

Dear Parents or Caregivers,

Welcome to the Diabetes Education in Tribal Schools program. Your child will be learning the *Health Is Life in Balance* curriculum, which will provide a learning experience in areas of type 2 diabetes, obesity, and prevention. This letter gives you an overview of the background and characteristics of the curriculum. We will also request your help in making the learning experience for your child more meaningful by including family and at-home activities designed to reinforce lessons in the curriculum. Your active involvement in the curriculum activities has the potential to positively affect the health of your child.

“The Diabetes Epidemic” Need for New Curriculum

Diabetes in American Indians and Alaska Natives (NDIC, NIDDK, NIH)

www.niddk.nih.gov

- Diabetes has tripled in the last 30 years.
- Type 2 diabetes is steadily increasing in children.
- The prevalence of obesity is steadily increasing in children.
- About 14 percent of 12 to 19-year-olds are classified as obese.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention predicts 1 out of 3 American children born since 2000 will develop diabetes.
- About 15 percent of American Indians and Alaska Natives have been diagnosed with diabetes.
- American Indians and Alaska Natives are 2.6 times more likely to have diagnosed diabetes.
- Type 2 diabetes is becoming increasingly common in all youth, especially American Indian and Alaska Native youth.
- American Indians and Alaska Natives have physiological and lifestyle risk factors for type 2 diabetes.
- Both diet and physical activity have changed for many American Indian and Alaska Native groups over the past several decades.

With these grim statistics, one fact is encouraging: ***type 2 diabetes can often be prevented or delayed through a balanced lifestyle that includes healthy eating and activity habits and maintaining normal weight.*** Clearly, for the

millions of children who are likely to develop diabetes, learning how to make healthful food and activity choices and why they should is potentially lifesaving.

Health curriculum materials usually cover diet and activity, but not always from a scientific perspective. Also, not all schools offer health as a subject at all grade levels. So instructional materials that explore the science of healthy lifestyles and diabetes prevention are valuable. In addition, *Health Is Life in Balance* is designed to be culturally appropriate for a highly vulnerable group of children, American Indian and Alaskan Native students, as well as for their classmates from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Overview of the K–4 Curriculum Plan: Enduring Concepts

- Health is life in balance.
- All animals need nutritious food and daily exercise to stay healthy.
- Humans obtain energy from the sun by eating a variety of plant and animal sources of food in balance.
- Diabetes is an imbalance of health at many levels.
- Personal health behaviors can help reduce the risks of diabetes.
- Making healthy choices includes many aspects of life: food, water, rest, exercise, senses, safety, and relationships with others.
- The Circle of Life represents balance in important aspects of life: body, mind, feelings, and environment.
- Traditional food sources and physical activities of Native American ancestors are different than those in the present day, and we can learn important things from the past.
- Individuals, families, and communities can work together to maintain health and prevent diseases.
- Students can develop skills and have opportunities to become scientists or health providers.

The Round Dance

The Round Dance graphic on the next page shows concepts of balanced lifestyles in an age-appropriate, appealing way that is relevant for American Indian children. Many tribes and intertribal groups use the Round Dance as a representation of the Circle of Life that promotes balance, friendship, unity, equality, and the earth. Both the latest medical research about preventing disease and promoting health and the traditional teachings of Native Americans emphasize ideas of balance in a person's whole life. Thus, it is a central theme for our materials. This curriculum uses the Round Dance to promote nutrition, physical activity, diversity, and respecting self and others—thus illustrating *Health Is Life in Balance*.

Health Is Life in Balance was developed by educators from eight Tribal Colleges and their university partners. Team members frequently consulted with in-service teachers and reviewed research on science education, early education, and culturally appropriate education for American Indian students. Funding for the Diabetes Education in Tribal Schools program is provided by the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) within the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

We would like to again welcome parents and caregivers to the *Health Is Life in Balance* curriculum. It is our hope that your participation in the school-to-home activities will help engage your child in his or her learning and that the materials will be beneficial in guiding your children to lead healthy lives.

Sincerely,





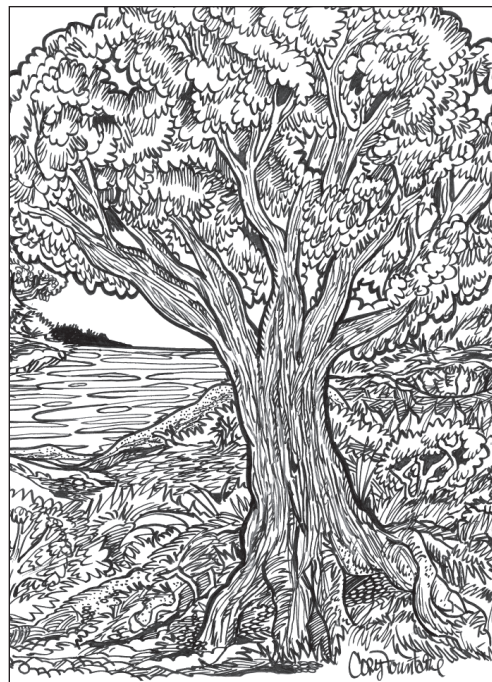
1.1

The Gifts of the Trees

Many, many moons ago, when Man first came to live on the earth, he looked at the vastness that surrounded him, and a great loneliness filled his heart. "How shall I live?" he cried. "The world is so big, and I am alone!"

The trees were glad the Great Spirit had sent Man to live among them and wanted to help him. "You are not alone. We are your brothers and we will help you," they murmured softly. Man felt comforted.

The maple tree touched him with her tender branches. "I will give you sweet water to drink and to make into sugar," she said.



Cory Fountaine

The hickory tree shook a host of nuts from his tall branches. "See? I will give you food to satisfy your hunger." "We will help," spoke up the hickory tree's cousins, the chestnut, the beech, and the walnut.





1.1

“Then you will need baskets,” said Goungah, the elm tree.
“Make them with my soft bark and strengthen them with thongs
of my tough muscles.”

Now there was happiness in the heart of Man as he set out to
explore the world, for he had food and drink and friends. But soon
a wide river blocked his trail. “Alas, I can go no further!” he cried.

Wigwass, the birch tree, grew near the great river and heard his
cry. “I will help you, my brother,” she called. “Take strips of my skin
and tie them together with the tough thongs given to you by the elm
tree. Then you will have a canoe strong enough to carry you across
the wide rivers.”

Man did as Wigwass suggested, and soon the fearful river was
behind him. But in the meantime, the sun had entered his lodge in
the west. Man shivered with cold.

This time, he eyed the balsam, who saw her brother’s need. “Do
not suffer cold,” she said. “In my heart there is much sunfire. Rub my
branches together, and they will give you sparks to kindle a flame.”

Man followed the balsam’s instructions, and soon a great
campfire roared before him. When he was warm, his eyes grew
heavy with sleep.





1.1

“It’s our turn to help,” spoke the great pine and the cedar. And they shook a mound of sweet-smelling needles beside Man. He spread them into a soft bed and slept.

All through the long night North Wind blew his icy breath over him. But Man rested warm and secure until Wabun, the east wind, chased the darkness down the valley and brought the morning to Man’s campfire.

When he awoke, there was a great gratitude in his heart. “How can I repay you for your kindness?” he asked the trees.

“We want no pay,” they replied. “Giving is the secret of our happiness. We only ask that you use the gifts of the forest wisely. Never waste or destroy what the Great Spirit has given freely to his children.”

