- Describe the impacts of substance use and addiction (Activity 3).
- Develop a personal safety plan (Activities 1, 2, and 3).

Facilitators have three activities from which to choose in the body of this lesson. Each activity ranges from 15–20 minutes in length. Time required for the introduction is 3–5 minutes, and time required for the conclusion is 5–10 minutes.

Learning Tools and Materials

If audiovisual equipment is not available, handouts could be produced from the slides, or the information could be displayed on a flip chart or white board.

Slide deck:

- Types of Substances
- (Optional) Substance Use and Addiction Quiz
- Risk Factors
- Resiliency
- Protective Factors
- Impacts
- Look, Listen, Link, Live©
- Kids Help Phone
- Community Resources

Handouts:

- Substance Use and Addiction Quiz and Answer Key
- Protective Factors Cards
- Impact Cards
- Ashley's Story
- Support Circles
- Safety Plan

Lesson Preparation

Introduction

- Nil.

Activity 1. Substance Use and Addiction

- Set up audiovisual equipment and cue slides (or alternative way to display information):
  - Types of Substances; and
  - (Optional) Substance Use and Addiction Quiz
- Print a copy of the Substance Use and Addiction Quiz and Answer Key for yourself.

Activity 2. Risk and Protective Factors

- Set up audiovisual equipment and cue slides (or alternative way to display information):
  - Risk Factors;
  - Resiliency; and
  - Protective Factors.
- Gather one piece of flip chart paper for each group.
- Gather felt markers for each group.
- Prepare or gather one set of Protective Factors Cards. Place them in a bowl or other container.

Activity 3. Impacts of Substance Use and Addictions

- Set up audiovisual equipment and cue slides (or alternative way to display information):
  - Impacts.
- Prepare or gather three sets of Impact Cards.
- Gather one piece of flip chart paper for each group.
- Gather felt markers for each group.

Conclusion

- Set up audiovisual equipment and cue slides (or alternative way to display information):
  - Look, Listen, Link, Live©;
  - Kids Help Phone; and
  - Community Resources.
- Fill in the Community Resources presentation slide with local agency numbers and helplines.
- Print required number of copies of handouts:
  - Ashley's Story;
  - Support Circles; and
  - Safety Plan.

Introduction

Estimated Time

3–5 minutes

Review the following safety guidelines at the start of the lesson:

- Participate as you feel comfortable.
- Maintain confidentiality when discussing someone else's experiences.
- Listen when others are speaking.
- If you are uncomfortable with the topic or discussion, you have permission to leave the room for a break. An adult will check up on you.

In this lesson, we are going to talk about substance use and addiction. We recognize that not all youth who experiment with substances will become addicted to them. We want to talk about some of the negative consequences of substance use, so you can make healthy and informed choices.

Read the following scenario out loud to the participants to facilitate a quick discussion on the topic.

Ashley is 14 years old. Her parents are divorced, and her mom is never around. When her mom is around, she and Ashley constantly fight about her mom's drinking.

Ashley started hanging out with an older friend, Tara, who is 16 years old. Ashley really likes Tara because she treats her like an adult and pays attention to her. Tara asks Ashley to go to an outdoor party on Friday night, and Ashley agrees. She tells her mom that she is sleeping over at Tara's house.

Ashley has stolen a bottle of alcohol from her mom to drink with Tara. Tara's parents are out, so they meet up at Tara's house to get ready. Ashley takes the bottle out of her backpack and starts drinking it straight. Tara laughs and tells her to slow down, but Ashley keeps going. The bottle is almost empty by the time the girls leave the house for the party. This is Ashley's first experience with alcohol. She feels lightheaded, and she stumbles across the snow as they make their way to the party.

At the party, there are lots of people standing around a big bonfire, drinking and partying. Ashley gets separated from Tara when Tara goes off to talk to some friends. Ashley is handed a joint by someone, and she takes a few puffs. She starts to feel nauseous. She heads towards the woods where she throws up.

Tara comes looking for Ashley and finds her passed out in a snow bank. Tara cannot wake Ashley up, and when she tries to pick her up, she is too heavy to move. Tara leaves Ashley to sleep it off for a bit and goes back to the party.

