

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

More Healthy





1.2

Less Healthy





1.3

School-to-Home Activity:

What Helps a Person Be Healthy?

As part of their lessons in school, your children are learning how what they eat and the activities they do affect their health and life. The following information title, “We have the power to prevent diabetes,” was created by the National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP) to help families learn about seven powerful steps to be healthy. You can also find this information on the NDEP Web site, http://www.ndep.nih.gov/diabetes/pubs/Power_tips.pdf.

Although this information was developed for American Indians and Alaska Natives, it is good advice for all people and all communities. Even very young children can learn healthy choices at an early age for a lifetime with a little help from their families. With this knowledge, you will be able to talk with your children about what makes us “more healthy” and “less healthy”.

Using these seven healthy tips, 1) move more, 2) make healthy food choices, 3) take off some weight, 4) set goals you can meet, 5) record your progress, 6) seek help, and 7) keep at it, you and your family are on your way to health and balance. These are all simple things that you and your children can do to get started today as a family. As stated in a positive message from Dr. Yvette Roubideaux, “We have the power to help our people and the generations to come. We have the power to prevent diabetes.”





1.3

1. Move More.

Get up, get out, and get moving. Walk, dance, bike ride, swim, or play ball with your friends or family. It doesn't matter what you do as long as you enjoy it. Try different things to keep it fun.

2. Make Healthy Food Choices.

Focus on eating less. Eat fiber-rich fruits and vegetables each day. Choose whole grain foods such as whole wheat bread and crackers, oatmeal, brown rice, and cereals. Cut down on fatty and fried foods. You still can have foods you enjoy, just eat smaller servings. Choose water to drink.

3. Take Off Some Weight.

Once you start eating less and moving more, you will lose weight. By losing just 10 pounds, you can cut your chances of getting diabetes.

4. Set Goals You Can Meet.

Start by making small changes. Try being active for 15 minutes a day this week. Then each week add 5 minutes until you build up to at least 30 minutes 5 days a week. Try to cut 100 calories out of your diet each day (that's one can of soda!). Slowly reduce your calories over time. Talk to your health care team about your goals.

5. Record Your Progress.

Write down all the things you eat and drink and the number of minutes you are active. Keeping a diary is one of the best ways to stay focused and reach your goals.





1.3

6. Seek Help.

You don't have to prevent diabetes alone. Ask your family and friends to help you out. Involve them in your activities. You can help each other move more, eat less, and live a healthy life. Go for a walk together or play a pick-up game of basketball. Join a support group in your area to help you stay on track.

7. Keep At It.

Making even small changes is hard in the beginning. Try to add one new change a week. If you get off track, start again and keep at it.

