

Making Positive Decisions



Quick Write

List three decisions you made since getting up this morning. Place a check next to those that had an influence on your health.



Learn About

- a goal-setting process to arrive at healthful decisions
- impact of communication skills on leadership
- responsible use of electronic media

"Parents can only give good advice or put them on the right paths, but the final forming of a person's character lies in their own hands."

Anne Frank, Holocaust victim and famous diarist

A Goal-Setting Process to Arrive at Healthful Decisions

Making Decisions and Setting Goals

Even a decision that may seem small can have great significance. Daniel, for example, agreed to take his younger brother to the nearby convenience store for some snacks. Because they were only driving around the corner, Daniel decided to call his girlfriend on his cell phone and became distracted as he made a left-hand turn into the store parking lot. An oncoming pickup truck slammed into Daniel's vehicle, leaving his brother with minor injuries. However, Daniel hit his head against the driver's side window, leaving him with a serious concussion. Because of this injury, Daniel is not allowed to play any type of contact sport such as football. This is particularly hard on Daniel since he was the defensive team captain. What Daniel thought was a minor decision has left him impaired for life. **Impaired** in this case means *having a condition that reduces physical or mental function*.

Decisions and Goals

Decision-making and goal-setting are two important health-related skills. Decision-making skills will help you make the best choices and find healthy solutions to problems. Goal-setting skills will help you take control over your life and give it purpose and direction.



Vocabulary

- impaired
- decision-making
- values
- evaluate
- goal setting
- interpersonal communication
- body language
- mixed message
- eye contact
- active listening
- interpret
- feedback
- refusal skills
- assertive
- prejudice
- tolerance
- stereotyping
- consequences

People often think of goals as something academic or job-related. The fact is, health-related goals are also important. Goals that help you stay physically active and prevent injury will provide benefits throughout your life. Moreover, people who set and achieve goals for their health feel better about themselves and about their lives.

The Decision-Making Process

You can make better decisions by setting goals. You should understand that a decision is a process in itself. **Decision-making** is *the process of making a choice or finding a solution*. It involves a series of steps. Figure 2.12 illustrates these steps. If you follow these steps, you'll avoid a "snap" decision—one that does not take into account these steps, which may lead you to make bad choices.

Step 1 is to *state or identify the situation*. What choice do you need to make? How much time do you need to make your decision?

Steps 2 and 3 are about *listing your options and weighing the possible outcomes of each option*. When evaluating your choices, follow the HELP criteria below:

- **H (Healthful)**—Will it contribute to your health?
- **E (Ethical)**—Does it show respect for yourself and others?
- **L (Legal)**—Is someone your age allowed by law to do this?
- **P (Parent Approval)**—Would your parents or guardians approve? This leads to Step 4, your values.

In Step 4, *consider your values* and the values of society.

Values are *the beliefs, ideals, and standards that guide the way a person lives*. For example, keeping a positive relationship with your family is probably one of your personal values. You know that if you decide to stay out past your curfew without permission, family members may lose trust in you. By considering your values, and getting home on time, you show respect and earn your family's trust. Respect and trust are also core ethical values generally shared by people around the world.

Evaluating Your Decision

Step 5 is *making your decision and taking action*. If you have followed the first four steps, you can feel confident that the decision you have made and the action you have taken have been correct. On the other hand, how are you to be sure of this? This is where the final step of the decision-making process comes in.

Step 6 is about *evaluating the results*. How do you evaluate? From the concept of value, **evaluate** means *to determine the value of something*. To evaluate a decision, you should ask yourself the following questions:

- What was the outcome of my decision? Was it what I expected?
- How did my decision make me feel about myself?
- How did my decision affect others?
- How did my decision affect my health?
- What did I learn? Would I make the same decision again?

What should Kendra do?

Go through the six-step decision-making process to help her decide.

Kendra must make a decision.

She and Michele have been best friends for a long time.

