

## Lesson 2—Explore/Explain Influences on Behavior

### At a Glance

#### Overview

This lesson consists of one activity and should take one class period to complete. It focuses on having students recognize the reasons underlying behaviors (that is, why people behave as they do) as well as the many factors influencing behaviors. Students begin by examining reasons for common behaviors and thinking about the influences that create these reasons. Students then create a diagram depicting these influences on behavior. Students also consider the extent to which an individual can modify his or her behavior based on the influences in her or her life.



#### Major Concepts

Individuals behave in certain ways for particular reasons. Reasons for behavior stem from various influences. These influences can be classified in general categories, such as biological, personal, social, or environmental. Individuals can modify the behaviors based on some influences more easily than they can modify the behaviors based on others.

#### Objectives

After completing this lesson, students will

- be able to describe the reasons for behaviors,
- recognize and be able to describe influences on behaviors, and
- be able to describe behaviors that can be modified more easily and those that can be modified either with more difficulty or not at all.

#### Teacher Background

See the following section in Information about the Science of Healthy Behaviors:

[\*\*\*3 Influences on Behavior\*\*\* \(\*info\\_healthy-b.html#influences\*\)](#)

### In Advance

#### Web-Based Activities

Activity	Web component?
1	No

#### Photocopies

Activity	Master	Number of copies
1	Master 2.1, <i>Influences: Examples, by Category</i>	1 transparency

## Materials

Activity	Materials
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blank transparencies, 1 per group</li> <li>• Pen to write on transparency, 1 per group</li> </ul>

## Preparation

For a class of 30 students, form 10 groups of 3 students each. Select five of the following behaviors and write each behavior on two slips of paper so that two groups will work on each behavior. For smaller classes, have two groups work on at least one behavior for comparison purposes. Adjust the number of behaviors according to class size. Suggested behaviors include social bullying, preening/grooming, playing a team sport, watching TV, skipping lunch, skipping school, participating in an individual sport, volunteering in the community, attending religious services, and recreational shopping. You will also need a box, bag, or other container from which students can draw the slips of paper.

## Procedure

### Activity 1: *Influences on Behavior (Or, Why Did You Do That?)*

**Note to teachers:** The concepts introduced in this activity will appear fairly obvious as they are introduced. However, it is important that students be aware of these ideas before moving on to Lessons 3 and 4. Influences on behavior and the ability of individuals to modify their behaviors play a major role in Lessons 3, 4, and 5. Keep this activity moving along quickly.

- 1. Divide the class into groups of three or four.**
- 2. Write “stealing” on the board. Ask students, “Why do people engage in this behavior?”**

List students’ responses on the board, rephrasing if needed. Students may suggest need, desire, revenge, excitement, and peer pressure.

- 3. Tell students that they have created a list of *reasons* for behaving in a certain way.**

**Note to teachers:** This activity begins with students’ identifying reasons, or motivations, for a behavior. However, the focus of the lesson is influences rather than motivations. Motivation is a concept used to describe the factors within an individual that produce, maintain, and channel behavior toward a goal. Another way to say this is that motivation is goal-directed behavior. While it is easy to observe a person’s behavior, it is much more difficult to guess why they are behaving that way. As an example, consider a hard-working student. It may be that that student is working hard because he or she wants to get high marks, but it may also be that the student really enjoys learning that subject. The student may be striving for high marks because he or she wants to impress her friends or because of parental pressure. The marks themselves are really a step toward another goal. In this example, one can identify influences such as peer pressure and family, while it is not as easy to firmly identify motivations.

- 4. Have each group select one behavior slip from the bag or box in which you have placed the slips.**

- 5. Ask the students of each group to discuss the behavior they**



**chose and then to record on paper what reasons a person might give for that behavior.**

Important personal and social decisions are made based on perceptions of benefits and risks.

Give the students about five minutes to generate ideas. They are to list only reasons at this point. They will focus on factors influencing those reasons in Step 8.

**6. Keeping the students in groups, reconvene the class. Ask each group to name the reasons for the behavior they studied, and write those reasons on the board.**

Groups will probably name similar reasons, especially if they are studying the same behavior.

**7. Show the transparency of Master 2.1, *Influences: Examples, by Category*. Tell the students that influences are the source of these reasons. In some cases, one influence is behind the reason, but in most cases, two or more influences generate reasons for a behavior.**

Students may observe that some influences and reasons are indistinguishable, such as “need.” It is sometimes difficult to separate reasons and influences.

**Note to teachers:** The list of influences in Master 2.1 is not comprehensive. Also, the grouping of influences is open to interpretation. If certain groupings bother students, feel free to move the influences around. As the lesson continues, add influences that students suggest to the list.

**8. Pick one of the reasons suggested by students. Ask students what influences in a person’s life may create this reason and the associated behavior. Write student responses on the board.**

For example, if the reason was to “fit in,” students may choose peers, popularity, TV, and movies as influences. If the reason was “to win,” students may choose success, culture, and advertisements as influences. There are no right or wrong answers. As long as the influence makes sense to the students, it is valid. Remind students that they may add additional influences.

