

## Health Education Glossary

*Note: This glossary provides definitions for some of the terms used in the grade-level health and physical education standards and outcomes. The terms and definitions included here are not meant to be a comprehensive list of essential concepts and ideas in health education. Additional information may be found in a variety of places, including the online sources listed at the end of this glossary.*

**Abuse:** Physical, mental, emotional, or sexual mistreatment of one person by another.

**Abstinence:** The practice of refraining from doing some action or using some thing. For example, choosing to refrain from sexual behaviors for a period of time.

**Addiction:** A physiological or psychological need for a drug.

- *Physiological addiction.* A state in which the body chemically needs a drug in order to function normally.
- *Psychological addiction.* A state of emotionally or mentally needing a drug in order to function.

**Advocate:** Taking action to influence others to address a health-related concern or to support a health-related belief.

**Aggression:** Hostile or violent behavior or attitudes toward another.

**Anxiety:** Mental state characterized by extreme or unrealistic worries or apprehension about daily events, experiences, or objects.

**Assertive communication:** A way of clearly stating one's feelings and opinions and firmly advocating for one's rights and needs without violating the rights of others.

**Attitude:** Positive or negative evaluations toward other people, objects, concepts, activities, behaviors, events, trends, or other observations and occurrences.

**Automated external defibrillator (AED):** Portable electronic device that automatically diagnoses cardiac arrhythmias and can apply electrical therapy to allow the heart to reestablish an effective rhythm.

**Bacteria:** Simple single-cell organisms commonly found in air, soil, and food and on the bodies of plants and animals. Bacteria can produce toxins and cause illness.

**Balanced meal:** Meal that includes one food from each food group.

**Behavior:** Manner of acting or controlling oneself.

**Behavioral health:** Overall emotional and psychological condition including cognitive and emotional capabilities, ability to function in society, ability to self-regulate, and other skills needed to meet the ordinary demands of everyday life. Behavioral health includes both mental health promotion and substance use prevention.

**Benefits:** Advantages gained from something.

**Biological sex:** Based on chromosomes, hormones, and internal and external anatomy.

**Birth control:** See *Contraception*.

**Body image:** Thoughts and feelings about how one looks.

**Body systems:**

- *Cardiovascular.* The heart, blood vessels, and blood, which provide oxygen and nutrients to the body.
- *Digestive.* The organs and glands that are responsible for ingestion, digestion, and absorption of food.
- *Endocrine.* The glands that produce hormones that regulate various body systems, including but not limited to metabolism, growth and development, tissue function, reproduction, sleep, and mood.
- *Immune.* The system that protects against infections and other foreign substances, cells, and tissues.
- *Muscular.* The skeletal, smooth, and cardiac muscles that support movement and help maintain posture and circulate blood, among other functions.
- *Nervous.* A complex communication system that transmits nerve impulses between parts of the body.
- *Reproductive.* The organs and glands in the body that aid in procreation.
- *Respiratory.* The airways and passages that bring air, including oxygen, from outside the body into the lungs.
- *Skeletal.* The framework of the body, consisting of bones and connective tissues that protect and support the body tissues and internal organs.

**Bullying:** Negative actions that are intentional, repeated, negative, show a lack of empathy, and indicate a power imbalance.

**Bystander:** Someone who witnesses an act or event without participating.

**Caloric expenditure:** Calories burned through basic body processes and exercise.

**Caloric intake:** Calories consumed through food and drink.

**Caloric needs assessment:** A determination of caloric intake needs based on one's age, gender, activity level and need to lose, gain, or maintain weight.

**Calorie:** A measure of the energy that food supplies to the body.

**Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR):** Lifesaving technique used when someone's breathing or heartbeat has stopped.

**Chronic disease:** A disease that persists over a long period. The symptoms of chronic disease are sometimes less severe than those of the acute phase of the same disease. Chronic disease may be progressive, result in complete or partial disability, or even lead to death. Examples of chronic disease include diabetes mellitus, emphysema, and arthritis.