Recently, Michele has been spending time with other students who skip classes. Michele has even boasted of going with them once. Now she wants Kendra to join them too. Kendra doesn't want to lose Michele's friendship, but she knows that her parents trust her to obey school rules.



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1. State or identify the situation.
2. List the options.
3. Weigh the possible outcomes.
4. Consider your values.
5. Make your decision and act.
6. Evaluate the decision.

FIGURE 2.12

The Decision-Making Process

As with any skill, decision-making gets easier with practice. For example, you might think about some problems that you or your family are facing. Think through all six steps of the decision-making process to find a healthy solution for each problem. This practice will help you with future decisions both during this school year and throughout your life.

Why Set Goals?

Goal setting is *the process of working toward something you want to accomplish*.

Achieving a goal requires planning and effort, and it can give you a great sense of accomplishment and pride. Goals that you set for one area of your life often lead to the achievement of goals in other areas.

For example, if you work toward the goal of becoming a black belt in karate, you will achieve fitness goals, too. Along the way, you may also reach other goals such as making new friends, gaining more self-confidence, and learning more ways to manage stress.

However, there are other ways to think about goal setting. For example, do you feel that you do all you can do to protect your health? Is there room for improvement, like protecting yourself from injury or infection? Perhaps you need to work on family relationships. Setting goals will help you focus on the behaviors you want to change.

The Benefits of Setting Goals

Goals help you use your time, energy, and other resources wisely. They can help you identify what you want out of life.

There are three kinds of goals—short-term goals, intermediate goals, and those you want to reach over time, called long-term goals. Short-term and intermediate goals help you reach your long-term goals.

Short-Term Goals

Some short-term goals are just that: goals that you want to achieve within the next year. Your short-term goals may include earning an overall “A” in your math class this year. It may be to reach the rank of cadet Staff Sergeant in your JROTC class.

Other short-term goals are stepping stones to long-term goals. Suppose, for example, that your intermediate-term goal is to earn a track scholarship at one of the top schools in the United States. Your short-term goals might be to make the varsity team by the end of your freshman year. You may also want to eat healthier foods as part of your training to give you more energy.

Intermediate Goals

Intermediate-term goals are those things you want to achieve in one to five years. Suppose your long-term goal is to make the US Olympic team. So far, you have achieved your short-term goal by making the varsity track team. Now, your intermediate goal is to earn a track scholarship at a college with a successful track program.

Long-Term Goals

Reaching goals may take several weeks, months, or even years to achieve. You may want to become a professional track athlete or basketball player, or go into the same business that one of your relatives started. These are long-term goals. They will take time, planning, and dedication.

A graphic with the text "keys to LEADERSHIP" in a blue and orange banner, with stylized human figures in blue and orange behind it.

keys to LEADERSHIP

Following these steps as you set your own short-term goals will help you reach them.

1. Identify the goal and write it down;
2. List the steps you'll need to take to reach the goal;
3. Get help and support from others;
4. Set up some checkpoints to evaluate your progress;
5. Once the goal has been achieved, give yourself a reward.

Short-term and intermediate goals will help you achieve long-term goals. One example might be to get good grades in high school this year to start a pattern of preparation for acceptance to college later, where you can major in a degree that will allow you to start a career. For a basketball career, a short-term goal might be to become the best overall player on your high school team this season, so that later you may be able to earn a college scholarship, and eventually play professional basketball.

Figure 2.13 shows the steps one teen uses to set and pursue his goal of making the school basketball team.

Building Goal-Setting Skills

A national poll taken in 2011 found that a majority of American students lack faith in their ability to reach their goals. Only a little over a third said they believed they could find ways around obstacles to their goals. This may be due in part to students not having the proper guides or tools to set goals effectively.

Goal setting is important when it comes to reaching success, no matter if the objectives are in sports, school achievement, career planning, or personal life. Setting goals too high can make you frustrated and can tempt you to give up. Set them too low and you may never push yourself to reach your full potential.

