Educator Guide: You Be the Judge Activity

Recommended for Grades:

7th grade

Time:

10 minutes

National Health Education Standards:

This lesson aligns with the following National Health Education Standards:

- Standard 1: Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health.
- Standard 3: Access valid and reliable resources to support health and well-being of self and others.
- Standard 7: Demonstrate practices and behaviors to support health and well-being of self and others.

For more information about the National Health Education Standards, visit the SHAPE America website: shapeamerica.org.

Learning Objectives:

After completing this lesson students will be able to:

1. Identify at least four questions to ask when determining if a source of information is valid and reliable.
2. Analyze the validity and reliability of mental and emotional health information.

Lesson Description:

In this activity students will be acting as a new judge, and will learn how to determine if a source of information is valid and reliable. Students will be given seven questions to ask themselves when evaluating a source of information. This activity will focus on mental health information, but these questions apply to any type of information. Once students have learned these questions they will put their knowledge to the test in their first “case” that involves mental health information. They will be shown pieces of evidence that all include mental health information and their task will be to determine if the information is valid and reliable.

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Vocabulary:

Use the following list of vocabulary as a reference for yourself or your students as you complete the You Be the Judge Activity. You may choose to use this list in any way that fits your needs.

- ADHD (Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) – a condition that causes differences in brain development and brain activity which affects attention, the ability to sit still and impulsiveness
- Alliance – a union or association formed for mutual benefit, especially between countries or organizations
- Commercial – something that makes a profit or intends to make a profit
- Counselor – a person trained to give guidance on personal, social or psychological problems
- Degree – the qualification given to a student after they complete their studies
- Educational – something that teaches new skills or knowledge
- Evidence – anything that is presented at a trial which is intended to convince the judge and jury of alleged facts important to the case
- Genetics – the study of heredity and inherited characteristics
- Government – the system that controls, or regulates, a nation, state or community
- Judge – a public official whose job is to hear and decide cases in a court of law
- LCSW – Licensed Clinical Social Worker
- LMFT – Licensed Clinical Marriage and Family Therapist
- LPC – Licensed Professional Counselor
- MD –Doctor of Medicine
- Mental health – a person's emotional, psychological and social well-being
- Mental health professional – a healthcare practitioner or social and human services provider who helps people improve their mental health or treats mental disorders
- Mentor – a trusted, experienced person who supports and advises someone with less experience
- Misinformation – incorrect or misleading information
- MSW – Master of Social Work degree
- Network – to connect or collaborate
- Nonprofit – not making a profit, or making a profit is not the main goal
- Organization – a group of people who work together to form or establish something
- PhD – Doctor of Philosophy degree
- Prejudice – a preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience

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- Psychiatry – the medical specialty devoted to the diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of mental health conditions, including various matters related to mood, behavior, cognition, perceptions and emotions
- Qualifications – accomplishments or experiences that make a person suitable for a particular job
- Reliable – comes from a dependable source, or consistently gives the same result each time
- Self-esteem – how we value and perceive ourselves
- Therapist – an individual who treats mental or emotional conditions through verbal communication and interaction
- Unbiased – free from favoritism or prejudice
- URL – the address of a web page
- Valid – based on truth or fact

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Supplemental Activity: Choose Your Sources Wisely

Objectives:

After completing this activity students will be able to:

- Locate valid and reliable mental and emotional health information.
- Analyze the validity and reliability of mental and emotional health information.

Materials Needed:

- Chalkboard or whiteboard
- Copy of Mental and Emotional Health Resources Handout (found later in this guide)

Time Required:

40 minutes

Instructions:

Ask student where they usually get their mental health information from? Start a list on the board. Is it from their friends, family, social media, certain websites, their doctor or somewhere else?

Review the questions students should ask themselves to determine if mental health information is valid and reliable.

- How current is the information?
- What are the author's qualifications?
- Is the language or tone unbiased?
- Can you find this information in at least one other place?
- What is the URL?
- What is the purpose of this information?
- Does the source provide evidence or facts to back up what they're saying?

Have students bring in mental health information that they have found. Feel free to bring some in too. Discuss as many as you have time for and determine if each is valid and reliable.