Ashley ends up with alcohol poisoning and must get emergency care. Everyone is talking about it and making fun of Ashley at school. You ask Ashley how she is doing, and she does not want to talk about it. A few weeks later, you see Ashley at another party. She is extremely intoxicated and can barely stand up. She has a much older guy hanging onto her.

What are the potential risks and consequences for Ashley and Tara in this situation?

Answer:

Potential risks and consequences include:

- alcohol poisoning from drinking too much in a short period of time;
- possible exposure to the elements while left sleeping outside in the cold;
- possibility of someone hurting Ashley when she is unconscious and cannot protect herself;
- trouble from underage drinking;
- loss of parental trust for lying;
- damaged reputation; and
- everyone talking about it at school.

We are going to do an activity to learn about substance use and addiction.

Activity 1
Substance Use and Addiction

Estimated Time

15–20 minutes

1. People use many different types of substances.
2. Display Types of Substances content, using the presentation slide or the alternative method you have prepared.

Types of Substances:

- Alcohol
- Marijuana (cannabis, weed, or pot)
- Tobacco or nicotine (cigarettes, e-cigarettes, and cigars)
- Hallucinogens (LSD and magic mushrooms)
- Stimulants (cocaine and meth)
- Opioids (fentanyl, heroin, morphine, and oxycodone)
- Sedatives (prescription drugs such as Valium, Xanax, and Ativan)
- Inhalants (gasoline, glue, and aerosol sprays)

3. Have your Substance Use and Addiction Quiz and Answer Key ready for you to use to read the statements.

We are going to do a true or false quiz to learn more about substance use and its effects on youth. I will read out a series of statements, and you will do a “thumbs up” if the statement is true, a “thumbs down” if the statement is false, and a “sideways thumb” if you are not sure.

4. Read out each statement from the Substance Use and Addiction Quiz and Answer Key, or from the Substance Use and Addiction Quiz presentation slides or the alternative method you have prepared. Ask for volunteers to share why they chose their response. Use the speaking notes in the Substance Use and Addiction Quiz and Answer Key to provide an explanation of each correct answer.

Substance Use and Addiction Quiz and Answer Key

1. When youth use substances, they use illegal drugs more than alcohol or marijuana.

   Answer:

   FALSE. Alcohol and marijuana are the most widely-used substances by youth, and they the most likely to be abused. Very few adolescents use illegal drugs on a regular basis.

   Question:

   What kinds of alcohol and marijuana use do you see at your school or in your community?

2. Intoxication from alcohol affects your judgment and your behaviour.

   Answer:

   TRUE. When people become intoxicated, their judgment becomes impaired. They may behave differently, and their coordination is affected.

   Intoxication can cause people to be more reckless and to do things they would not do when they are sober.

   Question:

   What are some of the reckless things people do under the influence of alcohol?

   Possible answers could include:
   - driving under the influence;
   - fighting with friends;
   - engaging in violence or crime; and
   - impaired coordination leading to physical safety risks such as stumbling into traffic, falling, or being stranded outside in freezing temperatures.

3. Driving a motor vehicle after smoking marijuana is not as dangerous as driving after drinking alcohol.

   Answer:

   FALSE. Driving a motor vehicle after using any type of drug is dangerous. Driving while under the influence of marijuana is classified as impaired driving and is penalized in the same way as drinking and driving.

4. Vaping is harmful to your health.

   Answer:

   TRUE. Even though vaping may be less harmful than cigarettes, vaping can expose a person to harmful chemicals. Vaping with nicotine can alter a teenager's brain development in the same way that cigarettes can.

   Vaping may also introduce youth to smoking who might otherwise never have tried it,

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Substance Use and Addiction Quiz and Answer Key

and in turn, cause them to become addicted to nicotine.

5. Binge drinking is harmless fun.

Answer:

FALSE. Binge drinking causes many safety and health problems. Binge drinking is defined as having four or more alcoholic drinks in one sitting. Too much alcohol in one sitting can damage your stomach, liver, and brain, and even cause death due to alcohol poisoning. Binge drinking can increase your risk of injury, and you are more likely to take part in dangerous activities. You are also at a greater risk of developing an addiction to alcohol when you binge drink.

Question:

What should you do if someone you know passes out from binge drinking?