As a teen, learning how to manage time, set goals, and make plans is especially important for making critical decisions that could affect the rest of your life.

Building skills in goal setting starts with adopting a plan or system. One proven method is the SMART goal-setting system, whose letters stand for **S**pecific, **M**easurable, and **A**ttainable goals, with clear **R**esults within a set **T**ime frame. Although the SMART system was introduced in the business world in the 1980s, it continues to work well for students.

Consider Katie, a real-life example. She set a goal to get straight As. She gave up time with her friends. She stayed after class to re-take tests. She also sought help from teachers. When she hit her goal, she was not only proud of the achievement, but she was able to strive for another goal—earning a perfect score playing her trumpet at a spring band competition. One week, she set a goal to get the rhythms right.

Here is one student's plan to achieve his goals using the SMART system.

Specific—Identify a specific goal and write it down.

Make the school's varsity track team.

Measurable—List the steps you will take to reach your goal.

Must be able to run 1 mile in 5 minutes or less to make varsity team.

Attainable—Goals are realistic.

Currently able to run 1 mile in 5 minutes and 30 seconds; reducing time by 30 seconds is a realistic goal.

Results—Set up checkpoints to evaluate your progress.

After 4 weeks of training, run a 1-mile time trial to check progress.

Time Frame—12 weeks.

Tryouts for the varsity track team are in 12 weeks, providing a clearly defined time frame to achieve goal.

Don't forget to give yourself a reward once you have achieved your goal.

If I make the team, I will buy myself a new pair of running shoes.

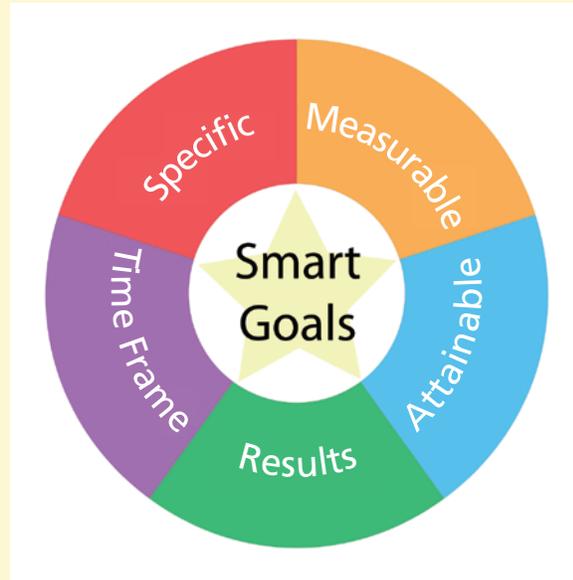


FIGURE 2.13

The SMART Goal-Setting Process

The next week she practiced hitting the higher notes. These goals were specific, measurable, and attainable, and she got results within the time she planned. Additionally, by achieving her short-term goals, Katie should be able to achieve her intermediate goal of earning a college scholarship.

Impact of Communication Skills on Leadership

You have probably discovered already that some people are better communicators than others. They have the ability to get their message across. However, they don't just say things well. They also listen to what others have to say and keep the lines of communication open. In short, they have good interpersonal communication skills.



Body language can say more than words.

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Interpersonal communication involves *the exchange of thoughts, feelings, and beliefs between two or more people*. Like other skills, interpersonal communication must be learned and practiced. It is important because you use forms of communication in all of your relationships. Think about how often you talk with family members, friends, teachers, and classmates. Effective communication involves not just speaking and listening skills but use of body language, which sometimes says a lot without the use of words.

Body Language

As discussed in Chapter 1, your body language can communicate your thoughts and feelings. **Body language** is a *form of nonverbal communication*. For example, raised eyebrows might reflect curiosity, surprise, or interest. Drooping shoulders might indicate sadness, insecurity, or fear. It is important for speakers and listeners to be aware of body language. Some forms of body language, such as smiling and nodding, encourage communication. Other forms, such as frowning and crossing arms tightly across the chest, discourage communication. Sometimes your words and your body language don't communicate the same message.

