

PART II

ACQUIRING CORE SKILLS

DECISION MAKING

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Decision Making

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MAKING DECISIONS BIG & SMALL



AGENDA

- Starter
- Snap Decisions
- Hot or Cold?
- Dear Source
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

Objectives

Students will recognize that the importance of a decision is determined by its consequences.

Students will identify factors that influence the decisions they make.

Students will recognize and use their power to make decisions—even when the decisions are difficult.

Materials Needed

- A pair of socks rolled into a ball (Part I)
- One copy of the “Hot or Cold?” activity sheet (Part II)

Starter (3 minutes)

Read aloud the following paragraph. Ask students to keep count of the decisions you made as you prepared to leave your house for school today:

The alarm went off this morning and I pushed the snooze button (1). Ten minutes later, I got out of bed (2) and took a shower (3). Then I brushed my teeth (4). For breakfast, I had a glass of juice (5) and a bowl of cereal (6) with bananas (7). I put on these clothes (8) and my black shoes (9). But I changed my shoes (10) before I left the house because I wanted to wear a different pair instead.

Ask various students how many decisions they counted. If students disagree on the number, read the paragraph again, this time marking the count, one by one, as you read. Afterward, say, "It's pretty amazing, isn't it? I made at least 10 decisions before I left the house this morning. Some were small and I didn't think about them much. Some were more important and took more thought. Today, we're going to look at the types of decisions you make."

Part I Snap Decisions (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students begin to understand that the importance of a decision is determined by its consequences.

1. Students participate in an activity in which they make snap decisions.

Explain to students that they are going to play a game to prompt their thinking about how they make decisions. Tell them that you will toss a ball of socks to a student while asking a question. The student must catch the ball, and then throw it back to you while answering the question.

Begin the game, asking questions that increase in difficulty like the ones below. If students hesitate in tossing the ball back to you, urge them to return it quickly with their answer. Keep the game moving, even if students don't completely answer the questions.

- On which wrist would you wear a watch or a bracelet?
- Did you choose to wear white, black, or colored socks today?
- What will you do after school today?
- If you were going to see a movie tonight, what movie would you see?
- You have to finish reading a book by next Monday. When will you do it?
- If you found money by your locker, would you keep it and not tell anyone, or would you try to find out who dropped it?

2. Students evaluate their decisions.

To prompt a discussion about the varying degrees of difficulty in making decisions, ask students if it seemed harder to answer some questions than others. Have them identify which questions seemed easy (the first two), which seemed more difficult (the middle two), and which seemed the most difficult (the last two). Challenge them to explain why.

3. Students examine the importance of consequences.

Through discussion, guide students to realize that some decisions are fairly easy to make because they involve personal preferences—the color of the socks they put on today, for example—and have no real consequences. These types of decisions are not worth worrying about.

Write the word “consequences” on the board, and ask students to explain what this word means to them. (Students should respond: the result or outcome of an action; what happens because of something else.) If students have difficulty verbalizing a definition, have them use the word in a sentence.

Have students consider why some decisions might be more difficult to make than others. Offer students an example to prompt their thinking. Say, “Imagine that you go to after-school tutoring to improve your grades in a subject you’re weak in. What might be the consequences of skipping this tutoring?” (Students might respond: poor grades, more time to spend at home or with friends, no improvement in subject.)

Explain that most decisions have both positive and negative consequences. This is why some decisions are more difficult than others.

Next, ask students to consider why some decisions might be very difficult to make. Ask them what they would do if they found money by their lockers. Affirm responses that point out that this decision could have many complicated consequences and require more time to be thought through. Assure students that they will talk more about consequences in later lessons.

Close the discussion by reminding students that they make many, many decisions every day. Point out that it’s important to think about how we make some of those decisions. Tell students that in addition to looking at the consequences of the decisions we make, we also need to look at other factors that influence our decisions.

Part II Hot or Cold? (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students identify factors that influence the decisions they make.

1. Students brainstorm a list of factors that influence their decisions.

Have the class brainstorm a list of factors that can influence, or affect, the decisions they make every day. (Students might respond: parents, friends, school, laws, television, etc.) Write student responses on the board.

Remind students of the rules of brainstorming: Begin by suggesting and writing down as many responses as possible. Afterward, review the list and identify those influences that students consider to be the strongest in their lives.

2. Students read a story and identify the decision makers in it.

Distribute copies of the “Hot or Cold?” activity sheet. Explain to students that they are going to read a story. After each part of the story, they are to write the word “hot” in the blank if Chris, the person in the story, makes a decision for herself. They are to write “cold” in the blank if her decision is influenced by what someone else says.

Call on different volunteers to read the parts of the story. After each part, allow students a few seconds to fill in the blanks. Afterward, have them share their answers.

3. Students recall that they have the power to make decisions.

Write the following sentence on the board: “Personal power lies in the choices you make.” Ask students if they recall this key point from “Lesson 6: Developing Personal Power” of Confidence Building. Have them identify who is responsible for the choices they make. Lead them to recognize that though many factors may influence them, they have the power to make their decisions. Conclude by making the following points:

- Just like Chris in the story, you will make different decisions for different reasons.
- The important thing is to understand why you make the decisions you make, so that you can be sure to make the ones you want.
- When making decisions, remember to think about your goals, values, strengths, skills, likes, and dislikes.

Part III Dear Source (15 minutes)

Purpose: In giving advice to others, students recognize that they always have the power to make decisions—even when the decisions are difficult.

1. Students write about a difficult decision.

Tell students to think about a tough decision they must make, one they have already made, or one that someone they know must make. Explain that they will write an anonymous letter asking for advice to a fictitious newspaper columnist called “the Source.” Tell students to sign their letters, but not with their real names.

Give students time to write their letters. If students need prompting, you might give a few examples such as the following:

- You have a crush on your best friend's boyfriend/girlfriend.
- The grades that you have earned in science are low, but you really want to be a doctor.
- You want to join a certain sports team or after-school activity, but none of your friends are on the team and everyone hangs out together at the same time that practice is held.
- Your friends, whom you want to impress, are planning to draw graffiti on a wall at the park near your house. They want you to help.
- One of your parents must make a decision about a new job. It could mean that your family would have to move to a different state.

2. Students offer advice about making decisions.

Collect all of the letters, row by row; then, redistribute them so that students will not get their own letters. Tell students to read the letters and, as “the Source,” to write a response on the back of the paper. Encourage students to give reasons for their advice.

3. Students share letters and replies with the class.

Invite as many students as possible to read aloud their own letters and responses for the remainder of the class session. Ask questions, make observations, or invite responses from others in the class as appropriate.

Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students if it is easier to make decisions for others or for themselves. Lead them to recognize that it is often easier to make decisions for others than for themselves. Elicit from students the following key points that were taught in this lesson:

- The importance of a decision is determined by its consequences.
- Many factors may influence your decisions, but you are the one who makes them.
- You have the power to make decisions, so make ones that are right for you.

Student Assessment

1. Keep a list of all the decisions you make from the time you leave school until you go to bed. When the list is complete, mark each decision “hot” if you made the decision for yourself, or “cold” if someone influenced your decision.
2. Explain the difference between a small decision and a big decision. Why is it important to give more thought to a big decision?
3. Give an example of a big decision you have made. Explain why you made this decision, what its consequences were, and what you would or would not choose to do differently if you had the chance.

LESSON EXTENSIONS

Using Quotations

“A man’s judgment is best when he can forget himself and any reputation he may have acquired and can concentrate wholly on making the right decisions.”

Have students give examples of how the desire to protect their reputation can influence the decisions they make.

Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

Have students choose children’s picture books in which a main character has to make a choice.

Have students read the books they chose to the class, a younger sibling, or a student from a lower grade. Discuss what made the characters act as they did.

Writing in Your Journal

Have students write about a decision they are proud (or not proud) of. Have them describe how they made the decision, whether making the decision was difficult, and what consequences it had. Tell students that they will share their work.

Have students read from their journals in small groups. Encourage students to practice active listening by asking questions and summarizing what they’ve heard.

Additional Resources

Have students read selections from *SOS: Stressed Out Students’ Guide to Handling Peer Pressure* by Lisa Medoff. (This book deals with certain topics that may be sensitive issues for your students. