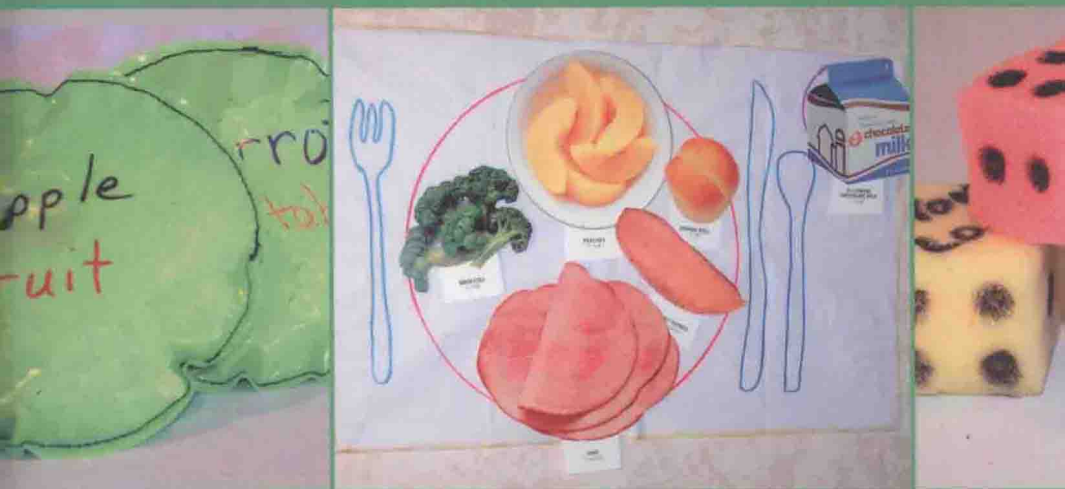


# Innovative Tools for Health Education

**Making Inexpensive Props,  
Visuals, and Manipulatives**



**Marilyn Grechus**

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Making Inexpensive Props,  
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Marilyn Grechus, PhD

Tools for Health Education

健康教育的创新方法



Human Kinetics

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# PREFACE

We've all heard these deflating words: "Sorry. We can't afford that right now." Yet school districts expect teachers to provide a top-notch education to all students. Quite a dilemma—and one that will continue in most schools. There is never enough money, especially for the health and physical education curriculum. But such predicaments often present an opportunity for creativity. This is especially true when creating teaching materials for the health classroom. A little thought and some guidance from this book will provide the teaching tools you need in order to make an impact on students. What's more, these teaching materials will fit into the budget of almost any school district.

*Innovative Tools for Health Education* is a guide for all teachers who are short on funds for teaching props for health lessons, but feeling like their students are the ones who are short-changed when the props are not available. Whether you teach health classes in elementary school or high school, this book will take you step by step through the process of using everyday materials and turning them into props that can enhance every student's health lessons. There are 28 projects plus several ideas for reusing and purchasing inexpensive substitutes for more expensive catalog items. The simple instructions are accompanied by photographs of materials and the steps involved in assembly. There is also a statement or two of how the props can be incorporated into lessons.

These ideas have come from years of creating materials to be used for demonstrating teaching methods in workshops and conferences I have presented across the United States. Health teachers, science teachers, and school nurses have all had positive comments about how useful a book like this would be since most schools are short on resources.

These ideas will give teachers a new perspective on how to look at ordinary objects lying around the house. With a little time and energy, items that you'd pay a lot of money for in the catalogs can be made for pennies. You will have the pleasure of knowing that students are gaining new insights into their health because of the teaching props available to them. Your students will certainly be healthier for it.

The most unique thing about this book is that any teacher will find ideas that could enhance their teaching. The ideas encompassed in

the book are specifically for teaching health, but many of them could supplement other lessons as well. For example, the puppets made from stuffed animals could easily be used in language arts. The easel could be used to display any small project.

Teachers are generally creative people, but they sometimes need some inspiration to get started. Hopefully, the ideas in this book will spark some enthusiasm for being resourceful and help teachers emerge with a sense of accomplishment and the knowledge that their students will be more attentive to their health lessons. With a little time, effort, and just a little cash, any teacher can enhance their inventory of teaching aids. Give it a try! What is there to lose?

## Acknowledgments

My special thanks go to Dr. Sheri Beeler at Missouri Southern University, Julie Leukenhoff at Blair Oaks High School, and Marla Drewel-Lynch for their ideas. These educators care about their students and understand how their jobs are limited by their schools' budgets. They have used many of these ideas in their own teaching and have shared with me what they have used.

I also want to thank my brother, Lee Hancock, who took the time to help me photograph the items. Without his help and support, this book would still be on my back burner!

