

Respecting Authority and Obeying Laws

HEALTH GOAL

- I will respect authority and obey laws.

Laws that are regulated by people in positions of authority govern all societies. A **law** is a rule of conduct or action recognized to be binding. Laws are enforced by a controlling authority. **Authority** is the power and right to apply and enforce laws and rules. Laws usually represent the beliefs of a majority of people in a community, state, or nation. Every citizen has the responsibility to know and obey existing laws.



What You'll Learn

1. Explain how a person develops a moral code. (p. 665)
2. Explain why some teens challenge authority and break laws. (p. 666)
3. Discuss the legal consequences juvenile offenders may experience. (p. 667)
4. Identify ways juvenile offenders can change their behavior to show respect for authority and obey laws. (p. 668)

Why It's Important

The key to true freedom and happiness is found through obeying laws. When we disobey laws we are bound by the harsh consequences that follow.

Key Terms

- authority
- moral code
- conscience
- role conformity
- social reciprocity
- delinquent behavior
- status offenses
- probation
- juvenile detention
- diversion

What Would You Do?

Writing About Developing a Moral Code Suppose that you have learned that some of your friends are involved in a bike stealing ring in your community. You do not want to tell on them but you know that their actions are wrong. You want to do the right thing. Read the information about developing a moral code on page 665, then write an entry in your health journal about what you would do if you were in this situation.



Health TEKS covered by Lesson 64: 2B, 5D, 7E, 7F, 8A, 13D, 15A, 15C, 16A

Moral Codes



Laws are designed to protect the rights of people in a community, state, or nation. Many laws protect the health and safety of people. They may prevent violence and injury. You would think that everyone would want to obey laws. However, people have their own moral codes. A **moral code** is a personal set of rules that a person uses to control his or her behavior. People develop a moral code in three stages.

How to Develop a Moral Code

Stage 1: Will I get into trouble? The first stage of moral development occurs in early childhood. During childhood, people learn what is right and wrong based upon whether they will be rewarded or punished for their actions. Children do not completely understand the reasons why their parents, guardian, and other caregivers punish or reward certain actions, yet they want to please them. They also want to avoid punishment. If they can do something and not be punished for it, they will, even if it is wrong.

Between ages five and seven, people begin to develop a conscience. A **conscience** is a sense of right and wrong that prompts responsible behavior and causes feelings of guilt following wrong behavior. The moral code learned early in life forms the basis of people's conscience.

Stage 2: What will people think of me if I behave this way? People reach the second stage of moral development between ages 10 and 13. This stage is referred to as **role conformity**. Role conformity is the desire to behave in

ways that gain the approval of others. They are most concerned with behaving in ways that are expected by people with whom they feel close. Approval of peers begins to influence behavior. At this age, people understand which behaviors are expected, which behaviors are right, and which behaviors are wrong.

Stage 3: Is my behavior responsible? During the third stage of moral development, people commit to a set of principles that they use to guide their behavior. If you question whether a behavior is right or wrong, refer to the Responsible Decision-Making Model on page 61.

Having respect for the rights of others is a quality that helps prevent injury and violence. It is important to develop the ability to care how others feel when treated in certain ways and to care about other people. **Social reciprocity** is the act of people treating others as they wish to be treated. Some people may live by a moral code that says, "I will treat others as I expect to be treated."

Make the Connection

Responsible Decision Making For more information on responsible decision making, see page 61 in Lesson 6.



Reasons for Rebellion



Teens who have a solid moral code respect authority and obey laws. Some teens challenge authority and break laws. Why might they put themselves and others at risk for injury? Why might they be involved in actions that promote violence?

Why Some Teens Challenge Authority and Break Laws

Consider the stages of moral development. In the first stage, right and wrong are learned based upon behaviors that are rewarded or punished. If parents, guardians, and other caregivers have clear expectations, a person has guidelines for his or her behavior. If they always follow through and consistently punish wrong behavior, a person learns that wrong behavior has negative consequences.

Unclear expectations Some teens were raised in homes where expectations were not clear. Their parents, guardian, or other caregivers may not have followed through and consistently punished wrong behavior. Or, they may have been punished in inappropriate ways, such as with physical abuse. As a result, they did not develop a conscience and do not feel obligated to do what is right. When they behave in wrong ways, they do not feel guilty. These teens need mentors to help them examine the difference between right and wrong behaviors. A **mentor** is a responsible person who guides

another person. When troubled teens have a mentor, they have someone to whom they are accountable.