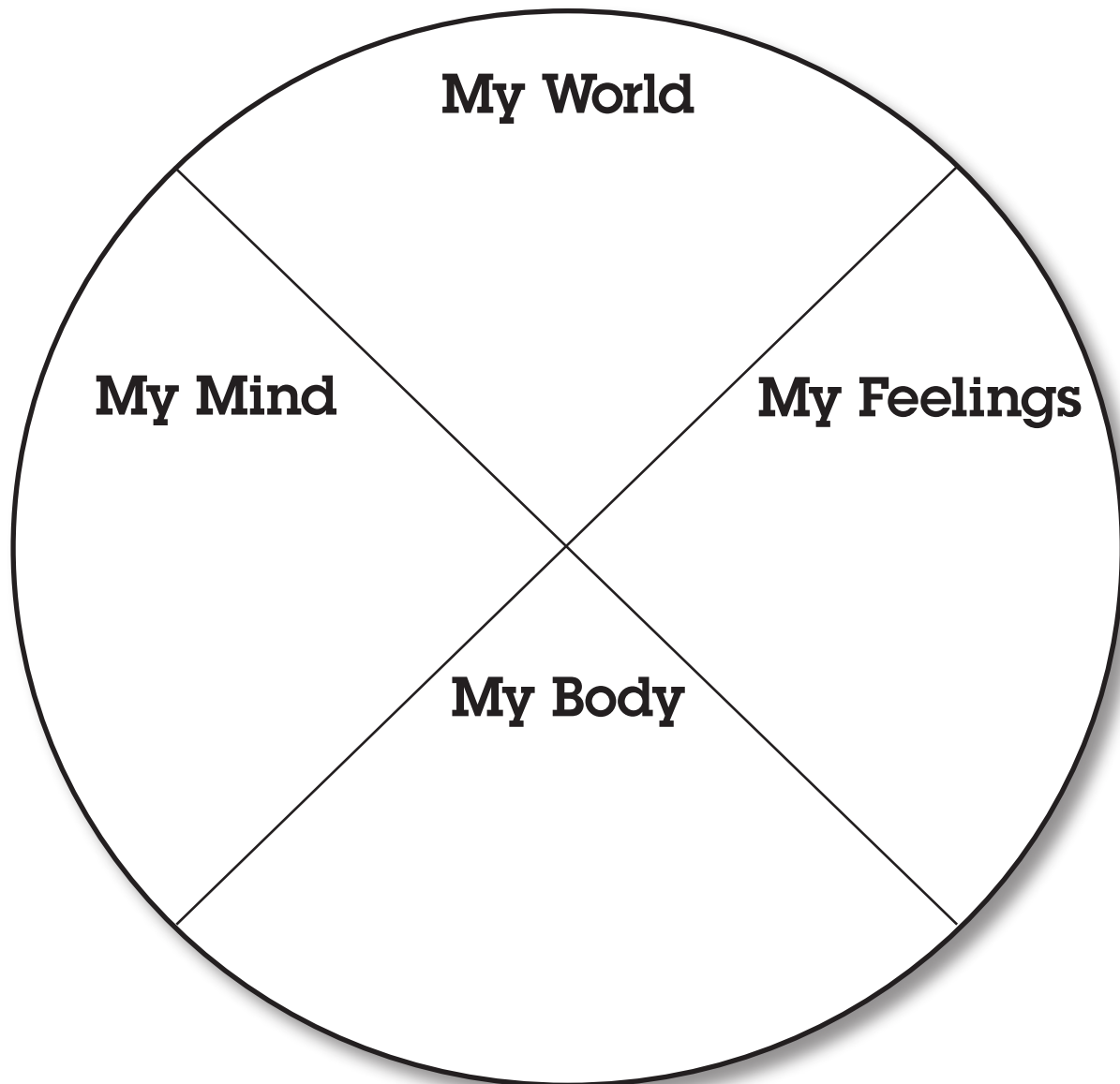
Indians have never forgotten. They take only what they need and leave the rest for others.





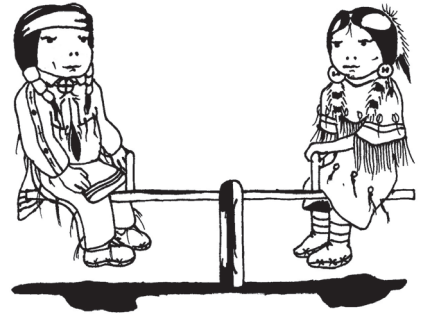
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Health Is Life in Balance Circle

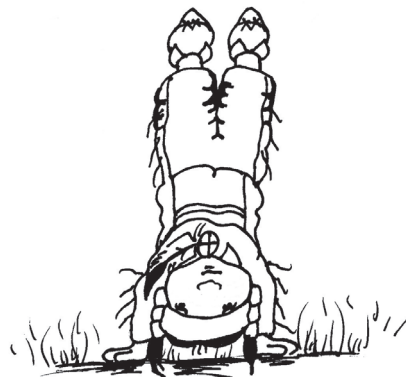
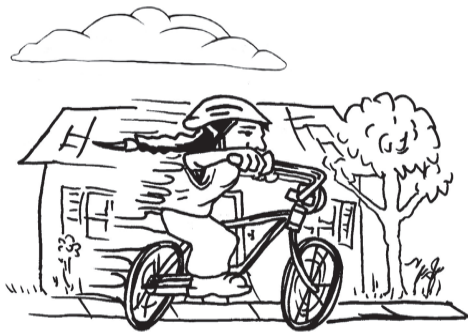




