

# Communication and Decision Making

Grades 9-12, Lesson 14

## Summary

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Students review communication skills covered in previous lessons, and read a list of gist-based statements about sexual health derived from material covered throughout the FLASH curriculum. Students then work individually, in small groups, and finally as a whole class to use their communication skills and gist-based statements to make and communicate sexual health-related decisions. They express support for their peers' effective use of communication skills, reinforcing healthy norms and increasing self-efficacy.

## Student Learning Objectives

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The student will be able to ...

1. Demonstrate effective communication skills to promote sexual health and healthy relationships.
2. Choose a healthy alternative when making a sexual health-related decision.
3. Apply a decision-making model to various situations relating to sexual health.

## Lesson Timing

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Warm up	Bell work + 2 minutes
Introduce lesson	2 minutes
Introduce communication and refusal skills	7 minutes
Communication skills activity	35 minutes
Summarize	2 minutes
Assign homework	
Exit ticket	2 minutes
Total	50 minutes

## **FLASH Key Concepts**

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**This lesson uses Bottom Line statements, which are derived from FLASH Key Concepts.**

- You can't tell if someone has HIV or other STDs by looking.
- The only way to know if you have HIV or another STD is to get tested.
- It's important to always use a condom when you have vaginal or anal sex.
- It's important to have permission or agreement before having sex with someone
- It's important to only have sex with people who are sober and awake, so they can give consent to have sex
- In healthy relationships, people treat their partners with respect and fairness.
- It's important to respect someone else's decision to choose abstinence.
- It's important for both people in a relationship to use birth control if they are having vaginal sex but aren't ready for a pregnancy.
- Both partners need to be responsible for birth control and STD protection if they are having vaginal or anal sex.

**Standards**

**National Health Education Standards (SHECAT)**

Standard 4	Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.
SH4.12.1	Demonstrate effective communication skills to promote sexual health and healthy relationships.
SH4.12.3	Demonstrate effective peer resistance, negotiation, and collaboration skills to avoid engaging in sexual risk behaviors.
SH4.12.4	Demonstrate effective communication strategies to prevent, manage, or resolve interpersonal conflicts.
Standard 5	Students will demonstrate the ability to use decision-making skills to enhance health.
SH5.12.5	Generate alternatives when making a decision related to relationships or sexual health.
SH5.12.7	Choose a healthy alternative when making a sexual health-related decision.
SH5.12.8	Evaluate the effectiveness of sexual health-related decisions.
Standard 7	Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and avoid or reduce health risks.
SH7.12.3	Demonstrate practices and behaviors to improve the sexual health of oneself and others.
Standard 8	Students will demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health.
SH8.12.2	Persuade and support others to avoid or reduce risky sexual behaviors
SH8.12.3	Persuade and support others to make positive and healthy choices about relationships.
SH8.12.6	Adapt sexual health messages and communication techniques for reach a specific target audience.

**National Sexuality Education Standards**

PD.12.DM.1	Apply a decision- making model to various situations relating to sexual health.
PR .12.IC.1	Demonstrate ways to communicate decisions about whether or when to engage in sexual behaviors.
PR .12.DM.1	Apply a decision-making model to choices about contraception, including abstinence and condoms.
SH.12.IC.1	Demonstrate skills to communicate with a partner about STD and HIV prevention and testing.
SH.12.DM.1	Apply a decision-making model to choices about safer sex practices, including abstinence and condoms.

## **Rationale**

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The communication and decision making lesson brings together the communication and refusal skills that have been covered in previous FLASH lessons and applies them to important sexual health-related situations, such as deciding to remain abstinent, using condoms and birth control, and preventing sexual violence. This lesson also incorporates new research on adolescent decision making, which shows that rather than teaching a decision-making model that stresses weighing risks and benefits, a more effective strategy is to build young people's ability to utilize "gist-based" decision making.

Gist-based decision making relies on understanding the bottom line of a situation and using that information to make decisions. It can be especially useful for teens in situations where the benefits, such as sexual pleasure or pleasing a partner, can seem high. This lesson provides students with "bottom-line" statements that they can apply to the hypothetical situations in this lesson, as well as to situations they may face in their own lives. Strong communication and refusal skills and a solid understanding of the bottom line are necessary if young people are to prevent pregnancy, STDs and sexual violence. This lesson powerfully combines these elements in order to shift peer norms and to improve individual student's self-efficacy with regard to healthy decision making.<sup>1 2 3</sup>

## **Materials Needed**

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### **Student Materials**

- *Communication and Refusal Skills*
- *The Bottom Line*
- *Real-Life Situations*
- *Individual Homework: Helping a Friend*
- *Family Homework: Talking About Communication and Decision Making*, available in multiple languages on the FLASH website
- *Lesson 14 Exit Ticket*

### **Classroom Materials**

- *Lesson 14 Warm Up*
- *Real-Life Situations Example Visual*

## **Teacher Preparation**

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Prepare *Real-Life Situations Example Visual* for document camera or projector.

## Activities

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### 1. Warm up

Display warm up as bell work

**Question:** Choose one of these statements and write 2 or 3 sentences about how you think teen dating relationships would be different if ALL teens believed the statement you chose.

- It's important to always use a condom when you have vaginal or anal sex.
- It's important to respect someone else's decision to choose abstinence.
- It's important for both people in a relationship to use birth control if they are having vaginal sex but aren't ready for a pregnancy.
- It is important to have permission or agreement before having sex with someone.

### 2. Introduce lesson

Remind students of previous lessons in which communication and refusal skills were covered (the *Healthy Relationships* lesson and the *Abstinence* lesson). Point out that they have also learned a lot of important information in other FLASH lessons. Tell students that they will be putting all these skills and information together today, in this lesson that focuses on communication and decision making.

*We have learned a lot during our sexual health unit about how people can keep themselves healthy and safe. One of the important ways people do this is by communicating what they want and need to their partners. The lesson on healthy relationships covered effective communication tips, and we watched a roleplay in which some of your peers worked hard to use those effective communication tips. In the lesson on abstinence we learned how people can clearly say NO to something they don't want.*

*Throughout all the lessons we've learned important facts that can help people make healthy decisions—things such as how safe birth control is, and the importance of using condoms when people have vaginal or anal sex. Today, we'll have a chance to put all of these skills together and apply them to some real-life situations people might find themselves in.*

### 3. Introduce bottom lines, communication skills and refusal skills

Distribute the *Bottom Line* handout. Explain that these statements are the "bottom line" of what students have learned during FLASH. For example, the condom lesson taught condom use skills, students brainstormed benefits, etc. But, the bottom line is that "It's important to always use a condom when you have vaginal or anal sex." See the script for more explanation of a "bottom-line" statement.

Distribute the *Communication and Refusal Skills* handout. Have students take turns reading the points out loud. Check for understanding. Let them know they will be using both of these handouts to respond to some real-life situations.

*To help us when we look at the real-life scenarios, I'm going to give you two handouts. The first one is called the Bottom Line. It has a list of statements that might help people when they are making decisions. These are all the things we have already covered in the FLASH*

*lessons, but it is boiled down here to the bottom line. There's a little more explanation about what a bottom-line statement is on the top of the handout. Can I have a volunteer read that paragraph aloud, and another volunteer read the statements?*

Call on volunteers to read the information.

*Great. I think you can see how helpful it can be to know the bottom line of a situation when you are trying to make an important decision.*

*The second handout is titled Communication and Refusal Skills. You may recognize these communication tips from the Healthy Relationships lesson and the refusal skills from the Abstinence lesson. This handout also gives you some example statements for each of the bullets. Could I have a volunteer read the communication tips, and another volunteer read the refusal skills?*

Call on volunteers to read the information.