**9. Display the transparency of Master 2.2, *Influences on Behavior*. Explain the general structure of the diagram.**

Keep the diagram visible as a reference during the next step. The diagram shows an individual and a specific behavior (stealing). The circles represent different categories of influence on that behavior. As examples, three influences are described. Blank circles are provided for you to add other influences, if you like.

**Note to teachers:** There are several ways to represent the impact and relationship of influences and behaviors. In this activity, students use a simple method that allows them to look at a variety of influences without determining a particular order or hierarchy of influences or interactions between influences. The key at the bottom allows students to define the reasons more formally.

**10. Hand out transparencies and pens. Ask groups to construct a diagram for the behavior their group selected using the example in Master 2.2 as a guide. Students should choose the three or four influences they believe are most important. For each influence, students**

**should list two or three reasons for the behavior, as in the example.**

Give students 5 to 10 minutes to complete this step. While the groups are working on their diagrams, move around the room and check their work. Identify two groups working on the same behavior who have selected substantially different influences. Use these groups for the presentation that follows in the next step.

**11. Reconvene the class. Select two groups working on the same behavior and have both groups present their diagrams.**

**12. Ask students why there are differences between the two diagrams. Did looking at these two different diagrams give them new insight into the behavior?**

Avoid ranking the diagrams (for example, by which is better) or attempting to redesign them. Guide students to realize that the interpretation of data is influenced by personal experience. These two different interpretations may lead students to new understandings of the behavior.

**Note to teachers:** A key idea in science is that different people interpret data differently. This leads to novel insights and applications. Groups will identify different influences and reasons based on their experiences. This is perfectly acceptable and mirrors how scientific research is conducted.

**13. Using the two diagrams just presented, ask students which influences can be modified easily. Which can be modified, but with more difficulty? Which cannot be modified?**

In most cases, students will probably decide that there are aspects of many influences and the resulting behaviors that an individual can modify to various extents. For example, we cannot modify the genes we inherit from our parents. However, as students will see in later lessons, individuals can reduce some inherited risks (for example, heart disease) by modifying specific behaviors (such as increased physical activity). Students will probably recognize that children, adolescents, and teenagers can modify influences and their resulting behaviors to a lesser extent than adults can. Adults make decisions not only for themselves, but also for their dependents. For example, middle school students may not be able to participate in a group sport if their caretakers cannot provide transportation or pay fees. Another example is that children eat the foods adults choose to buy and feed them. During adolescence, children gain progressively more ability to modify influences and their behaviors. They gain responsibility for those behaviors as well.

**14. Ask students how they would find out what influenced a certain behavior in another person.**

Use one of the behaviors given to the students to work with, or the original stealing behavior. Students may suggest watching (observation) the person or questioning the person. When students suggest questioning the person, use this as a lead-in to the next activity.



**Assessment:**

At the end of the lesson, collect each group's diagram. The students' understanding of the concept of influences will be apparent in their lists of influences and reasons.



**Content Standard A:**

Think critically and logically to make the relationships between evidence and explanations.



**Tip from the field test:** The transparencies of Master 2.1, *Influences: Examples, by Category*, and Master 2.2, *Influences on Behavior*, will be useful in Lesson 5. Keep them available.

## Lesson 2 Organizer

Activity 1: <i>Influences on Behavior</i>		
What the Teacher Does	Procedure Reference	
Divide the class into groups of three or four. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Write the word “stealing” on the board.</li> <li>Ask students, “Why do people engage in this behavior?” and write their answers on the board.</li> </ul>	Steps 1 and 2	
Explain that students have created a list of <i>reasons</i> for the behavior.	Step 3	
Have each group draw one behavior slip from the container. Instruct the groups to discuss their behavior and write down reasons a person might give for engaging in that behavior.	Steps 4 and 5	
Reconvene the class. Ask each group to provide the reasons they identified with the behavior written on their slip of paper. Write the behaviors and their associated reasons on the board.	Step 6	
Display a transparency of Master 2.1, <i>Influences: Examples, by Category</i> . Explain that these influences underlie the reasons for behaviors.	Step 7	
Select a reason suggested by a student. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask students what influences in a person’s life might create the reason and its associated behavior.</li> <li>Write students’ responses on the board.</li> </ul>	Step 8	
Display a transparency of Master 2.2, <i>Influences on Behavior</i> , and explain the structure of the diagram.	Step 9	
Reassemble student groups. Provide each group with a fresh transparency and a pen. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using the example on Master 2.2 as a guide, instruct groups to construct a diagram for their group’s behavior.</li> <li>Students should choose the three or four influences that they feel are most important.</li> <li>For each influence, students should list two or three reasons for the behavior.</li> </ul>	Step 10	
Reconvene the class. Select two groups that worked on the same behavior and have each present their diagram. Ask students, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Why are there differences between the two diagrams?”</li> <li>“Does examining these diagrams give you new insight into the behavior?”</li> </ul>	Steps 11 and 12	
Ask students, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Which influences can be modified easily?”</li> <li>“Which influences can be modified with more difficulty?”</li> <li>“Which influences cannot be modified?”</li> <li>“How would you identify influences on a specific behavior in another person?”</li> </ul>	Steps 13 and 14	
= Involves making a transparency.		