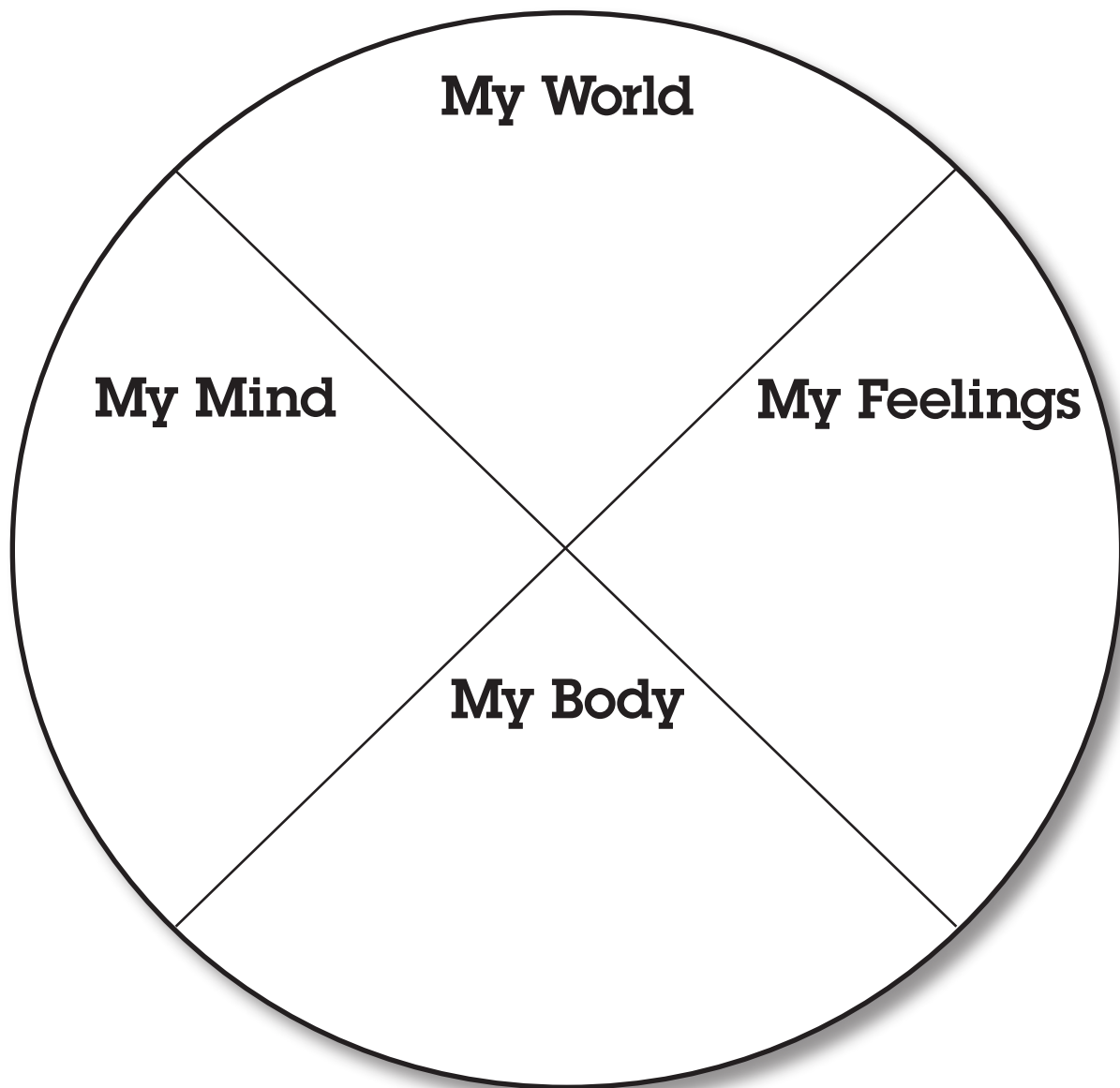
National Diabetes Education Program
www.YourDiabetesInfo.org





3.1

Health Is Life in Balance Circle





3.2

School-to-Home Activity:

Myself in Balance

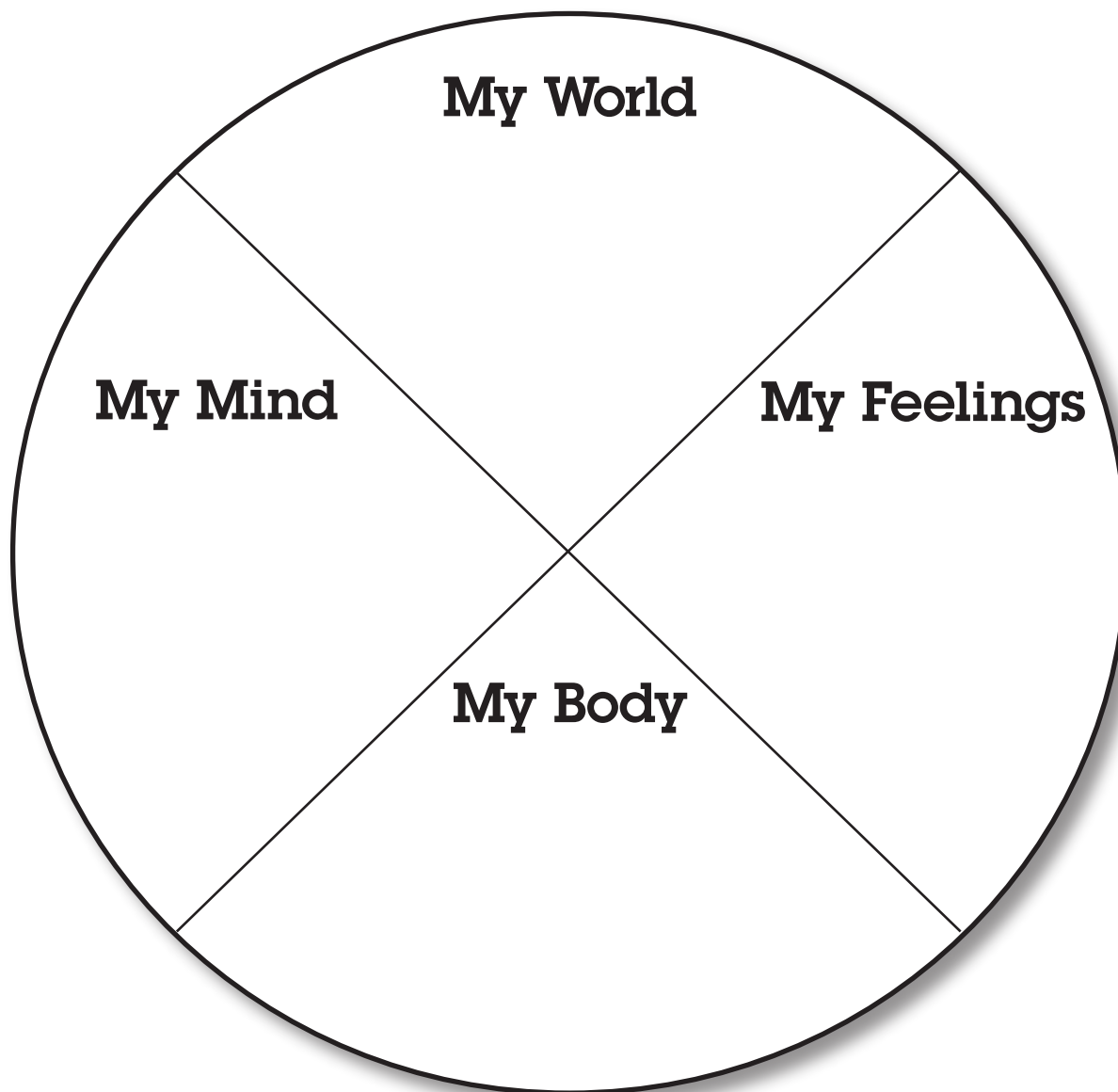
On the following page is a chart that your child completed in class. He or she is learning to think of healthy examples to go in each part of the circle. For example, “my world” is the child’s family, friends, home, or things in nature, and your child has been asked in class to think of something that goes in that section.

Please take a few minutes to add to this circle with your child. For “my body,” you and your child can come up with an example of something healthy your family can do for their bodies, such as eating a healthful snack or engaging in some fun physical activity such as playing (inside or outside). Try to come up with a specific example for each section and then take time to do these things with your child over the next week. For example, if you want to use a healthful snack as an example of something healthy for “my body,” think of a healthful snack, write it down in that section of the chart, then prepare and eat that snack with your child. A big hug can be an example of something healthy for “my feelings.”





3.2

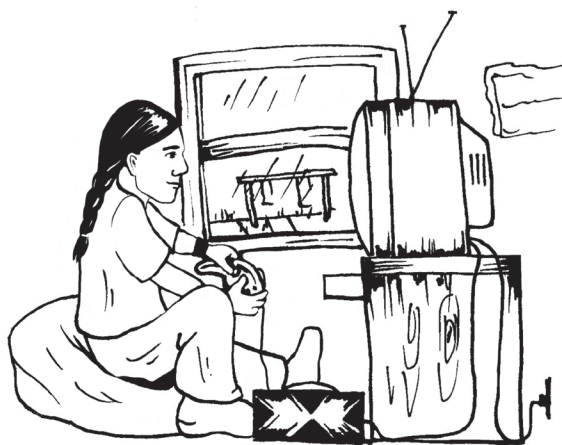




5.1

A Story about Milo Tatanka

Milo was a young boy who lived in the country with his family. This included himself, his mom and dad, four brothers, three sisters, his grandma and grandpa, and two uncles. Milo's youngest brother and sister always stayed in the house, watched TV, and played their video games all day. They also snacked all day, eating chips, soda, and candy.



Milo's family didn't own a car so they walked everywhere, to school, to the store, and to the post office to check the mail. The children always complained when they had to walk to the store, or anywhere.





5.1

Milo's family worked together to plant a big garden every spring. They all helped turn the soil over and made rows to plant the seeds.

It was Milo's job to walk to the river to haul water back for the garden every day. He carried two large buckets. On the way to the river, he enjoyed listening to the birds and watching butterflies. Milo walked early in the morning when the sun was just coming up to greet the day. It made him happy to work.



All of Milo's family helped care for the garden during the summer except his youngest brother and sister, who stayed in the house all day watching TV, playing games, and snacking on chips, soda, and candy.





5.1

Milo's older brothers and sisters picked berries from the trees when they were ripe. They liked eating them as a snack. The berries were sweet, plump, and juicy.



When the garden was ready to be harvested, all the family helped, except the younger ones, who were in the house. The vegetables would be dried and stored for the winter. Milo was happy working alongside his family, and happy they'd have vegetables for the winter.





5.2

Healthy Choices





5.3

Messages for Good Health