Answer:

If someone passes out from binge drinking, turn them onto their side, and tilt their head back to keep their mouth open. This helps to reduce the risk of a person choking on their own vomit. Do not leave the person alone. Call for help if the person cannot wake up.

6. Mixing alcohol and drugs is not more dangerous than using them separately.

Answer:

FALSE. Taking more than one drug at a time is always more dangerous. Drinking before smoking marijuana can cause severe illness and vomiting.

7. A young brain is more susceptible to the effects of drugs and alcohol than an adult brain.

Answer:

TRUE. Brains do not finish developing until about age 25, so using drugs and alcohol before age 25 can permanently impact the development of your physical coordination, emotional control, motivation, judgment, reasoning, and impulse control.

The biggest interference is that drugs and alcohol send too many “feel good” signals to the brain so that the body quits producing as many “feel good” signals naturally to

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balance. Then, when someone is not using drugs or alcohol, they may feel very low or sad. It can take a couple of weeks of not using drugs and alcohol for the body to once again start producing the “feel good” chemical called dopamine on its own.

8. Substance use becomes “abuse” when drugs or alcohol start to have a negative effect on a person’s life and interfere with their mental and physical well-being.

   Answer:

   TRUE. Addiction or substance abuse describes the use of substances over time that causes negative effects on a person’s life. Substance abuse can impact a person’s ability to function while at school or work, or while doing sports or other activities. Substance abuse can also put stress on their relationships; cause conflict with parents / caregivers; cause anxiety, depression, and psychosis; and increase the risk of injury and death.

9. Inhalants give you a short-term high, so they are less dangerous than other drugs.

   Answer:

   FALSE. Although the high from inhalants usually lasts just a few short seconds, people often try to make it last by continuing to inhale over and over again for hours.

   The long-term effects of inhalants include:
   - liver and kidney damage;
   - hearing loss;
   - bone marrow damage;
   - loss of coordination;
   - muscle spasms; and
   - brain damage.

   Inhalants are highly concentrated, and they contain a lot of chemicals. Sniffing these can cause the heart to stop, resulting in death.

10. Substance use is a good way to let go and cope with stress when things get too big to handle.

    Answer:

    FALSE. Using substances to cope with stress—including relationship problems, violence in the home, or anxiety—is a negative coping strategy. The effects of substances can stimulate the brain to feel good, but this feeling is temporary. Alcohol and drugs can be more harmful when you are stressed or when you have experienced a crisis. Your body is already stressed and is trying to calm down. Alcohol and drugs can elevate that stress, and coming off them can lead to anxiety and depression.

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Activity 2
Risk and Protective Factors

Estimated Time

15–20 minutes

1. Youth need to be aware of risk factors for substance use so they can make healthy and informed choices. Not all youth who experiment with substances will become addicted to them. We do know that some youth are more at risk of using substances.

2. Divide the participants into small groups (four or fewer participants per group). Distribute one piece of flip chart paper and felt markers to each group. Have the groups brainstorm factors that might put a person at risk of using substances. Have a few groups share their answers.

3. Display the Risk Factors content, using the presentation slide or the alternative method you have prepared. Use the following speaking notes to supplement the discussion with any points that may have been missed.

Risk Factors:

- EXPERIMENTING WITH ALCOHOL AND DRUGS AT A YOUNG AGE: Using drugs or alcohol as a youth can affect your brain development, and it can increase the likelihood of progressing to addiction as you get older.
- FAMILY MEMBERS THAT REGULARLY DRINK AND USE DRUGS AROUND THE HOUSE: Youth are more at risk of using substances if they live in a household where family members use drugs or alcohol.
- BEING ABUSED, BULLIED, OR HARASSED: People may use drugs or alcohol to cope with their emotions after negative or traumatic experiences.
- HAVING FRIENDS WHO EXPERIMENT WITH DRUGS AND ALCOHOL: Peer pressure is another risk factor for substance use, and pressure to fit in can cause youth to experiment with substances.

4. It is important to know that not all youth will develop substance use problems if they have experienced these risk factors. Many youth are resilient. Have you heard of the word “resiliency” before? Do you know what it means?

5. Display the Resiliency content, using the presentation slide or the alternative method you have prepared.

Resiliency

“Resiliency” is the ability to move forward and to cope with obstacles and negative events that can happen in life.