Peer influences In the second stage of moral development, people are motivated to behave in ways that gain approval. Peer groups have a tremendous influence during this stage. If members of a person's peer group respect authority and obey laws, that person is likely to behave in the same way. However, some teens hang out with peers who get into trouble. Therefore, these teens are likely to behave the same way. To change their behavior, teens must break away from peers who behave in wrong ways.

Lacking principles People develop a set of principles to guide their behavior in the third stage of moral development. They treat others as they wish to be treated. Some teens put their rights first. They do not consider the effects of their actions on others. Teens who have no principles to guide their behavior get themselves into trouble. They may become juvenile offenders.

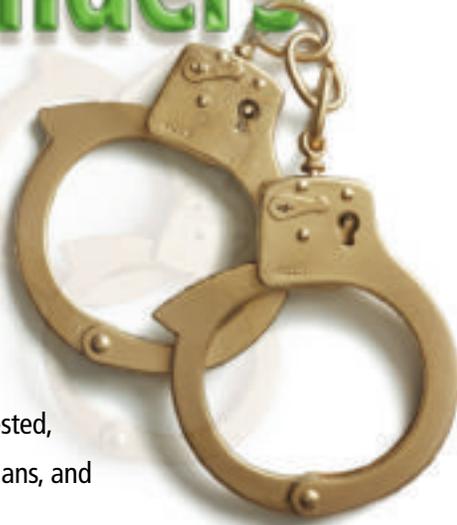
Make the Connection

Mentors For more information on mentors, see page 575 in Lesson 54.

Mini-Review

1. How can a mentor help a troubled teen?
2. How do peers influence a teen's behavior?

Juvenile Offenders



A minor who commits a criminal act is a **juvenile offender**. Juvenile offenders are involved in delinquent behavior. **Delinquent behavior** is an illegal action committed by a juvenile, including serious crimes, such as homicide, rape, drug trafficking, prostitution, robbery, assault, burglary, auto theft, and arson. Delinquent behavior also includes status offenses. **Status offenses** are types of behavior for which an adult would not be arrested, such as truancy, alcohol use, running away, defying parents or guardians, and breaking curfew.

What to Know About Juvenile Offenders

Many juvenile offenders who are arrested, stop committing crimes and do not become repeat offenders. They fear being arrested and put on probation, or sentenced to serve time in a correctional facility. Other juvenile offenders mature and change their behavior.

Some juvenile offenders respond favorably to rehabilitation. **Rehabilitation** of juvenile offenders is the process of helping juvenile offenders change wrong behaviors into responsible behaviors. Juvenile offenders may experience the following consequences.

Being placed on probation A sentence in which an offender remains in the community under the supervision of a probation officer for a specific period of time is **probation**. Probation is the most common sentence that judges use for juvenile offenders. During probation, judges set restrictions and conditions for juvenile offenders. For example, juvenile offenders may be ordered to obey laws, obey parents or

a guardian, attend school, avoid contact with other juvenile offenders, take drug tests, and make some form of restitution. **Restitution** is making up for what has been taken, damaged, hurt, or done. It might involve making a payment, returning stolen property, or performing community service.

Spending time in a correctional facility Juvenile offenders who engage in illegal behavior or violate the terms of their probation may be sent to a correctional facility. These include detention centers, training schools, ranches, forestry camps, farms, halfway houses, and group homes.

Juvenile detention is the temporary physical restriction of juveniles in special facilities until the outcome of their legal case is decided. Detention centers are secure custody facilities where juvenile offenders are kept. Detention centers also are known as juvenile halls. Juvenile offenders are held in detention centers for a period of several hours to 90 days.

Did You Know?

Doing Time One out of every 32 adults—or 6.6 million Americans—was in prison, on parole, or on probation at the end of 2001. Also, 57 percent of prison inmates were under the age of 35 in 2001.





▲ Juvenile offenders are sometimes sentenced to spend time in correctional facilities.

They are held for several reasons—they may be a threat to others, their home environment may be unacceptable, or they may need physical or mental health treatment.

