



Personal Goals and Healthy Habits

Valuing and Applying Rationality



Grade Level

9th-10th

Suggested Timing

30-50 minutes

Focus Standard

VAR.7 - Create and track sustainable and desirable habits

Supporting Standard

VAR.5 - Practice and demonstrate self-awareness of thought processes and behavior

Resources

[Example Scenario](#)

Subject

Cross-curricular

Impact

This lesson introduces students to strategies for forming habits to support their efforts in making everyday decisions that align with their values and goals. Developing healthy habits can both relieve stress and foster dispositions that support a student as they exercise agency in their lives.

Objectives

- Students will understand the value of forming healthy habits around everyday decision-making.
- Students will identify areas for growth in their daily decision-making that will benefit from forming and practicing habits.

Optional Teaching Strategies

- For the *Apply* section, consider expanding on deciding dispositional qualities that help support healthy habit formation, such as: intellectual humility, active open-mindedness, and truth-seeking.
- For a few weeks following this lesson, set aside some time each week for students to reflect on and modify their habits/contracts/mantras: What is working? What is not working? What needs to be adjusted to make this a sustainable habit?

Differentiation

- Some students might feel intimidated when answering questions about what they care about and what their goals are. Remind them that they can continually add to their list throughout the lesson as new thoughts and ideas come to them.
- When discussing the formation of healthy habits, you might find that providing some examples helps your class generate their own ideas.

What To Look and Listen For

- Can students identify their personal goals and values?
- Can students identify actions they can take to support an outcome they desire?
- Notice values and struggles that the class has in common. Are there trends to share? Are students able to identify ways to create a sustainable balance between what they care about and what they want to achieve?

Engage (10–15 minutes)

Ask your students to engage in self-reflection by journaling about their personal values and goals. Let them know that sharing their responses will be optional.

Suggested Journaling Prompts:

- What do YOU care about? This is about your personal values. What do you do that makes you happy every day? Think about what matters to you most at school, in your social life, and in your family life.
- What do YOU want to achieve? What are your goals as a student, as a friend, as a member of the school community, as a family member, as an athlete, or as a person—who do you want to be?

Lead a quick share, emphasizing the wide variety of your students' values and goals.

Suggested Prompt:

Today's lesson is about YOU, and developing habits to support your efforts in achieving the goals you've set for yourself. So let's hear about you. What are your personal values and goals? How do they relate? Do they conflict at all?

Apply (15–20 minutes)

Lead a discussion on how habits can help us achieve our goals—or possibly keep us from achieving our goals.

Suggested Questions:

- What is a habit? What different types of habits do we all have? (Our suggested definition: *frequently occurring patterns in thoughts and behaviors.*)
- What are you already doing to get closer to your goals? How can you make that a habit?
- What patterns in your thoughts or behaviors interfere with achieving your goals? What could you do to interrupt these patterns of behavior? Is there a healthier alternative?

Break your students into small working groups of 2–4, and present an [example scenario](#) that will resonate with your students.

Suggested Prompts & Questions:

Given what you know about this sample student's goals and values...

- Discuss amongst your group and suggest a new habit to help them achieve their goal.
- Write a mantra that this student could implement to help them interrupt patterns in thoughts and behaviors that get in the way of their goals. Check: How well does your advice align with what this student cares about?

If time permits: have groups share and discuss each other's recommendations, emphasizing the differences and strengths of each approach.

Reflect (7–10 minutes)

Give your students time to journal to identify a healthy habit they can develop to help them achieve one of the goals they identified earlier in the lesson. Their journal could be a simple free-write to brainstorm ideas for a contract with themselves, or maybe even a mantra—a short saying to help them redirect your thoughts to a helpful mindset—to support the development of a healthy habit.

Example Scenario

Sam is new to his high school, because he moved last month from another state. He is happy with the new friend group he has found and he spends time outside of school on his phone using social media, and texting to connect and foster these new friendships.

At his old school, Sam saw himself as a good math student but since starting here he has found the math course to be challenging and is becoming discouraged with his grades. Math always came easy to him in the past and he is used to completing his homework the day it's due before school starts.

His commute home takes a while on the train and he usually spends that time decompressing, listening to music or playing games on his phone. After school, he usually practices soccer for the team he just joined and then relaxes with some video games. He knows if he spends time developing better study habits he might reach his academic goals, but he's just so tired by the time he sits to do school work.

Questions to consider:

- What does Sam seem to care about?
- What goals can you imagine Sam might want for himself?
- What advice would you give Sam considering what he cares about?
- Can you work as a group to develop a good habit that he can track and modify as needed?
- Is there a “mantra” or quick reminder you could advise him to adopt?
- How does he know this habit is helping him—what should he pay attention to?