*Great. These tips and skills, along with the bottom-line statements, are really going to help you as you work through some real-life situations in which teens have to make some very important decisions.*

#### **4. Conduct communication skills activity**

Show the *Real-Life Situations Example Visual* and review the example with students. Point out that when students work on their responses, they can choose whichever bottom-line statement they want from the 3 provided. In this example, "It's important to always use a condom when you have vaginal or anal sex" was chosen to guide the answer. The example response uses 3 tips from the *Communication and Refusal Skills* handout. Read through everything on the example visual, checking for student comprehension of the assignment. This should take 5 minutes.

Distribute the *Real-Life Situations* worksheet, and have students work on their own to respond to the first 3 situations on the worksheet. Explain that they should choose a bottom-line statement from those provided and write a 2- to 3-sentence response. Remind them that they will be reading their responses out loud, and that responses should use either the refusal skills or the communication tips, and should be respectful and non-judgmental. After they've written their individual responses, students will form groups of 3 and read their answers to each other.

Allow 5 minutes for individual work. Then put students into small groups of 3. Explain that students will take turns reading their responses. While each student reads his or her responses, the other group members are listening for the refusal skills and communication tips listed on the handout. Then each listener compliments the reader on one or more skills that were used well. For example, "I like how you said NO so clearly," or "You did a good job stating your strengths." Allow 5 minutes for the small-group work.

After groups have shared all of their responses, have students work individually again to answer the final 3 situations. Then have them repeat the small-group debrief process in different groups.

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After both rounds of small-group work are finished, lead a large-group debrief for approximately 10 minutes. Have volunteers share responses they thought were particularly strong, as well as any strengths of their peers' answers they would like to compliment. The purpose of the large-group sharing is to shift peer norms regarding healthy communication and refusal, and to improve individual student's self-efficacy in using these skills.

### 5. Summarize activity and unit

Thank students for their thoughtful comments and hard work. Remind them that many people will find themselves in situations like the ones they just discussed, and it's helpful to be prepared with good communication skills and a strong understanding of the bottom line so they can make the best decisions possible.

Remind them of the many subjects they have covered over the course of FLASH, including birth control methods, how to use a condom, STD testing, sexual orientation and gender identity, refusal and communication skills, preventing sexual violence, and healthy relationships. Point out how this knowledge and these skills prepare them for situations they may be facing now as well as in the future.

*I want to thank you all for your thoughtful comments and your hard work, today and throughout our FLASH unit. Many people will find themselves in situations like the ones we just discussed. In situations like these it's helpful to be prepared with good communication skills and a strong understanding of the bottom line so you can make the best decisions possible to keep yourselves and your partners healthy.*

*We've covered many topics over the course of our FLASH unit, including birth control methods, how to use a condom, STD testing, sexual orientation and gender identity, refusal and communication skills, preventing sexual violence, and healthy relationships. All of the knowledge and skills you have gained throughout these lessons will help prepare you for situations you may be facing now or that you will face in the future. I am so glad we've been able to spend this time together learning this material, and I feel confident in your ability to go forward and make healthy decisions.*

### 6. Assign homework

Allow students to choose between the individual or family homework and explain the assignments as needed.

*Individual Homework: Helping a Friend*

*Family Homework: Talking About Communication and Decision Making, available in multiple languages on the FLASH website*

### 7. Exit ticket

Hand out the *Lesson 14 Exit Ticket*.

**Question:** Which of the following communication skills would be easiest for you to use when communicating with a dating partner? Choose one and write 1 or 2 sentences explaining why.

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1. Use I-statements ("I think ...", "I want ...")
2. Express opinions ("I believe ...")
3. State your strengths and abilities ("I can ...")
4. Say NO firmly but respectfully.
5. Ask for what you want.

**Answers:** Any explanation provided is acceptable.

## Warm Up

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Choose one of these statements and write 2 or 3 sentences about how you think teen dating relationships would be different if ALL teens believed the statement you chose.