A **mixed message** occurs *when your words say one thing but your body language says another*. For example, you might say "I'm not angry," but your frown and clenched jaw convey a different message. Your body language gives your true feelings away.

Using "I" Messages

Imagine your reaction if a friend said to you, "You're never on time!" or "You're so bossy!" These types of "you" messages place blame on the other person and often cause hurt feelings or an angry response. "You" messages can cause the listener to become defensive and stop any communication rather than solve a problem. Using "I" messages instead is a much more effective way to communicate. An "I" message is a statement in which a person uses the pronoun "I" to express an opinion or comment.

“I” messages usually contain four elements:

- How you feel about the behavior and its effects
- A description of the behavior; what actually happened
- The actual, concrete, tangible effects of that behavior on you
- The behavior you would prefer

A well-crafted “I” message is a powerful non-blaming communication tool. It states the situation and how you feel about it without putting blame on the other person. It also offers an explanation for your feelings. Finally, it states what we need or think. For example, you might say, “When we were late for the movie I felt disappointed. I’d heard that the opening sequence was funny and I didn’t want to miss it. Next time we go to the movies, let’s make sure we’re early so I don’t miss anything.”

What does an “I” message do?

- Provides a high chance of changing the behavior of another person
- Protects the self-esteem or feelings of the other person
- Preserves the quality of the relationship
- Helps the other person to understand and improve

Of course, it would be much easier if we didn’t have relationship problems with family, friends, or classmates. However, learning to manage the situation is your best hope. Using “I” messages to show annoyance, irritation, frustration, or anger is a more controlled way to indicate negative feelings. We are less likely to hurt feelings or cause negative reactions from the person whose behavior we are trying to change.

Speaking Skills

Interpersonal communication involves both giving and receiving messages. Speaking is the giving part. Good communication involves speaking clearly and carefully.

Here are some ways to improve your speaking skills:

- 1. Use “I” messages**—Consider how your words will affect the other person, and express your concerns in terms of your own feelings. You’ll be less likely to make others feel defensive.
- 2. Make clear, simple statements**—Stick to the point and be specific. Make sure the other person understands what you’re saying.
- 3. Be honest with thoughts and feelings**—Say what you want to say. Be truthful and direct about your values while showing respect for your listener’s values.
- 4. Use appropriate body language**—Make sure your facial expressions, gestures, and posture match your message. Use **eye contact**, or *direct visual contact with another person’s eyes*, to show that you are sincere.

Listening Skills

You might think that having good speaking skills means that you are a good communicator. In truth, though, being a good listener is equally important to interpersonal communication. A speaker's message has meaning only if the listener receives it. Good communication involves active listening. **Active listening** means *hearing, thinking about, and responding to the other person's message.*

The first part of active listening is important. Sometimes what you hear is based not so much on what the other person says, but on how it is said. It may be the tone of voice, use of eye contact, or body movements that affect what you hear.

Consider how you might respond if you heard the message below. State the sentence to yourself with the word in bold being emphasized.

"**I** didn't say that to Sally."

"I **didn't** say that to Sally."

"I didn't **say** that to Sally."

"I didn't say **that** to Sally."

In that one sentence, you can create or interpret four different meanings, depending on how you state it, and also how you hear it. To **interpret** is *to attribute a particular meaning or feeling.* Active listening means hearing the content and the tone of the message through verbal and nonverbal means.

How, then, can you improve your own listening skills?

First, listen carefully to what the other person has to say and *use appropriate body language* when you respond. You may disagree with what is said to you, but stay calm, maintain eye contact, and use facial expressions and gestures that show that you are interested.

Second, show that you are listening by nodding or asking questions. These things *encourage positive communication* in return. Say things like "Really?" or "What happened next?" to show that you are paying attention.