Give each student a copy of the Mental health resources for families and educators handout. These should all be valid and reliable sources of information. Reiterate the importance of finding valid information when it comes to mental health.

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Handouts

Included on the following pages are additional resources that you and your students' families may find useful.

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Mental and Emotional Health Resources

- 988 Lifeline, 988lifeline.org, call or text 988
- Anxiety and Depression Association of America, adaa.org
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/
- Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, chadd.org
- Children's Wisconsin, childrenswi.org/find-care/mental-behavioral-health
- KidsHealth, kidshealth.org
- Mental Health America, mhanational.org
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), nami.org
- National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), nimh.nih.gov
- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (Student Services/Prevention and Wellness), dpi.wi.gov/sspw/mental-health

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Transcript

Title
You be the judge.

Introduction
You are a new judge about to hear your first case. This case involves mental health and you will need to decide if the evidence is based on valid and reliable health information. You are about to have a meeting with your mentor, Judge Ramsey, who will be giving you advice on how to determine what is valid and reliable information, and what is not. Here is Judge Ramsey now. Click “join meeting” to begin the meeting.

Meeting with your mentor
Hello! I understand you’re preparing for your first case that involves mental health information. There is a lot of misinformation out there, and misinformation can be dangerous, especially since we use this information to make decisions about our health. It’s important to know when information is valid and reliable and I’ll show you the best ways to figure that out. It can be hard to tell if information is true or not so I’ll share with you what questions to ask yourself when trying to figure out if a source of information is valid and reliable.

First let’s talk about what valid and reliable health information means. Valid means that the information is accurate, or true. Reliable means the information is consistent and trustworthy. Any time you are looking for health information or services you want them to be accurate, consistent and trustworthy. This applies to all health information and services, but I’ll focus on mental health for now.

I find it helpful to ask myself some questions to determine if a source of information is valid and reliable. The first question I ask myself is, “How current is the information?” If you’re looking at a web site, when was the last time it was updated? Look for information that has been updated in the last five years. You can usually find the date that it was last updated at the top or bottom of the page.

Another question I ask myself is, “What are the author’s qualifications?” Do they have a degree, and/or experience in the mental health field? It’s best to get mental health information from someone who has studied and worked in the field. Some examples of letters they may have after their name to show their qualifications are: MD, PhD, LPC, LCSW, LMFT, or MSW.

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A third question I ask myself is, “Is the language or tone unbiased?” Unbiased means free from favoritism or prejudice. The facts should be presented, rather than personal opinions. I mean, we are judges, and our job is to look at the facts without prejudice. Some people have strong opinions about things, so it’s important to recognize when they are sharing their opinions and not facts.

The next question I ask is, “Can I find this information in at least one other place?” Information that is valid and reliable can be found in multiple places. Check other websites. Talk to someone who has experience with the topic you’re researching, and do some digging to see if you can find at least one other source.

A question I ask myself when looking at a web page is, “What is the URL?” What does the URL, or web address, end in? Some common web address endings are …

.edu – which means it’s the web site of an educational institution, like a university.

.gov – which means it’s a government web site, usually for a federal, state, or local agency.

.org – which means it’s an organization’s web site, most likely a nonprofit organization.

.com – which means it’s a commercial web site, usually a company whose goal is to make money.

.net – which means it’s a network web site, which could be any site.

Web addresses that end in .edu, and .gov usually have the most valid and reliable information. An organization with a .org address that is well respected in mental health can be a valid and reliable website too. For example Childrenswi.org! Be aware of web sites that end in .com or .net because anyone can get one of those.

Another question I may ask myself is, “What is the purpose of this information?” Is it to inform or teach, sell a product or service, or to entertain? If the purpose is to do anything other than to inform or teach then the information is probably not reliable.

The final question I would ask is, “Does the information provide evidence or facts to back up what they’re saying?” Where did the original information come from? A valid and reliable site will note where their facts are coming from.

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Hopefully these questions will help you during the case as you try to figure out what is valid and reliable information. I'm sending you a tip sheet that you can reference during the trial if you need it. It will contain all of the questions we talked about, and some tips on using them. Good luck. You'll do great! I'll talk to you again soon.