Many youth have protective factors that help minimize the effects of negative, stressful situations. These protective factors can also lower their risk of using or abusing substances.

6. Protective factors can come from a person’s own strengths and skills, from their culture and traditions, from family members, or from the community. It is also possible for people to

develop or improve upon protective factors throughout their lives.

7. Pass the container of Protective Factors Cards around the room, and ask for volunteers to take a card as it goes around.

8. Ask each volunteer to read the protective factor on their card to the group. As a large group, discuss how the factor could protect a person against using or abusing substances.

   Display the Protective Factors content, using the presentation slide or the alternative method you have prepared.

Protective Factors

Use the following speaking notes to explain each protective factor.

The following are protective factors that help a person to be resilient:

- ABILITY TO DEAL WITH STRESS AND TO PROBLEM SOLVE. Youth who have healthy coping strategies and problem solving skills learn to deal with stress in positive ways, instead of turning to alcohol and drugs to cope.
- ABILITY TO CONNECT WITH OTHERS. Youth who are able to build and nurture healthy friendships with others are less likely to use substances. Friends and other people who care about them will support them through tough times.
- HAVING A SAFE AND TRUSTWORTHY PERSON TO WHOM YOU CAN REACH OUT FOR HELP. Having safe, trustworthy peers and adults with whom to share concerns, and to whom youth can go for help, has been shown to protect against substance use.

  Refer to their Safety Circles or Safety Plans.

  It is important to identify who these safe, trustworthy people are in your life.
- ABILITY TO EXPRESS, AND DEAL WITH, EMOTIONS. It is a normal part of life to feel sad, scared, or anxious when going through bad times. Resilient people can express their emotions in healthy ways instead of keeping them bottled up inside. This is a protective factor in dealing with many of life's challenges, and it lowers the risk of using substances.
- BEING OPTIMISTIC AND EXCITED ABOUT THE FUTURE. Optimism can help protect people against anxiety, depression, and substance use. It involves learning to think positively about the future—even when things go wrong. Optimistic people are happier and are better problem solvers.
- BEING PART OF A SCHOOL CLUB, A SPORTS TEAM, A COMMUNITY PROGRAM LIKE THE CADET / JCR PROGRAM, OR VOLUNTEERING FOR A CAUSE. A program like the cadet / JCR program allows youth to take safe risks and take on challenges that teach life skills and build self-confidence. All these skills lower the risk of using substances.
- SCHOOL / ORGANIZATIONAL / PROGRAM / COMMUNITY POLICIES TO REDUCE ABUSE, BULLYING, AND HARASSMENT. When there are policies and procedures in place to deal with violence, this helps to keep youth safe from harm and reduces the risk of substance use.
- CULTURE. Being able to take part in their own culture and traditions protects people from substance use.

9. All of us have our own personal strengths and abilities to help us when going through tough times or challenges in life. It is important to know that there are people who care about you and who can help you.

Protective Factors Cards

Ability to deal with stress and problem solve	Ability to connect with others
Having a safe and trustworthy person to whom you can reach out for help	Ability to express and deal with emotions
Being optimistic and excited about the future	Being part of a school club, a sports team, a community program (cadet / JCR program), or volunteering for a cause
School / organizational / program / community policies to reduce abuse, bullying, and harassment	Culture

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Activity 3
Impacts of Substance Use and Addictions

Estimated Time

15–20 minutes

1. We are going to look at the impacts of substance use and addiction on youth.
2. We will discuss the impacts on three areas of well-being: physical well-being, emotional well-being, and social well-being.

Display the Impacts content, using the presentation slides or the alternative method you have prepared.

> The Impact Cards contain the content, so you may decide to read from them instead of displaying the content for the participants.

3. Divide the participants into three groups. Distribute one set of Impact Cards to each group. Also distribute one piece of flip chart paper and felt markers to each group. Explain that the groups will develop a short Public Service Announcement (PSA) about the impacts of substance use and addiction that are listed on their card. The maximum length for their PSA is 30–45 seconds.

   Their goal is to teach their audience about the impacts on their card, and to relay the seriousness of substance use and addictions.