Third, repeat what the person said as a way of confirming what you heard. This is how you *mirror the other's thoughts and feelings*, another way you show interest. However, do not repeat everything that is said; this can become annoying to the speaker and may inadvertently end communication. Then, offer feedback when appropriate. **Feedback** is *a response by the listener to what the speaker has said.*

Finally, *ask questions.* After the person has finished speaking, ask questions or add your own comments or opinions.

Say No and Mean It!

Your body language can speak as loudly as your words do. These teens are emphasizing their points of view with strong body language.

This teen is showing refusal with a firm, resistant body posture response. Others will clearly understand that she means "No!"



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This teen's crossed arms send a clear visual signal that his refusal is to be taken seriously.

Refusal Skills, or How to Say "No"

During your high school years, there will be times when friends or acquaintances may want you to do something that you do not want to do. Maybe you're just not interested. Maybe you don't have the time or money. Maybe it's something that is unhealthy or that goes against your values. In these situations, saying no can be difficult. That's why refusal skills can be important.

Refusal skills are strategies that help you say no, effectively. When you feel pressured to do something, good refusal skills let others know that you mean what you say. Like other skills, they take practice. Nevertheless, using them will help you be true to yourself. You can resist temptation to "go along" without feeling guilty or uncomfortable. Other people will respect you for being honest and holding to your values.



A key for remembering refusal skills is to keep in mind the letters in the word STOP.

- **S**ay no in a firm voice.
- **T**ell why not.
- **O**ffer other ideas.
- **P**romptly leave.

One of these skills is to be assertive. **Assertive** means *behaving with confidence and clearly stating your intentions*. Words and actions show someone that you mean what you say. Speak clearly, calmly, and in a firm tone of voice to show the other person that you mean what you say. Your body language, including eye contact, helps you to do this. Be sure that your body language and gestures match your words. If you stare at the floor or shift your weight from one leg to another, you won't seem very assertive or confident. If you have a smile on your face and a teasing look in your eyes, the person pressuring you won't believe that you're serious. Instead, use eye contact, put a serious or neutral look on your face, and stand or sit up straight.

Eliminating Communication Barriers

Have you ever heard the saying, “A chain is only as strong as its weakest link”? The same is true of communication. If one person in a relationship has good communication skills but the other person does not, the entire communication process suffers. Sometimes a person's beliefs or attitudes can make communication difficult.

Obstacles to clear communication take several forms:

- **Image and identity issues**—Many teens spend at least part of their teen years searching for an identity—a sense of who they are and their place in the world. If someone is unsure of his or her values, the uncertainty can complicate the communication process.
- **Unrealistic expectations**—Imposing unrealistic expectations on your listener can cause the individual to become frustrated or defensive.
- **Lack of trust**—Good communication is built on trust between two people. If you don't trust a person—if you believe that you can't count on him or her to tell you the truth or to keep in confidence—communication is very difficult.
- **Prejudice**—Some individuals have a **prejudice** or *an unfair opinion or judgment of a particular group of people*. Prejudice prevents a person from having an open mind and listening to new information. To avoid developing prejudices, you can demonstrate **tolerance**, or *the ability to accept others' differences and allow them to be who they are without your expressing disapproval*. Being tolerant helps you understand the differences among people and recognize the value of diversity.
- **Gender stereotyping**—Gender stereotyping is a type of prejudice. **Stereotyping** involves *having an exaggerated or oversimplified belief about a group of people*. Assuming that all males like sports and that all females enjoy cooking are examples of this. In the military, a recent policy decision has allowed women into combat roles. This came about only after a long history of gender stereotyping. For a long time women were thought not to be able, physically or mentally, to handle the stress of combat. Eliminating such stereotyping allows people to communicate more honestly and openly.



Good communication skills help you form healthy relationships.

