

Chapter 5

Values Education in Health

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ABSTRACT

Individual and societal values, which are the reasons behind decisions and choices, guide thoughts and behaviors. Values also shape an individual's actions regarding their health, contributing to health improvement. Our values play a crucial role in enhancing the quality of life, encompassing physical, social, environmental, emotional, and mental well-being. The periods of elementary school, childhood, and adolescence are stages where health risks can pose threats. During this time, children may be influenced by new social relationships and their environment, which can lead to undesired changes in existing values. Health-based values education provides school-aged children with opportunities to develop knowledge and skills for healthy growth and disease prevention. This education conveys health-related values to children, encouraging them to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Furthermore, values education, commencing from an early age and progressing gradually, can play a protective role against risks that may arise during adolescence.

INTRODUCTION

Individuals differentiate themselves from one another not only through their physical appearance but also through their beliefs, thoughts, and actions. Values are crucial in shaping our interactions with the social environment and influencing our behaviors. They guide our attitudes and actions, helping us determine

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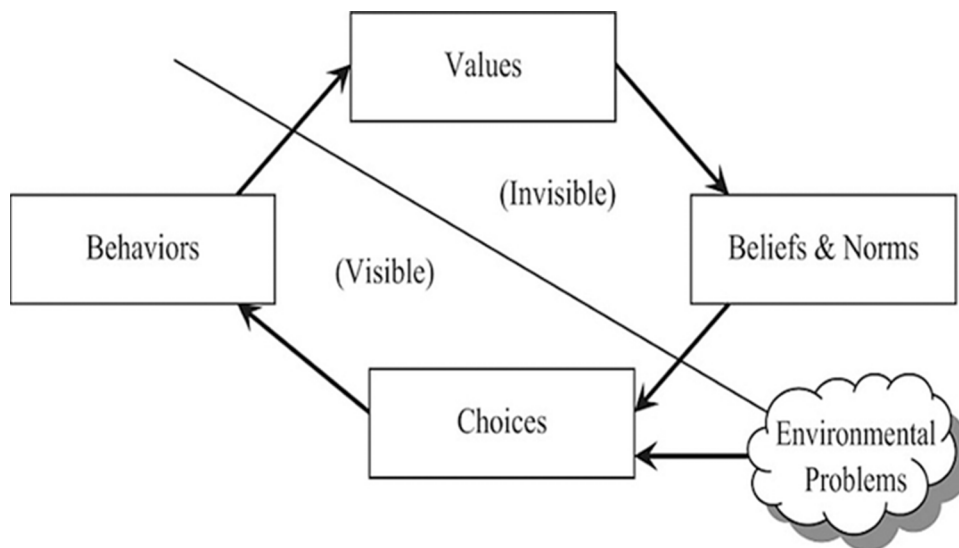
what is right and good. Our values significantly determine how we communicate in our relationships with society (Mintz, 2018). As a result, values and the core beliefs that influence our behaviors emerge as the most important factors guiding our attitudes.

Values also shape our preferences, habits, and attitudes related to health, thus closely influencing our health behaviors. Individuals who value health may prioritize their well-being by engaging in regular physical activity, adopting balanced eating habits, and sharing health-related information and resources with others. If a person's values are based on virtues such as prioritizing health, helping others, and sharing, they will likely be inclined to assist in health emergencies or when others face health problems. Conversely, if an individual's values focus on individual success and competition rather than health, they may adopt a competitive approach to their health behaviors. Such individuals may focus on optimizing their health and compete by setting health-related goals. They may adopt a competitive attitude while taking steps related to their health and try to succeed in sports or exercise (Cass et al., 2020). Individuals' health behaviors are shaped by decisions and actions based on their values.

The cultural patterns of society influence values and can evolve, develop, and be reinforced over time within the prevailing environment (Ratnawat, 2018). The cultural patterns of society have a significant impact on individuals' attitudes, beliefs, preferences, and values. The visible aspect of this relationship is reflected in individuals' choices and behaviors. However, individuals' internalized values, beliefs, and norms influence the formation of these behaviors and preferences. Bertsch (2009) suggests that attitudes and behaviors resulting from cultural variances essentially manifest internalized values in the context of addressing problems. Consequently, values themselves are not directly observable; instead, their significance is derived from the choices and actions of individuals (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Culture's cycle

Source: Bertsch (2009)



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