**Clique:** A small circle of friends, usually with similar backgrounds or tastes, who exclude people viewed as outsiders.

**Club:** An association or organization dedicated to a particular interest or activity.

**Codependency:** Excessive emotional or psychological reliance on a partner.

**Collaboration:** Working with others to perform a task and achieve shared goals.

**Collaboration skills:** Behaviors that help two or more people work together and function well in the process.

**Communicable disease:** A disease that can spread from one living thing to another, such as the flu or HIV.

**Communication skills:** The ways in which one sends messages to and receives messages from others.

- *Conflict resolution skills.* Skills used in the process of talking over problems to reach a solution.
- *I-message skill.* A skill in which one describes how one feels by using the word "I."
- *Interpersonal skills.* Skills for interacting positively with others.
- *Negotiation skills.* Use of communication and often compromise to settle a disagreement.
- *Nonverbal skills.* Use of body language, tone, volume, and other methods to send messages.
- *Refusal skills.* Communication skills that can help one say no when urged to take part in behaviors that are unsafe, unhealthy, or against one's values.
- *Verbal skills.* Use of spoken and written words to send messages.

**Communication styles:**

- *Passive.* Not standing up for rights and needs, and instead giving up, giving in, or backing down.
- *Aggressive.* Being overly forceful, pushy, hostile, or otherwise violent.
- *Assertive.* Standing up for rights and needs in a positive way.
- *Manipulative.* Being indirect and dishonest in order to control or influence others.

**Compassion:** The human quality of understanding the suffering of others paired with the desire to help alleviate it. Compassion is marked by equal parts caring and discipline.

**Conflict resolution:** A process for two or more parties to find a peaceful solution to a disagreement among them.

**Consent:** An agreement made or permission given without coercion, such as without force, threats, manipulation, or intimidation.

**Contraception:** Any means to prevent pregnancy, including abstinence, barrier methods such as condoms, and hormonal methods such as the pill, patch, injection, and others.

**Coping:** Dealing successfully with difficult changes in one's life.

**Culture:** The collective values, beliefs, customs, and behaviors of a group. Culture means different things to different people, and everyone has a culture that is influenced by a wide variety of personal, societal, and historical factors.

**Cyberbullying:** Cruel or hurtful online contact. A form of bullying that takes place electronically.

**Daily food plan:** Food group targets for what and how much to eat within one's calorie allowance.

**Decision-making:** Steps used to evaluate choices and consequences before making a decision

**Defense mechanism:** A mental process that protects one from strong or stressful emotions and situations.

**Dependence:** A state in which someone functions normally only under the influence of a drug. When the drug is removed, the person experiences withdrawal.

**Depression:** An emotional state characterized by feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, irritability, and/or worthlessness and by a lack of interest in daily life.

**Dimensions of health:** The environmental, mental, intellectual, occupational, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of health that interact together to help determine one's overall state of wellness.

**Disaster:** A sudden event, such as an accident or a natural catastrophe, that causes great damage or loss of life.

**Disease:** A poor state of health and wellness.

**Distress:** Anxiety, sorrow, or pain.

**Drug:** Chemical substance that changes the structure or function of the body or mind

**E-cigs or e-cigarettes:** A device used to simulate the experience of smoking, using a cartridge with a heater to vaporize liquid nicotine instead of burning tobacco.

**Eating disorder:** A psychological illness characterized by a serious disturbance in eating behaviors.

**Ejaculation:** Release of sexual fluids from the body.

**Emergency situation:** A situation demanding immediate action.

**Emotional health:** A dimension of health that involves one's emotions, mood, outlook on life, and beliefs about oneself.

**Emotions:** Moods and feelings.

**Empathy:** The ability to imagine oneself in someone else's place, and to understand someone else's wants, needs, and point of view.