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Responsible Use of Electronic Media

How we communicate with others has continued to dramatically change since the invention of the telephone and computer. Prior to this, if you wanted to communicate with someone else, you either had to talk with them face-to-face or write a note or letter.

With the invention of computer communications came a change in how we communicated with other people. People could email others without having to talk directly to them. In the late 1980s the mobile or cell phone appeared, allowing us to keep in constant contact with other people. Today's technological improvements allow you to communicate with anyone, from anywhere, at any time. You can Tweet[®], text, post messages, email, and send many other forms of communication without actually having to talk directly to the other person. Some experts believe that not only has this changed the way we communicate, it has actually created barriers to effective communication. In this section, we will explore responsible use of the most popular form of communication for young people today: social networking.

Using a cell phone, laptop or desktop computer, tablet, or other mobile device, it is easier than ever to stay in touch with your friends, family, school, or even your place of work. Young people have been the first to adopt new technologies and in doing so, have become the largest population of social media users today. Social networking sites such as Facebook[®], Twitter[®], and Instagram[®] provide easy-to-use tools that allow users to explore the Internet and connect with others with the same interests. This also allows individuals to connect with others 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Studies have shown that only 7 percent of communication is based on the verbal or written word. That means 93 percent is based on non-verbal body language. When we can hear the tone of someone's voice and see the expression on his or her face, we really know how that person feels about a topic or situation. The use of social media has allowed anyone to hide behind a text, email, tweet, or Facebook® post.

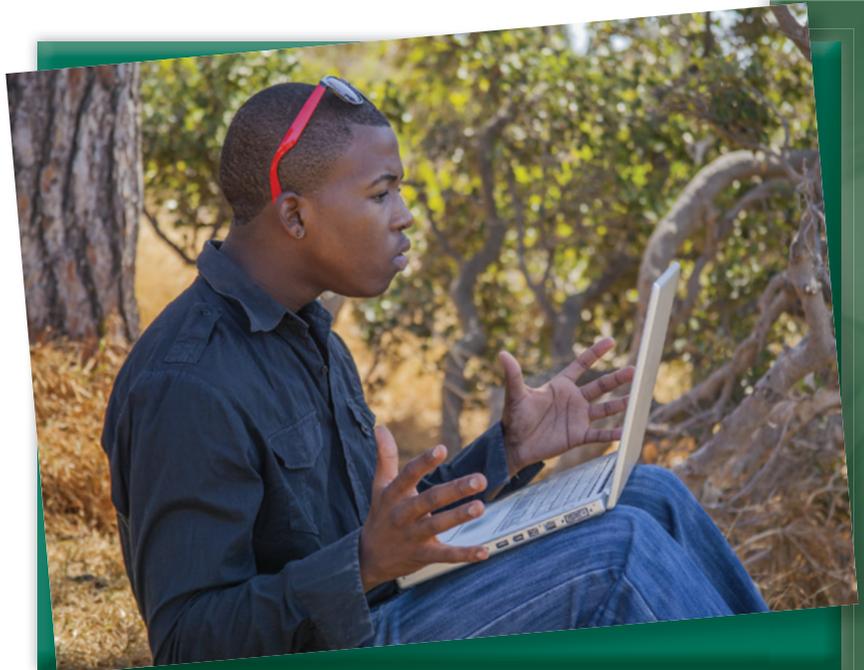
Safe Social Networking

The last thing young people want to hear is another set of rules; it seems everywhere you turn there are rules. The school you attend has rules, the home where you live has rules, and the society we live in has rules. So, instead of calling these suggestions rules, think of them as guidelines for responsible social networking. After all, irresponsible social networking comes with **consequences**, or *the direct results of your actions*. It could cost you that college scholarship you were hoping to receive or that job you really wanted. Irresponsible social networking could cause you to be arrested or expelled from school. Worst of all, it could cause harm to someone you really care about.