# CONTENTS

PREFACE V

## ACTIVITIES

1	Portable First Aid Kit	2
2	Stethoscope	4
3	Puppets	6
4	Beanbags	8
5	Health Balls	10
6	Stress Balls	12
7	Germs Under the Black Light	14
8	Alcohol Goggles	16
9	DUI Game Kit	18
10	Bottles With Impact	20
11	Breathless Cigarettes	22
12	Smokeless Tobacco Can	24
13	Homemade Phlegm	26
14	Tobacco Tar	28

## CONTENTS

15	<b>Stinky Beanbag</b>	30
16	<b>Clogged Arteries</b>	32
17	<b>Components of Blood</b>	34
18	<b>Organ Vest</b>	36
19	<b>Model Lungs</b>	38
20	<b>MyPyramid Pocket Chart</b>	40
21	<b>Healthy Placemat</b>	42
22	<b>Simulation of Fat</b>	44
23	<b>Simulation of Sugar</b>	46
24	<b>Food Portion Kit</b>	48
25	<b>Portion Plates</b>	50
26	<b>A Pound of Fat</b>	52
27	<b>Fat Vest</b>	54
28	<b>Dice</b>	56
29	<b>Inexpensive Teaching Props</b>	58

APPENDIX 61

ABOUT THE AUTHOR 65



# ACTIVITIES



# Portable First Aid Kit

Elementary classroom teachers (and any other adults who take students out of the school building) need a way to carry first aid supplies with them every time they leave their classrooms. This kit is simple enough that every teacher should have her own to hang right inside the door so it can be grabbed on the way out.

## Materials

- Small, inexpensive travel pack
- First aid supplies (determined by district policies or school nurse):
  - Plastic or vinyl gloves
  - 2-inch (5 cm) athletic tape
  - Rolled gauze
  - 2-by-2-inch gauze pads
  - Plastic adhesive bandages (variety of sizes)
  - Antibiotic ointment
  - Cleansing towelettes
  - Alcohol wipes
  - Tweezers
  - Cold pack
  - Elastic bandage
  - Tylenol
  - Hard candy or sugar packets

## Instructions for Assembling

1. Collect materials.
2. Assemble basic first aid supplies into travel pack and place in a convenient spot near the exit (figure 1.1).



**Figure 1.1** Travel pack supplies.

## To Use

Place by door to have available every time you leave the classroom. Use it as a teaching aid to show students how to create their own first aid kits to have at home.

# Stethoscope

Children love to use stethoscopes for listening to their—or others’—hearts. Although store-bought stethoscopes are not very expensive, the homemade versions can be much more appealing. And, if the materials are donated, children can take the stethoscopes home with them!

## Materials (Figure 2.1)

- Small funnel (approximately 2 inches in diameter and 2 inches long)
- T coupling (found in the plumbing department or automotive department of a hardware store)
- Hollow rubber or plastic tubing (such as exercise tubing, surgical tubing, or plastic jump rope)

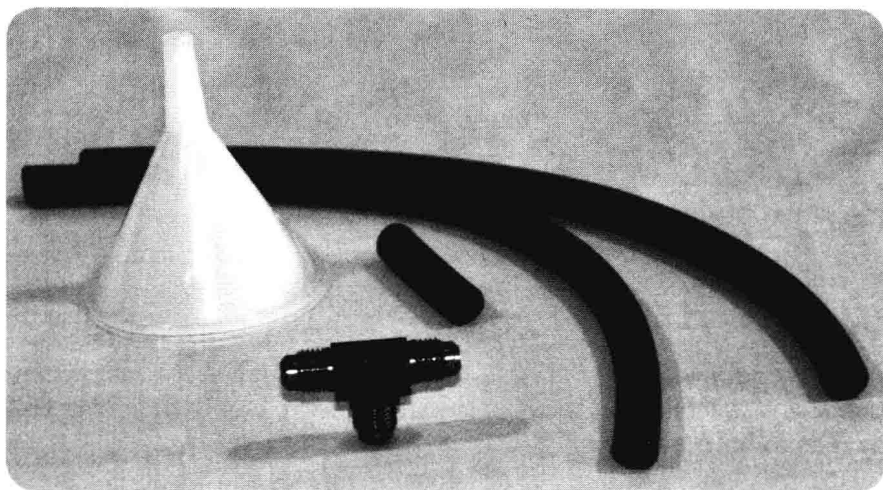
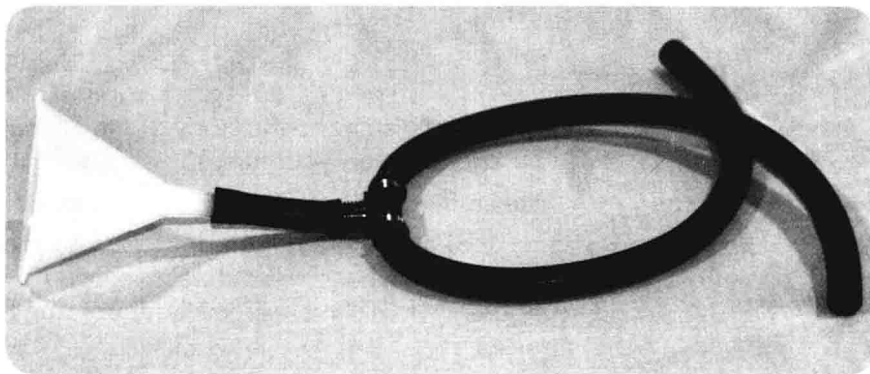