   The PSAs can be as creative as they want, in order to effectively communicate the impacts (e.g., they can create a song, skit, poem, make a poster, tell a story, etc.).

   If they choose to conduct a role play or skit, they will need to focus on one or two key points on their card to ensure their PSA fits the 30- to 45-second time frame. Each group will present their PSA to the larger group.

   Give the groups a few minutes to prepare their PSAs. Then, have the groups take turns presenting their PSAs to the larger group.

4. It is important to know all the facts about the impacts of substance use and addictions so you can make healthy and informed choices.

Impact Cards

Substance Use: Impacts on Physical Well-Being

- Harm to the brain
- Liver damage
- Blackouts, seizures, and vomiting
- Alcohol poisoning
- Injury or death from drinking and driving
- Injury or death from a drug overdose
- Infections from used needles, such as HIV / AIDS and hepatitis

Substance Use: Impacts on Emotional Well-Being

- Mental health disorders such as anxiety or depression
- Psychotic episodes that can include hallucinations, hearing voices, and violent and dangerous behaviours
- Unable to use healthy coping strategies to deal with stress and feelings of sadness and anxiety
- Unable to focus on school work or a job due to memory loss, anxiety, and confusion

Substance Use: Impacts on Social Well-Being and Relationships

- Lying and hiding substance use from family and friends
- Conflicts and fights with family and friends
- Loss of trust with family and friends
- Breakup of dating relationships due to substance use
- Quitting or being expelled from extracurricular activities, sports, or the cadet / JCR program
- Unable to have fun without using substances

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Conclusion

Estimated Time

5–10 minutes

Safety Planning

Distribute a copy of the Support Circles or Safety Plan handout to any participants who did not fill one out prior to the lesson. Have them fill in the required sections.

If the participants filled out the Support Circles or Safety Plan handout already, ask them to revisit the section in which they recorded safe people to talk to. Are these the same people they would talk to about substance use or addictions? Allow them time to record any changes.

Intervention: How to Help

Look, Listen, Link, Live©: How to Help a Friend

1. We know that youth will reach out to their peers for help before they will talk to an adult. We want to give you information so you can support a friend or peer if they come to you for help with relationship problems.

2. Display the Look, Listen, Link, Live© content, using the presentation slides or the alternative method you have prepared.

This is a four-step model that we use to help a friend. Let us consider how we can help Ashley from our scenario. We are going to review the scenario and help Ashley using the Look, Listen, Link, Live© model.

Read the scenario out loud.

> You may distribute copies of the scenario (Ashley's Story) to allow the participants to follow along, or you may put the scenario on a presentation slide.

Ashley is 14 years old. Her parents are divorced, and her mom is never around. When her mom is around, she and Ashley constantly fight about her mom's drinking.

Ashley started hanging out with an older friend, Tara, who is 16 years old. Ashley really likes Tara because she treats her like an adult and pays attention to her. Tara asks Ashley to go to an outdoor party on Friday night, and Ashley agrees. She tells her mom that she is sleeping over at Tara's house.

Ashley has stolen a bottle of alcohol from her mom to drink with Tara. Tara's parents are out, so they meet up at Tara's house to get ready. Ashley takes the bottle out of her backpack and starts drinking it straight. Tara laughs and tells her to slow down, but Ashley keeps going. The bottle is almost empty by the time the girls leave the house for the party. This is Ashley's first experience with alcohol. She feels lightheaded, and she stumbles across the snow as they make their way to the party.

At the party, there are lots of people standing around a big bonfire, drinking and partying. Ashley gets separated from Tara when Tara goes off to talk to some friends. Ashley is handed a joint by someone, and she takes a few puffs. She starts to feel nauseous. She heads towards the woods where she throws up.

Tara comes looking for Ashley and finds her passed out in a snow bank. Tara cannot wake Ashley up, and when she tries to pick her up, she is too heavy to move. Tara leaves Ashley to sleep it off for a bit and goes back to the party.

Ashley ends up with alcohol poisoning and must get emergency care. Everyone is talking about it and making fun of Ashley at school. You ask Ashley how she is doing, and she does not want to talk about it. A few weeks later, you see Ashley at another party. She is extremely intoxicated and can barely stand up. She has a much older guy hanging onto her.