2.1



balance





3.1

Paper Plate Model

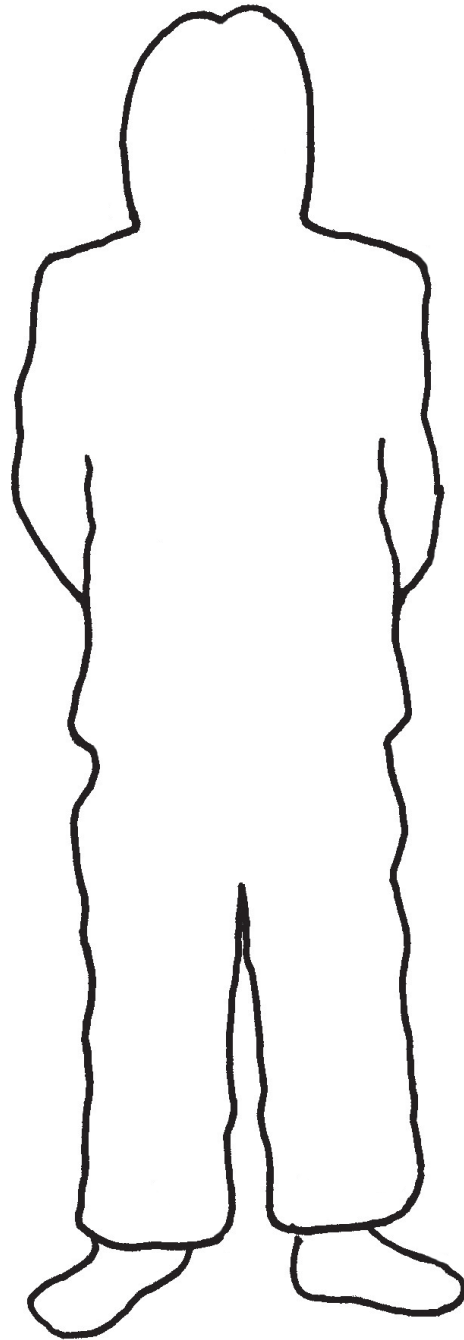
Our Lives

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5.1

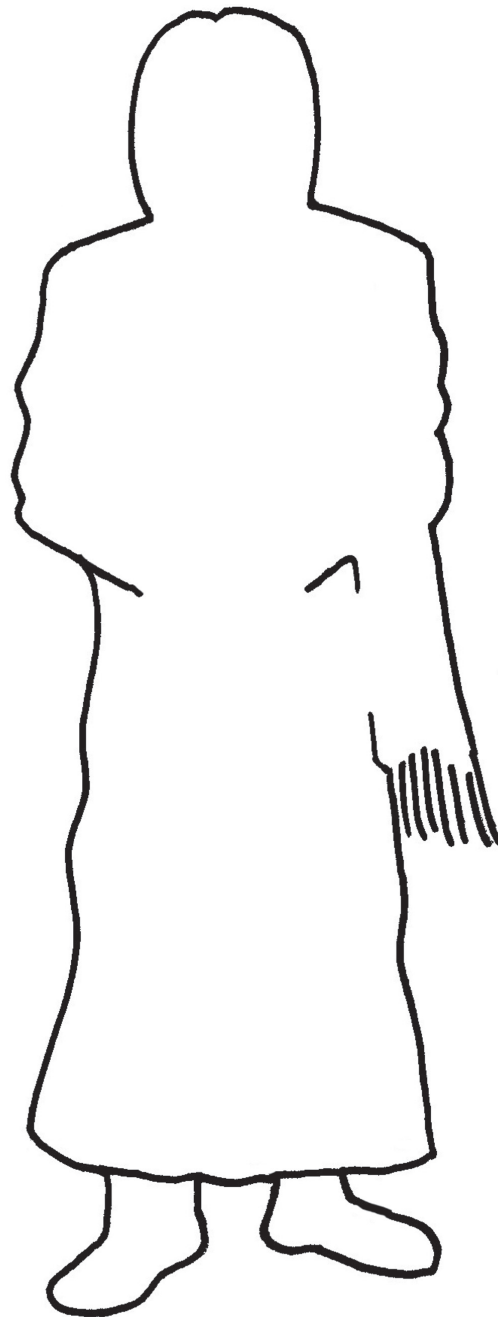
Messenger Man





5.2

Messenger Woman





5.3

School-to-Home Activity:

Let's Move— The Round Dance

Your child is learning about the Native American Round Dance, a social dance that is done by many tribes. Your child is learning that the Round Dance is one example of physical activity that is special to many Native American tribes.

The Round Dance goes by many names for different tribes: *Kahomni*, 2-Step, Owl Dance, Friendship Dance, and Rabbit Dance. It is a social dance that often is a part of Native American powwow activities.