For responsible and safe social networking, do not become involved in:

- 1. Posting information on illegal activities**—Never post information on any activity that is illegal, such as underage drinking, drug use, or any other abuse of the law. To do so could result in expulsion from school or criminal arrest.
- 2. Bullying**—This is a serious problem in schools and society today. Hateful words or actions using social networking could result in violence, and you could face expulsion or criminal arrest. Bullying will be covered in more detail in a later lesson.
- 3. Trashing your teachers or school**—After all, teachers and the school you attend will ultimately provide the support you may need to earn the grade and receive recommendations that may result in the scholarship or job you badly wanted.
- 4. Posting objectionable content from school computers or network**—Follow school policies when using computers, whether at home or school. By accessing school networks, you are held to the school's policies for computer use.
- 5. Posting confidential or personal information**—Do not share any personal information about yourself over social networks. Be especially careful about sharing your address, social security number, phone number, student ID, full name, or birthday over social networks. These networks are accessible by anyone. Too much information could lead to someone stealing your identity or showing up where you live. Doing this over a cell phone is okay as long as you know the person you are providing the information to; however, it still has risks, so know who you are texting or talking to. Always check with your parents or guardians before releasing any confidential or personal information to anyone.
- 6. Providing overly specific locations when communicating**—Just as you would with your personal information, if you are using a social network site to check in with friends and family, do not be too specific about your location, especially if you are alone.

7. **Lying, cheating, or plagiarizing**—Lying and cheating—in any environment, whether online or face-to-face—reflect on your character and may result in people no longer trusting you. Plagiarizing is claiming or using someone else's work as your own. Doing this in high school will result in a failing grade, and doing this in college may result in expulsion from school.
8. **Threatening violence**—Threatening another person or group is an extremely serious offense. Doing so over the phone or the Internet can, and most often does, result in an investigation and many times an arrest of the person who posted the threat. Avoiding and preventing violence will be covered in a later lesson.
9. **Ignoring school-specific policies**—School policies vary from state to state and public or private institutions. Know your school's electronic use and networking rules. Ignoring these rules could result in loss of privileges, suspension, or even expulsion.
10. **Portraying unprofessional public profiles**—Whether you are a high school student applying for a job at McDonald's or you are hoping to earn a scholarship at a top-rated university, posting or sending questionable photos of yourself or your activities could raise red flags about your values or character to potential employers or universities looking to offer scholarships. It may also be illegal.
11. **Relying on privacy settings to keep you 100 percent safe**—Although social networks provide security settings, these may be complicated to use or not fully effective when used. The bottom line is to protect your personal information. If you don't want it seen, don't post it.
12. **Posting emotionally**—Everyone has said and done things they regret. Sometimes we overreact and say and do the wrong thing. Our friends and family have made us all angry from time to time. Remember, how you respond using social media tools has consequences. Posting or sending an angry message cannot be taken back once it's out there for all to see. So, before you hit the post or send button, take a moment to breathe and think about what you are about to do. Would you want someone doing this to you?



Using a cell phone or computer requires responsible behavior.

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The best way to communicate with another person is still to talk directly to them. Whether you call them on a phone or meet with them face-to-face, this is still the best way to express yourself or understand how someone else feels. However, it seems more and more people prefer social media networks to communicate their views, feelings, and messages. Make sure you follow responsible guidelines when using this method of communication; your personal information and reputation may be at stake.

 **CHECKPOINTS**

Lesson 3 Review

Using complete sentences, answer the following questions on a sheet of paper.

1. Define the term decision-making.
2. What are the six steps of the decision-making process?
3. What are three questions you can ask yourself when you evaluate a decision?
4. Define interpersonal communication.
5. List four elements of an “I” message.
6. What are four tips for improving speaking skills?
7. List two social networking sites.
8. Define the word consequences.
9. Write down four guidelines for responsible social networking.

APPLYING YOUR LEARNING

10. You have just created your first Facebook® account, which comes with a lot of responsibility. Describe what information you would provide for others to read and what information you would leave off.