Trial introduction

The trial is about to begin. The lawyer will present evidence to you and you'll need to decide if it is valid and reliable information. If you need help, you can use the tip sheet that your mentor sent to you. Just click the tip sheet button to open it. Good luck.

Exhibit A

Exhibit A: A few of your friends were talking about ADHD today. They were saying how you can tell if you have it, and what medications are supposed to work the best. Do you think this is valid and reliable mental health information?

> *Valid and reliable:* Although we may trust our friends, and it's great that we can talk to them, they're probably not the most valid source of mental health information. That doesn't mean they can't support us in some ways, but it means that they're not professionals in the mental health field.
>
> *Not valid and reliable:* That's right. Although we may trust our friends, and it's great that we can talk to them, they're probably not the most valid source of mental health information. That doesn't mean they can't support us in some ways, but it means that they're not professionals in the mental health field.

Exhibit B

Exhibit B: Nami.org is the website for the well-known National Alliance on Mental Illness. Their support and education page has many resources for people who are struggling or know someone who is. There are no ads on the site, but lots of information. It appears most information is from the last few years. Do you think this is valid and reliable mental health information?

> *Valid and reliable:* That's correct. It appears that this web site would contain valid and reliable information. The National Alliance on Mental Illness is a well-known national organization. Their goal is to provide education and support to people affected by mental illness and their families. This mission is clearly stated on their web site, and the URL ends in .org. Their fact sheets and policy information are all from the last three to four years so it's current.

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Not valid and reliable: Actually, it appears that this web site does contain valid and reliable information. The National Alliance on Mental Illness is a well-known national organization. Their goal is to provide education and support to people, affected by mental illness, and their families. This mission is clearly stated on their web site, and the URL ends in .org. Their fact sheets and policy information are all from the last three to four years so it's current.

Exhibit C

Exhibit C: This doctor recommends you talk to a therapist or counselor at a local counseling center if you are often feeling very worried or nervous. Do you think this is valid and reliable mental health information?

Valid and reliable: That's right! A health care provider like this doctor is a great source of information. If they don't specialize in mental health they may refer you to someone who does, like a therapist or counselor.

Not valid and reliable: Sorry, but a health care provider like this doctor is a great source of information. If they don't specialize in mental health they may refer you to someone who does, like a therapist or counselor.

Exhibit D

Exhibit D: This online vitamin ad says it will improve mental health. It's only $24.99 for a month's worth, and it says it will give you more energy, improve your self-esteem and make you feel happier in general. Do you think this is valid and reliable mental health information?

Valid and reliable: Sorry, but this ad is not valid or reliable mental health information. The main goal of this ad is to sell vitamins and the claims sound too good to be true.

Not valid and reliable: Correct! This is not valid or reliable mental health information. The main goal of this ad is to sell vitamins and the claims sound too good to be true.

Exhibit E

Exhibit E: This research article was written by a doctor and professor of psychiatry at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. The research was funded by the National Institute of Mental Health about 4 years ago. The focus of the research is on how genetics factor into anxiety and mood disorders. Do you think this is valid and reliable mental health information?

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Valid and reliable: That's right. This research is current as it's from the last five years, and the author is a doctor and professor of psychiatry at a reputable university.

Not valid and reliable: Actually, from what we can see here this does look like valid and reliable information. The research is current as it's from the last five years, and the author is a doctor and professor of psychiatry at a reputable university.

End of evidence

That concludes this part of the trial. Click the continue button to return to your chambers.

Chambers

It looks like Judge Ramsey wants to meet with you to discuss the trial. Click the join button to begin the meeting.

Message from Judge Ramsey (based on "score")

Congratulations-all correct: Congratulations! I hear you made all of the correct rulings today.

Nice job-most correct: Nice job! I hear you made almost all of the correct rulings today.

Some correct: I heard you made most of the correct rulings today.

A couple correct: I heard you had some trouble with the rulings in your trial today. Don't get discouraged.

This is definitely a skill that takes some practice. It's not always going to be easy to determine if a source of information is valid and reliable. At first it may seem kind of awkward to ask yourself all of those questions, but it will help you figure out if information is valid and reliable. Keep using them whenever you're evaluating health information. Best of luck with your future cases!

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