Figure 2.1 Materials for stethoscope.

## Instructions for Assembling

1. Cut tubing into three pieces. Two pieces are approximately 12 inches (30 cm) long and one piece is 3 inches (8 cm) long (figure 2.1).
2. Attach the funnel to one end of the 3-inch piece of tubing (figure 2.2).
3. Attach the bottom end of the T coupling to the other end of the 3-inch piece of tubing (figure 2.2).
4. Attach the long pieces of tubing to either side of the top piece of the T coupling (figure 2.2).
5. Work pieces of tubing snugly onto coupling and funnel so it doesn't come apart easily.

If you wish to disassemble and keep, store in zipped plastic bags.



**Figure 2.2** Assembled stethoscope.

## To Use

The long pieces of tubing go into the ears. The funnel is held against the chest to pick up the sound of the beating heart. Use it when teaching students about increased heart rate caused by exercise or activity.

If more than one student uses the same stethoscope, you can disinfect with alcohol wipes between uses.

# Puppets

All children love puppets! Most children will interact with a puppet in ways they won't with an adult. Unfortunately, puppets are not always available in the characters you want or need. A simple solution is to transform an appropriate stuffed animal into a puppet.

## Materials

- Stuffed animals (almost any size will work—larger animals will make hand puppets, and smaller can be finger puppets); don't forget to look in the pet department, too!
- Craft knife (box cutter type) or seam ripper (sewing tool)
- Old mitten or glove
- Scraps of material for finger puppets
- Hot-glue gun

## Instructions for Assembling

### Larger Stuffed Animal

1. Carefully cut open a part of the seam to the body of the animal (where you want to be able to insert your hand).
2. Remove enough of the stuffing so that a hand can be inserted.
3. Glue (using a hot-glue gun) or stitch a mitten or glove into the opening. This lets the user insert a hand without being concerned about the stuffing (figure 3.1). (This is especially important if children use the puppet.)



**Figure 3.1** Ensure the opening is large enough for your hand to fit inside.

## Small Stuffed Animals

1. You can follow the instructions for the larger stuffed animal if appropriate, or follow the instructions in this section.
2. Glue both ends of a strip of cloth (approximately 1 by 3 inches, or 2.5 by 8 cm) to the back of the animal, allowing room for a finger to slide under it so you can animate the puppet (figures 3.2 and 3.3).
3. If you can't find a strip of cloth in the color you want (to match the animal), you can use a permanent marker to color the cloth (figure 3.3).



**Figure 3.2** Use a cloth strip on the outside for smaller animals.



**Figure 3.3** Color the cloth to match the animal, if desired.

## To Use

Use as you would any puppet to engage your students in conversations or in learning appropriate healthy behaviors. Use in role-plays or skits or as a "guest" lecturer.

# Beanbags

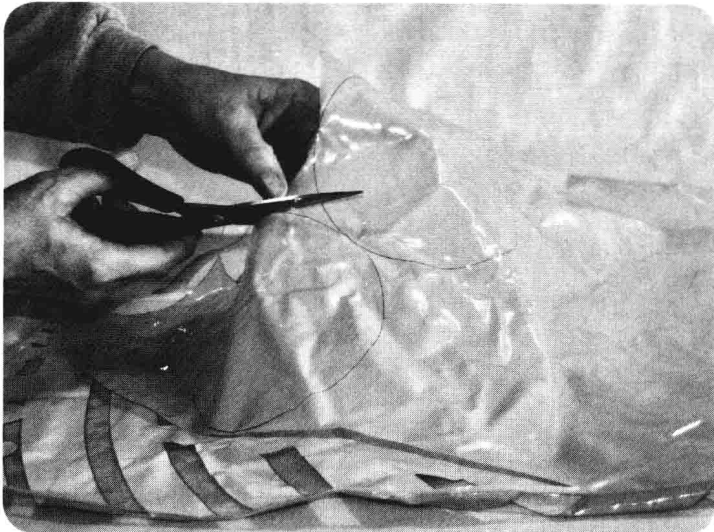
Students enjoy activities with tactile manipulatives. These can be used in a variety of activities or games.