**Empty calories:** Solid fats and added sugars that add calories but few or no nutrients.

**Eustress:** A form of stress that has a positive, beneficial effect on health, motivation, performance, and emotional well-being.

**Family:** The person or people identified as one's caretakers and strongest connections. People come from a variety of different family environments, and one person's family may look very different from another's.

**Fertilization:** In human reproduction, the joining of sperm and an egg.

**First aid:** Immediate, temporary care given to an ill or injured person before and until professional care can be provided.

**Food choice:** Recognizing that some foods are more nutritious than others and that some individuals are unable to make choices based on limited supply or access to variety.

**Food group:** A collection of foods that share similar nutritional properties. Five primary food groups are dairy, fruits, grains, proteins, and vegetables.

**Gang:** A group of people who do things together. This word is used both for groups of people who do illegal things together and may fight against other gangs, as well as for groups of people who are friends and do things together based on shared interests.

**Gender:** A social construct based on emotional, behavioral, and cultural characteristics attached to a person's assigned biological sex. A person's social and/or legal status as male or female.

- *Gender expression.* The way someone outwardly expresses their gender, whether consciously or unconsciously.
- *Gender identity.* Someone's inner sense of their gender (see *Transgender*).
- *Gender roles.* Social expectations about how people should act, think, or feel based on their assigned biological sex.

**Germ:** A microorganism that causes disease.

**Goal-setting:** A process of defining goals and planning steps to achieve them. Approaches include setting long-term, short-term, and SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely) goals.

**Harassment:** Any malicious act that causes harm to any person's physical or mental well-being.

**Health:** State of complete physical, emotional, mental, environmental, spiritual, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease.

**Health services:** Medical care provided by public or private facilities.

**Healthy relationship:** A relationship characterized by mutual respect, consent, fairness, honesty, trust, and nonviolence.

**HIV (human immunodeficiency virus):** A virus that attacks and weakens the immune system and causes AIDS.

**Home:** The place where one lives, sleeps, or stays. There are a variety of different home environments, and one person's home may look very different from another's.

**Hormone:** Chemical substances produced in glands that help regulate many body functions.

**Hydration:** Consuming the fluids necessary for the body to function properly.

**Hygiene:** Regular practices for maintaining essential elements of health. Examples included brushing teeth, flossing, bathing, and washing hands. Cultural practices and social norms for hygiene can vary significantly between countries, regions, and communities.

**Interpersonal conflict:** Conflicts between people or groups of people

**Intimidation:** Intentional behavior, including implied or overt threats of physical violence or other harm that would cause fear of injury or harm.

**Label literacy:** The ability to identify and interpret the important information on food labels.

**Lifestyle factors:** Behaviors that impact health, such as exercise and diet.

**Media:** Various methods for communicating information.

**Medicine:** Drugs that are prescribed by a medical professional to treat or cure an illness or health-related issue.

**Mental disorder:** A medical condition characterized by mental or emotional problems severe or persistent enough to interfere with daily functioning.

**Mental health:** A state of well-being in which one realizes one's own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life and self-regulate during stressful times, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to the community.

**Metabolism:** Chemical reactions in the body's cells that convert food into energy for the body to use.

**Negotiation:** Discussion aimed at reaching an agreement.

**Noncommunicable disease:** A disease that cannot be spread from one living thing, or from the environment, to another living thing. Heart disease is an example of a noncommunicable disease.

**Nutrient-dense foods:** Foods that are high in nutrients as compared to their calorie content.

**Nutrients:** Substances in food that the body needs to grow, to repair itself, and to supply energy. There are six essential nutrients:

- *Carbohydrates.* Starches and sugars present in foods.
- *Fats.* Energy source that increases the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins.
- *Proteins.* Nutrients that help build and maintain body cells and tissues.

- *Vitamins*. Compounds that help regulate many vital body processes, including digestion, absorption, and metabolism of other nutrients.
- *Minerals*. Substances that the body cannot manufacture, but are needed for forming healthy bones and teeth and for regulating many vital body processes.
- *Water*. Essential nutrient that keeps the body hydrated and functioning.

**Nutrition:** The process by which the body takes in and uses food.

**Nutrition facts label:** A label found on the outside packages of food that states the number of servings in the container, the number of calories in each serving, and the amount of nutrients in each serving.

**Nutritional value:** A measure of what a food is made of and its impact on the body.

**Occupational:** Of or relating to a job or profession.

**Over the counter:** Refers to medicines that can be purchased without a prescription.

**Ovulation:** Process of releasing a mature ovum into the fallopian tube.

**Passive:** Accepting or allowing what happens or what others do, without active response or resistance.

**Pathogen:** An infectious agent (such as a virus or bacterium) that causes a disease.

**Peer pressure:** Influence that people have on others of similar age to change attitudes, values, or behaviors.

**Perpetrator:** Someone who has committed a wrong or illegal act.

**Portion size:** The amount of food one chooses to eat at one time.

**Pregnancy:** The state of carrying a developing embryo or fetus within the female body.

**Prescription:** An instruction written by a medical practitioner that authorizes a patient to be provided a medicine or treatment.

**Prevent:** Keep something from happening.

**Procedure:** A series of actions conducted in a certain order.

**Protective factor:** Conditions or traits that shield individuals from the negative consequences of exposure to risk.

**Puberty:** The process of maturing physically and becoming capable of reproducing. Also, the time period when one begins to develop traits of adults of one's own gender.

**Recovery:** The process of learning to live without using a drug.

**Refusal skills:** Skills for avoiding doing things one does not want to do or that are not safe and healthy. Example of a six-step refusal skill model:

1. Say "NO."
2. Ask questions.

3. State the problem.
4. List the consequences.
5. Suggest alternatives.
6. Move, sell, and leave the door open.

**Reliable:** Trustworthy, dependable, and appropriate information, products, and services.

**Reproductive system:** The system of organs involved in producing offspring.

**Resistance skills:** Skills for avoiding being pressured into risky behavior.

**Risk behaviors:** Behaviors that may expose oneself or others to harm that will prevent one from reaching one's potential.

**Risk factors:** Conditions or traits that increase the likelihood that one will develop a disease or infection or experience an injury.

**Risky:** Involving a possibility of something bad or unpleasant happening.

**Self-control:** The ability to use responsibility to override emotions.

**Self-esteem:** Feelings of self-worth.

**Self-harm:** Deliberately injuring one's own body.

**Self-talk (positive or negative):** The act or practice of talking to oneself, either aloud or silently.

**Serving size:** The amount of food listed on a product's Nutrition Facts label.

**Sex:** May refer to gender (biological sex), or used as another term for sexual intercourse.

**Sexual harassment:** Any unwanted sexual attention.

**Sexual health:** A state of physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being in relation to sexuality.

**Sexual health services:** Clinical care that advances an individual's physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being in relation to sexuality; may include contraceptive counseling and methods, sexually transmitted disease testing and treatment, pregnancy testing, and counseling.

**Sexual intercourse:** Oral, genital, or digital contact with a partner's vagina, penis, or anus; commonly used to describe penetrative/insertive sex.

**Sexual offense:** In Washington, a felony with a finding of sexual motivation (see RCW Chapter 9A.44).

**Sexual orientation:** The nature of an individual's physical, romantic, emotional, or spiritual attraction to another person.

**Sexuality:** A combination of many elements that describe who we are as sexual beings that may include feelings about oneself and others, values and beliefs, body awareness, intimacy, sexual identity, and sexual health.



**Sexually transmitted disease (STD):** Infectious disease spread from person to person through sexual contact. Also known as sexually transmitted infection (STI).

**SMART goal-setting:** A specific type of goal-setting. SMART goals are:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable/Achievable
- Realistic/Relevant
- Timely/Time bound/Timeline

**Society:** The community of people living in a particular country or region and having shared customs, laws, and organizations.