**It's important to always use a condom when you have vaginal or anal sex.**

**It's important to respect someone else's decision to choose abstinence.**

**It's important for both people in a relationship to use birth control if they are having vaginal sex with each other but aren't ready for a pregnancy.**

**It's important to have permission or agreement before having sex with someone.**

# Communication and Refusal Skills

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## Communication Tips

**Use I-statements ("I think ...", "I want ...")**

- I only want to have sex with a condom.
- I won't have sex with someone who has been drinking.

**Express opinions ("I believe ...")**

- I believe people shouldn't have sex without protecting themselves.
- I believe people shouldn't have sex unless they are married.

**State your strengths and abilities ("I can ...")**

- I can buy condoms so we have them when we need them.
- I can wait to have sex until I am ready.

**Say NO firmly but respectfully.**

- No, I won't have sex without a condom.
- No, I don't want to go to your car.

**Ask for what you want.**

- I want to wait to have sex until we've been together longer.
- I want to have sex, but only if we use a condom.

**Express positive feelings and/or appreciation.**

- I love you and I'm glad we're together.
- I appreciate how you listen to me and take my feelings seriously.

## Refusal Skills

**Say NO and clearly state what you don't want to do.**

- No, I don't want to have sex yet.
- No, I don't want to do that.

**Explain why.**

- I'm worried about getting you pregnant.
- I don't have sex with people I just met.

**Suggest an alternative.**

- We can go to the store up the street and buy some condoms.
- I don't want to go upstairs, but we can keep talking here with everyone else.

**Leave if you need or want to.**

- My mom is calling, I have to go home.
- We are done talking about this. I am leaving.

# The Bottom Line

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The “bottom line” is the most important thing to consider in a situation. It is also called “the heart of the matter,” the essential point, or the core issue. The bottom line is the thing that helps people make good decisions quickly. Instead of debating the pros and cons of a situation, if you know the bottom line, you can quickly decide what you need to do.

Understanding the bottom line is especially helpful for making decisions when emotions are strong or the stakes are high, such as in sexual situations. The following are some “bottom lines” that come from information covered in FLASH.

- You can't tell if someone has HIV or other STDs by looking.
- The only way to know if you have HIV or another STD is to get tested.
- It's important to always use a condom when you have vaginal or anal sex.
- It's important to have permission or agreement before having sex with someone.
- It's important to only have sex with people who are sober and awake, so they can give consent to have sex.
- In healthy relationships, people treat their partners with respect and fairness.
- It's important to respect someone else's decision to choose abstinence.
- It's important for both people in a relationship to use birth control if they are having vaginal sex with each other but aren't ready for a pregnancy.
- Both partners need to be responsible for birth control and STD protection if they are having vaginal or anal sex.

Visual

## Real-Life Situations Example

**Instructions:** Choose the bottom line statement you think should guide the response. Then write a 2- to -3-sentence response using your *Communication and Refusal Skills* handout.

**John wants to use condoms but his partner doesn't. What bottom-line statement could help John figure out what to say to his partner?**

- ☒ It's important to always use a condom when you have vaginal or anal sex.
- ☐ In healthy relationships, people treat their partners with respect and fairness.
- ☐ You can't tell if someone has HIV or other STDs by looking at them.

Use communication tips or refusal skills from your handout to write what John should say to his partner.

*"I believe it's very important to use condoms. I really do want to have sex with you, but only if we use a condom. I appreciate how you always listen to me and take my feelings seriously, and I hope you will this time too."*

**Tips from the Communication and Refusal Skills handout John used:**

- Expressed opinions ("I believe ...")
  - *I believe it's very important to use condoms*
- Asked for what he wanted
  - *I really do want to have sex with you, but only if we use a condom.*
- Expressed positive feelings and/or appreciation.
  - *I appreciate how you always listen to me and take my feelings seriously, and I hope you will this time too.*

## Real-Life Situations

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**Instructions:** Choose the bottom line statement you think should guide the response. Then write a 2- or 3-sentence response using your *Communication and Refusal Skills* handout.

1. Jorge and Luis want to stay abstinent, but things have been getting heated. It seems like they are headed toward sex. Jorge wants to tell Luis they should slow down. What bottom-line statement could help Jorge figure out what to say to Luis?