3. Have the participants go through the four steps of the Look, Listen, Link, Live© model by asking the questions below.

STEP 1: LOOK. In this step, we are looking for signs that a person is upset and in need of help.

What are the signs that tell you Ashley needs help?

Possible answers could include:

- Ashley ended up with alcohol poisoning and continues to drink so much that she cannot stand up.
- Ashley is also hanging out with a much older guy.

STEP 2: LISTEN. In this step, we listen to the person without judgment.

How would you approach Ashley to talk to her? What would you say?

Possible answers could include:

- Approach Ashley, and ask her if she is okay.
- Let her know that you are concerned about her safety because of the amount that she is drinking and that you are there to help.

STEP 3: LINK. In this step, we link the person to helping resources.

Where would you link Ashley for help and support?

Possible answers could include:

- Offer to go with Ashley to talk to a counsellor or other safe adult about what is happening at home.
- Let her know you want to make sure she is safe.

STEP 4: LIVE. In this step, you take care of yourself and find healthy ways to cope. Helping a friend deal with a difficult situation can take a physical and emotional toll.

How would you take care of yourself, and what suggestions would you have for Ashley?

Possible answers could include:

- Write down your feelings in a journal.
- Play your favourite music or sport.
- Exercise.

- Spend time with a pet.
- Watch videos.
- Go to a movie.
- Get outside and hunt or hike, and enjoy the outdoors.
- Get creative and bead, sew, or write poetry or music.
- Eat healthy.
- Talk to friends and family to help work through your own feelings about the situation.

4. To summarize, display the Look, Listen, Link, Live© content, using the presentation slides or the alternative method you have prepared.

Closing Comments

- If you have friends who are drinking or doing drugs but you do not want to join them, remember that you can say no.
- You and your friends need to look out for each other. Know that you can offer help and support to a friend who is struggling with substance use problems.
- Everyone has the right to be safe, and there are people you can talk to if you need help or support. Some examples are: friends, caregivers, parents, foster parents, aunts, uncles, elders, cadet and JCR leaders, and school personnel.
- Display the Kids Help Phone content, using the presentation slides or the alternative method you have prepared.
- Display the Community Resources content, using the presentation slide or the alternative method you have prepared.

Ashley's Story

Ashley is 14 years old. Her parents are divorced, and her mom is never around. When her mom is around, she and Ashley constantly fight about her mom's drinking.

Ashley started hanging out with an older friend, Tara, who is 16 years old. Ashley really likes Tara because she treats her like an adult and pays attention to her. Tara asks Ashley to go to an outdoor party on Friday night, and Ashley agrees. She tells her mom that she is sleeping over at Tara's house.

Ashley has stolen a bottle of alcohol from her mom to drink with Tara. Tara's parents are out, so they meet up at Tara's house to get ready. Ashley takes the bottle out of her backpack and starts drinking it straight. Tara laughs and tells her to slow down, but Ashley keeps going. The bottle is almost empty by the time the girls leave the house for the party. This is Ashley's first experience with alcohol. She feels lightheaded, and she stumbles across the snow as they make their way to the party.

At the party, there are lots of people standing around a big bonfire, drinking and partying. Ashley gets separated from Tara when Tara goes off to talk to some friends. Ashley is handed a joint by someone, and she takes a few puffs. She starts to feel nauseous. She heads towards the woods where she throws up.

Tara comes looking for Ashley and finds her passed out in a snow bank. Tara cannot wake Ashley up, and when she tries to pick her up, she is too heavy to move. Tara leaves Ashley to sleep it off for a bit and goes back to the party.

Ashley ends up with alcohol poisoning and must get emergency care. Everyone is talking about it and making fun of Ashley at school. You ask Ashley how she is doing, and she does not want to talk about it. A few weeks later, you see Ashley at another party. She is extremely intoxicated and can barely stand up. She has a much older guy hanging onto her.

Using the Look, Listen, Link, Live© model, answer the following questions:

- STEP 1: LOOK. What are the signs that tell you Ashley needs help?
- STEP 2: LISTEN. How would you approach Ashley to talk to her? What would you say?
- STEP 3: LINK. Where would you link Ashley for help and support?
- STEP 4: LIVE. How would you take care of yourself, and what suggestions would you have for Ashley?

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