## Materials

- Heavy plastic (recycle an old inflatable toy such as a child's bop bag that leaks)
- Scissors
- Permanent markers in various colors
- Polyurethane spray paint
- Baby powder
- Sewing machine (or needle and thread)
- Rice or beans

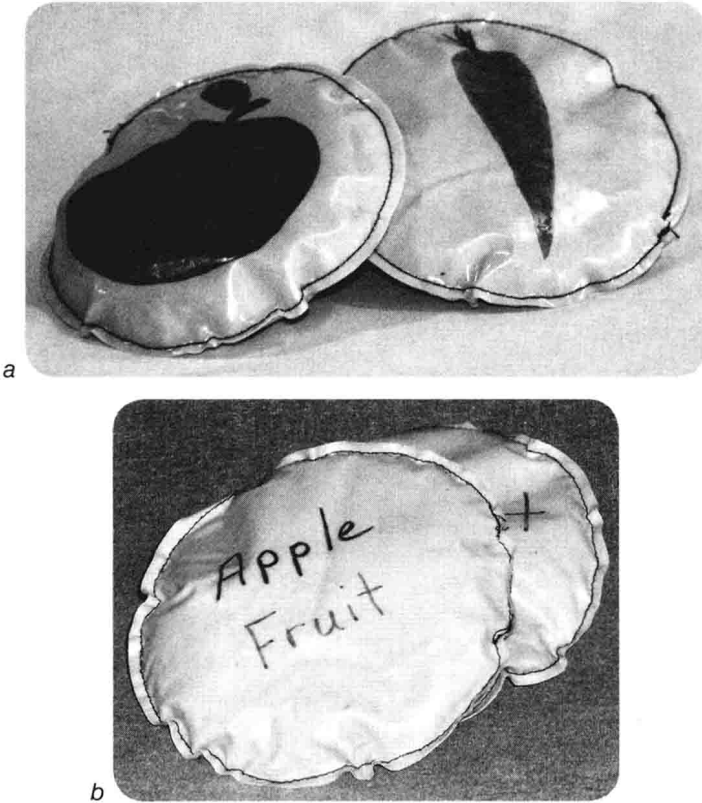
## Instructions for Assembling

1. Cut two circles (3.5 to 4 inches in diameter, or 9 to 10 cm) for each beanbag. (Trace around a small dish; figure 4.1).
2. Using the permanent markers, draw a fruit or vegetable on one side. The name of the fruit or vegetable can be written on the back side (figure 4.2).



**Figure 4.1** Cut out two circles for each beanbag.





**Figure 4.2** (a) Use permanent markers to draw a vegetable or fruit on one side. (b) On the back side, write the name of the fruit or vegetable.

3. After the marker dries, spray very lightly with the polyurethane paint and let dry completely. Once it is dry, dust lightly with baby powder and rub it in. Wipe off excess. (This keeps the marker or paint from being sticky.)
4. Sew around the edge, leaving an opening for inserting the filling.
5. Fill with rice or small beans.
6. Sew up opening.

## To Use

Create a game, such as toss to a teammate who then has to name the fruit or vegetable shown on the beanbag. As a variation, the teammate could name the food group or spell the name.

# Health Balls

Some students are very resistant to joining an activity. They prefer to sit and watch or totally disengage themselves from the class. You can draw students back in by including them in the tossing and catching of the balls.

## Materials

- Blown-up beach ball or other inexpensive plastic ball
- Permanent markers
- Polyurethane spray paint

## Instructions for Assembling

1. Select topic for the activity (such as substance use and abuse, mental health, nutrition).
2. Blow up ball if needed.
3. Using permanent markers, write statements or questions all over the ball. You can also use pictures to represent statements (figure 5.1). For example, stars could represent this statement: "I am good at \_\_\_\_." Hearts could mean "I like \_\_\_\_." To add texture and interest, you can use foam stickers in a variety of shapes.
4. Let marker dry completely.
5. Spray lightly with polyurethane paint. Allow to dry completely. If it's sticky, dust very lightly with baby powder.

## To Use

Put students into groups of five to seven. A student will toss the ball to a peer in the group. The statement or question closest to where the right thumb (or other preselected digit) lands is what the student will do or answer. That student then tosses the ball to someone else. Be sure to explain to groups that everyone should be included. This can be used as an icebreaker or a review of information on the specific topic.