A powwow is a celebration where people gather to sing Native American songs, dance, see family and friends, conduct honorings such as giveaways, and engage in competition in singing and dancing.

Powwows take place all over the United States and Canada. During the summer months, there is usually a powwow every weekend in different areas of the United States. Contact the tribe in your area and find out when their annual celebration or powwow takes place. Take your family to the powwow and participate in the intertribal dancing and the round dancing. Powwows are social events and are open to the public (some powwows may require an admission fee). You will find that a powwow is well attended by Native American and non-Indian people alike.

Listen to the master of ceremonies (MC), who is the official who lets everyone in attendance know the activities and events that are taking place during a powwow. The MC will let the audience know when the dances are taking place where





5.3

anyone is welcome to participate. These dances are called Intertribals; or the MC will call for the Round Dance.

Your children can show you what they have learned in their class by your family's attendance and participation at a powwow. It will also reinforce the importance of physical activity as your family strives to stay in balance and be healthy.

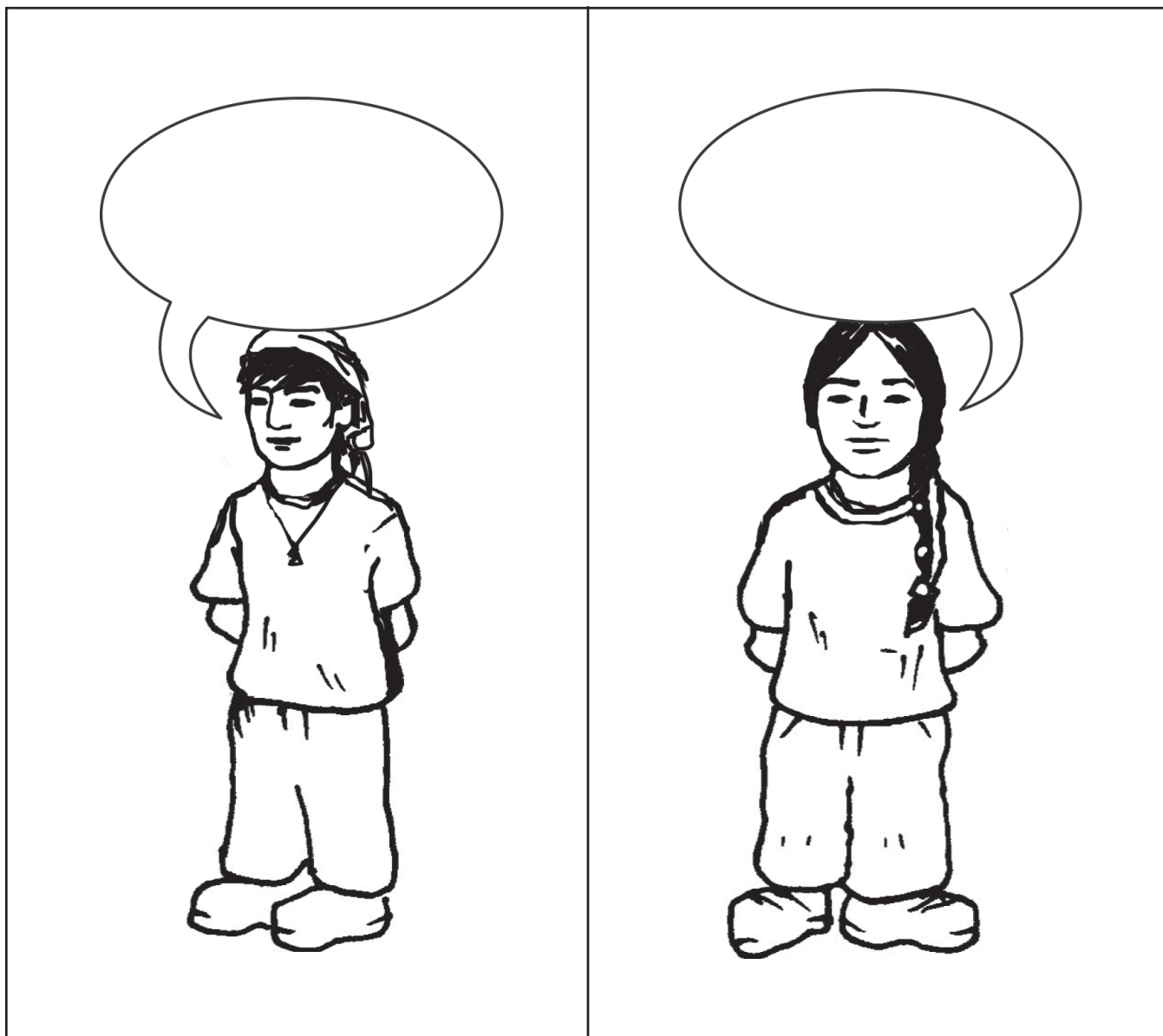
Web resource for more powwow information: PowWows.com