**Sodium:** Salt.

**Stress:** The body's physical and psychological response to traumatic or challenging situations.

**Stress management:** The use of healthy ways to reduce and manage stress.

**Stress, stages of:**

- *Alarm stage.* The body and mind go on high alert. The fight-or-flight response prepares the body to either defend itself or flee from danger.
- *Resistance state.* The body adapts to the rush created by the alarm stage and reacts to the stressor. This is the stage in which the body decides to either "fight" or take "flight."
- *Fatigue.* When exposure to stress is prolonged, the body loses its ability to adapt to the situation and may feel tired. Both body and mind become exhausted. Prolonged or repeated stress can lead to life-threatening situations such as high blood pressure, heart disease, or stroke.

**Strategy:** A careful plan or method for achieving a particular goal, usually over a period of time.

**Stressor:** Any factor that causes stress.

**Substance:** See *Drug*.

**Substance abuse:** Purposeful misuse of a legal drug or use of an illegal drug.

**Substance misuse:** Use of a drug that differs from the intended use.

**Substance use:** Use of a drug as intended.

**Suicide:** The act of intentionally taking one's own life.

**Teasing:** Making fun of someone, either playfully or maliciously.

**Transgender:** A broad term describing people whose gender expression is nonconforming and/or whose gender identity is different from the gender they were assigned at birth.

**Transmission:** The process of spreading something, such as a disease, from one living thing to another.

**Treatment:** A long-term process of interventions and monitoring to help someone stop compulsive substance abuse or misuse (related to the Substance Use and Abuse Core Idea).

**Unintentional injury:** Harm that occurs without there being any intention of causing damage.

**U.S. Dietary Guidelines:** A series of dietary recommendations intended to improve cardiovascular health.

**Valid:** Accurate, legitimate, authoritative, and evidence-based information, products, and services.

**Values:** Principles or standards of behavior one considers important.

**Vaping:** To inhale (breathe into the lungs) the vapor produced by an electronic cigarette.

**Violence:** A threat of or actual physical force or power that results in physical or psychological injury or death.

**Virus:** A small infectious agent that enters a cell and takes over normal functioning.

**Wellness:** An overall state of being in good health.

**Withdrawal:** Uncomfortable physical and psychological symptoms experienced when someone who is physically dependent on a drug stops using it (related to the Substance Use and Abuse Core Idea).

## Resources for Further Exploration

[ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov). Alexandria, VA: United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, n.d. (accessed June 2, 2015). [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)

*Comprehensive Health*. By Catherine Sanderson, Mark Zelman, Melanie Lynch, and Melissa Munsell. Tineley Park, IL: The Goodheart-Willcox Co., 2015.

*Decisions for Health*. Austin, TX: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 2004.

A [Gender Spectrum Glossary](http://www.tolerance.org/LGBT-best-practices-terms). Montgomery, AL: Teaching Tolerance, A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016. [www.tolerance.org/LGBT-best-practices-terms](http://www.tolerance.org/LGBT-best-practices-terms)

[Glencoe Health Student and Teacher Resources](http://www.glencoe.com/sec/health/findbook/index.html). Columbus, OH: McGraw-Hill Education, 2005. [www.glencoe.com/sec/health/findbook/index.html](http://www.glencoe.com/sec/health/findbook/index.html)

*Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool (HECAT)*: [Overview](#) and [Glossary](#). Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015. Available from [www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/hecat](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/hecat)

[Merriam-Webster Online](http://www.merriam-webster.com). Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 2015. [www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com)

[National Sexual Education Standards: Core Content and Skills, K–12](http://www.futureofsexed.org/documents/josh-fose-standards-web.pdf) [a special publication of the *Journal of School Health*]. Washington, DC: Future of Sex Education Initiative, 2011. [www.futureofsexed.org/documents/josh-fose-standards-web.pdf](http://www.futureofsexed.org/documents/josh-fose-standards-web.pdf)