Spending time in prison A building, usually with cells, where convicted criminals stay is a **prison**. Some people feel that juvenile offenders should be treated as adults and kept in prison. These people are concerned about juvenile offenders who repeat crimes. Many states have changed their laws so that teens as young as 14 years old can be tried as adults for any crime. People who are opposed to trying juvenile offenders as adults feel that the results would be negative. They are afraid juvenile offenders will spend time in prison without changing their behavior. They are concerned about the influence adult criminals might have on juvenile offenders. They also are concerned that juvenile offenders will be

Mini-Review

1. What is restitution?
2. Name possible restrictions placed on juvenile offenders while on probation.

How Teens Who Have Been Juvenile Offenders Can Change Their Behavior

- Improve difficult family relationships or find a supportive substitute family.
- Spend time with a mentor.
- Ask trusted adults for feedback on their behavior.
- Work to improve self-respect.
- Choose friends who obey laws.
- Make restitution for wrong actions.
- Become involved in school activities.
- Develop job-related skills.
- Volunteer in the community.
- Attend a support group.
- Avoid alcohol and other drugs.

sexually and physically abused by adult criminals while they are in prison.

Experiencing a diversion approach

An approach to rehabilitation that involves sending juvenile offenders somewhere to learn how to obey laws is called a **diversion**. Juvenile offenders may be sent to social agencies, child welfare departments, mental health agencies, substance abuse clinics, shoplifters' programs, crisis intervention programs, and runaway shelters. Youth service bureaus offer services, such as drop-in centers, school outreach programs, and crisis intervention programs.

Going to boot camp A camp that uses rigorous drills, hard physical training, and structure to teach discipline and obedience is a **boot camp**. At boot camp, juvenile offenders live under very strict rules. They may have to wake up at 5 a.m. and go to bed at 9 p.m. They may not be allowed to watch television, listen to the radio, or swear. Most boot camps include education and therapy efforts. Juvenile offenders often end up in boot camp in exchange for reduced sentences.

Being paroled and being involved in

aftercare A conditional release from a sentence in a correctional facility is called **parole**. Support and supervised services that juvenile offenders receive when they are released to live and interact in the community is **aftercare**. Once paroled, juvenile offenders are assigned an aftercare officer who makes certain they follow the conditions of parole and stay out of trouble. Juvenile offenders who do not follow the conditions of their parole are returned to correctional facilities.

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juvenile offender
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role conformity
social reciprocity
status offenses

Key Terms Review

Complete these fill-in-the-blank statements with the lesson Key Terms on the left. Do not write in this book.

1. A _____ is a set of rules a person uses to control behavior.
2. A _____ is a sense of right or wrong that prompts responsible behavior and causes feelings of guilt following wrong behavior.
3. _____ is the desire to behave in ways that other people approve of.
4. _____ is the act of people treating others as they themselves wish to be treated.
5. _____ is an illegal action committed by a juvenile.
6. _____ is the power and right to apply laws and rules.
7. _____ is a sentence in which an offender remains in the community under the supervision of a probation officer for a specific period of time.
8. _____ are types of behavior for which an adult would not be arrested, such as truancy, alcohol use, running away, defying parents or guardians, and breaking curfew.
9. _____ is the temporary physical restriction of juveniles in special facilities until the outcome of their legal case is decided.
10. _____ is an approach to rehabilitation that involves sending juvenile offenders somewhere to learn how to obey laws.

Recalling the Facts

11. List examples of status offenses for which juvenile offenders can be arrested.
12. When do people begin to develop a conscience?
13. Name correctional facilities where juvenile offenders might be sent.
14. Analyze the influence of legal consequences on potential juvenile offenders.
15. Why does the first stage of moral development occur in early childhood?
16. When do people reach the stage of role conformity?
17. Identify ways that teens who have been juvenile offenders can change their behavior.
18. Describe the purpose of a boot camp.

Critical Thinking

19. Describe the stages a person goes through to develop a moral code.
20. Explain why some teens may challenge authority and break laws.
21. Describe the diversion approach to rehabilitation.
22. Discuss possible short- and long-range consequences of being a juvenile offender.

Activities

Responsible Decision Making

27. **Write** You are with two friends at a bowling alley. Your friends suggest that you all steal a pair of bowling shoes. Write a response to this situation. Refer to the Responsible Decision-Making Model on page 61 for help.

Real-Life Applications

23. How do you feel when you do something wrong? Why?
24. Do you feel you have reached Stage 3 in your moral development?
25. How do you exhibit social reciprocity?
26. Discuss how consistent rewards and punishments influence your behavior.

Sharpen Your Life Skills

28. **Analyze Influences on Health** Locate an article about a person who has committed a violent crime. Do they show remorse for their actions? What form of restitution would be appropriate? Write a response to the article in your journal.