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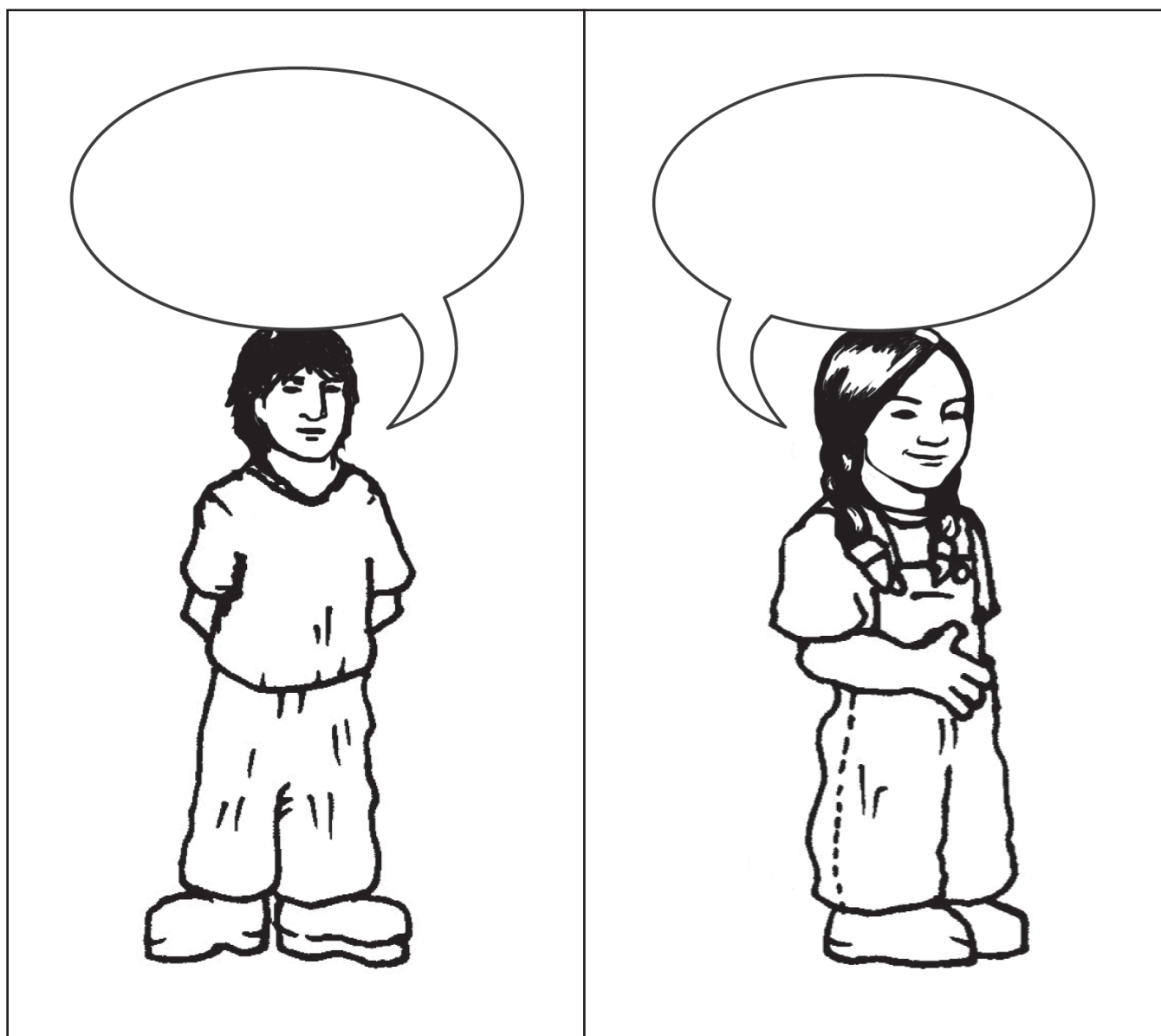
A Good Health Message





6.1

A Good Health Message





6.1

A Good Health Message