- ☐ It's important to respect someone else's decision to choose abstinence.
- ☐ In healthy relationships, people treat their partners with respect and fairness.
- ☐ It's important to have permission or agreement before having sex with someone.

Use communication tips or refusal skills from your handout to write what Jorge should say to Luis.

2. Jocelyn wants to get an IUD. Her boyfriend Chris doesn't know much about birth control, and thinks they should just keep using condoms. What bottom line statement could help Jocelyn figure out what to say to Chris?

- ☐ In healthy relationships, people treat their partners with respect and fairness.
- ☐ Both partners need to be responsible for birth control and STD protection if they are having vaginal or anal sex.
- ☐ It's important for both people in a relationship to use birth control if they are having vaginal sex with each other but aren't ready for a pregnancy.

Use communication tips or refusal skills from your handout to write what Jocelyn should say to Chris.

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3. Dominic has been wanting to hook up with Sierra for a while. They are at a party together. Sierra is drunk and Dominic is not. Dominic's friends keep telling him he should take his chance and try to have sex with her. Dominic doesn't think that's right. What bottom-line statement could help Dominic figure out what to say to his friends?

- ☐ It is important to only have sex with people who are sober and awake, so they can consent to have sex.
- ☐ It's important to have permission or agreement before having sex with someone.
- ☐ In healthy relationships, people treat their partners with respect and fairness.

Use communication tips or refusal skills from your handout to write what Dominic should say to his friends.

4. Deon thinks he and his new girlfriend Mariah should go to the clinic and get STD tests before they start having sex. What bottom-line statement could help Deon figure out what to say to Mariah?

- ☐ You can't tell if someone has HIV or other STDs by looking.
- ☐ The only way to know if you have HIV or another STD is to get tested.
- ☐ In healthy relationships, people treat their partners with respect and fairness.

Use communication tips or refusal skills from your handout to write what Deon should say to Mariah.

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5. Aiden is concerned about the way his friend Michael is treating his girlfriend. Michael is always telling his girlfriend what to do and putting her down in front of other people, and he told Aiden that he never uses condoms when he and his girlfriend have sex. What bottom line statement could help Aiden figure out what to say to Michael?

- ☐ In healthy relationships, people treat their partners with respect and fairness.
- ☐ It's important for both partners to be responsible for birth control and STD protection if they are having vaginal or anal sex.
- ☐ It's important for both people in a relationship to use birth control if they are having vaginal sex with each other but aren't ready for a pregnancy.

Use communication tips or refusal skills from your handout to write what Aiden should say to Michael.

6. Aliyah and Malik are in a new relationship. Aliyah wants to have sex, but Malik wants to wait. What bottom-line statement could help Malik figure out what to say to Aliyah?

- ☐ It's important to respect someone else's decision to choose abstinence.
- ☐ It is important to have permission or agreement before having sex with someone.
- ☐ In healthy relationships, people treat their partners with respect and fairness.

Use communication tips or refusal skills from your handout to write what Malik should say to Aliyah.

# Individual Homework: Helping a Friend

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

A friend needs some advice about their relationship; their note to you is provided below. Be sure to mention at least one bottom-line statement and use the communication tips or refusal skills from your handout in your response.

Hey! I think I need some advice. You know Sofia and I have been going out for a while. I was really hoping she would want to have sex by now, but I can't tell if she does or not. She hasn't said anything, and I don't really know what to do. Should I just make a move on her? I feel like I should talk to her, but I don't even know what I would say. I know you are good at this kind of thing. I really need some help!

# Family Homework: Talking about Communication & Decision Making

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All Family Homework is optional. Students may complete Individual Homework instead.

**Purpose:** Family Homework is a chance to share your beliefs about sexuality and relationships, and the beliefs of your family, culture or religion.

**Directions:** Student will do the homework with a family member or trusted adult who is like family. Find a quiet place where the two of you can talk privately for 5-10 minutes. Please follow these guidelines:

- It is okay for either of you to skip a question.
- What you discuss will not be shared with anyone else, unless you give one another permission to share it.
- Take turns asking questions. When it is your turn to listen, try to understand the other person's response.

**Ask the student:** What are your life goals at this time? Career? Family? Travel? What would a pregnancy or STD do to change those goals?

**Ask the adult:** How do you communicate with your boss at work when you want or need something? Can you think of an example? How would you communicate with your partner (past, present or future) when you wanted or needed something? Can you give an example?



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## Family Homework Confirmation Slip: Talking about Communication & Decision Making

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Due: \_\_\_\_\_

We have completed the family homework.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of family member or trusted adult

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of student

# Exit Ticket

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Which of the following communication skills would be easiest for you to use when communicating with a dating partner? Choose one and write 1 or 2 sentences explaining why.

1. Use I-statements ("I think ...", "I want ...")
2. Express opinions ("I believe ...")
3. State your strengths and abilities ("I can ...")
4. Say NO firmly but respectfully.
5. Ask for what you want.

## **Lesson 14: Assessment Questions**

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1. Linda wants to wait to have sex until she has graduated from high school. Jun, her boyfriend, thinks that if they use protection, it would be fine to have sex. Linda doesn't want to worry at all about pregnancy and STDs, and she doesn't feel ready to have sex yet. Help her communicate her decision to Jun.

Start by choosing a bottom-line statement from your handout to guide your answer, then use 2 or 3 communication tips or refusal skills to write what Linda should say to Jun.

## Lesson 14: Assessment Key and Standards Alignment

Question	Answer	Standard
<p>1. Linda wants to wait to have sex until she has graduated from high school. Jun, her boyfriend, thinks that if they use protection, it would be fine to have sex. Linda doesn't want to worry at all about pregnancy and STDs, and she doesn't feel ready to have sex yet. Help her communicate her decision to Jun.</p> <p>Start by choosing a bottom-line statement from your handout to guide your answer, then use 2 or 3 communication tips or refusal skills to write what Linda should say to Jun.</p>	<p>Correct answers will identify a bottom-line statement from the handout, and will use 2 or 3 communication tips or refusal skills from the handout.</p>	<p>NSES: PD.12.DM.1 PR.12.IC.1 PR.12.DM.1 SH.12.IC.1 SH.12.DM.1</p> <p>NHES: SH4.12.1 SH4.12.3</p>
<b>Individual Homework</b>	<p>Correct answers will identify a bottom line statement from the handout, and will use 2 or 3 communication tips or refusal skills from the handout to persuade the friend to communicate with his partner.</p>	<p>NHES: SH8.12.2 SH8.12.3 SH8.12.6</p>
<p><b>Exit Ticket:</b> Which of the following communication skills would be easiest for you to use when communicating with a dating partner? Choose one and write 1 or 2 sentences explaining why.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use I-statements ("I think ...", "I want ...")</li> <li>2. Express opinions ("I believe ...")</li> <li>3. State your strengths and abilities ("I can ...")</li> <li>4. Say NO firmly but respectfully.</li> <li>5. Ask for what you want.</li> </ol>	<p>Any explanation provided is acceptable.</p>	

## References

<sup>1</sup> Reyna, V.F., & Adam, M.B. (2003). Fuzzy-trace theory, risk communication, and product labeling in sexually transmitted diseases. *Risk Analysis*, 23, 325–342.

<sup>2</sup> Reyna, V.F., Adam, M.B., Poirier, K., LeCroy, C. W., & Brainerd, C. J. (2005). Risky decision-making in childhood and adolescence: A fuzzy-trace theory approach. In J. Jacobs and P. Klacynski (Eds.), *The development of judgment and decision-making in children and adolescents* (pp. 77–106). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

<sup>3</sup> Reyna, V.F., & Brainerd, C.J. (1991). Fuzzy-trace theory and framing effects in choice: Gist extraction, truncation, and conversion. *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*, 4, 249–262.