

HEALTHY FOOD, HEALTHY MIND, HEALTHY BODY

LESSON 1: MOOD AND FOOD

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will connect social and emotional learning and the practice of healthy eating. They will reflect on how a particular food makes them feel and why (i.e., calm, energized), how they feel when hungry vs. full, and how their diet influences their physical and emotional wellness.

TIME

One to two 45-minute classes

OBJECTIVES

In this lesson, students will:

- Describe ways in which food affects mental and emotional health;
- Identify their emotional responses to food;
- Differentiate between physical and emotional responses to food; and
- Describe how particular foods make them feel.

STANDARDS

CASEL FRAMEWORK

SELF-AWARENESS: The abilities to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts. This includes capacities to recognize one's strengths and limitations with a well-grounded sense of confidence and purpose. Such as:

- Identifying one's emotions
- Having a growth mindset

CDC NHES

- 6.8.1 Assess personal health practices.
- 6.8.2 Develop a goal to adopt, maintain, or improve a personal health practice.
- 6.8.3 Apply strategies and skills needed to attain a personal health goal.
- 6.8.4 Describe how personal health goals can vary with changing abilities, priorities, and responsibilities.

MATERIALS

In addition to common classroom materials and an Internet connection, students will need:

- FOOD Cards PDF (one for each group of 4-6 students)
- MOOD Cards PDF (one for each group of 4-6 students)
- BODY Cards PDF (one for each group of 4-6 students)

PREPARATION

1. Arrange the classroom to accommodate groups of 4-6 students.
2. Cut out the FOOD, MOOD, and BODY cards.
3. Arrange the cards for each group into two stacks (FOOD pile and MOOD/BODY pile)

KEY TERMS

In addition to common classroom materials and an Internet connection, students will need:

- **Emotion:** a feeling such as happy, sad, or nervous
- **Wellness:** the state of being healthy
- **Balance:** a state in which different things have equal importance

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INTRODUCTION

Explain to students:

*You understand that what you eat can affect your physical health. But did you know it can also affect your mental health? Think of a time when you ate something that you haven't eaten since you were very young. Maybe it was eating ice cream at a carnival, or perhaps your grandparents' spaghetti sauce. You likely had an emotional connection with the food, and it may have brought out some memories and **emotions**. In this lesson, we're going to explore how you can better balance mind and body to support wellness.*

LESSON PROCEDURE

Step 1

Explain to students that food and its nutrients can affect you in many ways. The first is the effect on your "body," or your muscles, bones, and bodily systems. As you digest food and your body absorbs nutrients, those nutrients will affect how your body feels. If you've eaten plenty of carbohydrates, you might feel more energized. If you've eaten plenty of protein, you might feel more satisfied.

The second effect is on your "mind," or your emotions and thought processes. Tell students: Imagine eating an exotic dish you've never tried before! Eating something new may cause an emotional reaction in you, such as nervousness. Or maybe you find the thought of trying something you've never tried before to be exciting and adventurous!

Step 2

Explain that a single food can affect you both in body and in mind. Remind students of the example of trying

a new food for the first time. The idea of something new may cause you to have an emotional response, such as excitement or concern. However, those emotional responses may also affect you physically. You may actually feel a sensation in your stomach when you think of eating a new food! That's an actual bodily response to a mental (or emotional) process!

The same is true for bodily processes triggering an emotional response. Think about being really, really hungry. Your stomach may ache, and you might feel weak. However, being hungry may also affect your mood and make you feel cranky or panicked.

Step 3

Arrange students into groups of 4-6. Give each group the two sets of cards you prepared (FOOD and MOOD/BODY).

Explain that they will be thinking about how food affects them in body and in mind by playing a sentence completion game.

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Step 4

Have students play the **Mood and Food** game in groups. Give them these directions:

In this game, you will try to complete this statement using the words in your two piles. Turn your FOOD words face down in a well-shuffled pile. Turn your MOOD and BODY cards face up, spread out on your desk.

In turns, each student will draw a FOOD card and then select a MOOD or BODY card to complete this statement:

I feel _____ (MOOD or BODY card) when I eat _____ (randomly drawn FOOD card). This affects my _____ (BODY or MIND).

If no MOOD or BODY cards accurately captures the way you feel, you can use any adjective that conveys the feeling. Then, you will decide if the card represents an effect on your body or your mind.

For example, if you draw a “pizza” card, you may say:

*I feel **EXCITED** when I eat **PIZZA**. This affects my **Mind**.*

MOOD and BODY cards can be used as many times as you like, but the game will end when all of the FOOD cards are used.

Step 5

After the game, in a whole class discussion, have students consider the way certain foods make them feel. Focus on the ways in which nutrient-rich foods make them feel vs. those with fewer nutrients. Explain that there are no “good” or “bad” foods. There are simply foods with different nutrients and some foods with very few nutrients, and it’s important that what they eat throughout the day meet their nutritional needs. Explain that it’s helpful to

move away from negative emotional feelings associated with foods and to focus on the ways in which the nutrients in the food they eat contribute to their physical and mental wellness.

Remind students that how they feel physically and how they feel mentally are very connected. A combination of physical activity, nutrient-rich foods, mental awareness, and self-care are interdependent and contribute to balancing one’s overall “wellness.” Striving for a balance of physical and mental health helps you to achieve and maintain that wellness!

REFLECTION

Do you have any “comfort” foods? What are they? Are all comfort foods nutrient-rich? Do you think finding comfort in foods is helpful? Why or why not?

ASSESSMENT

Have students identify any patterns they see in their MOOD and FOOD connections. Ask them to list foods that make them feel “good” in some way and then have them identify if each one affects their body, their mind, or both, and explain why.

EXTENSIONS

If you have English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students, it may be helpful to have the students group the MIND and BODY cards into similar groups, such as positive and negative feelings. Students can also pair words into synonyms and antonyms as they are learning the nuanced vocabulary.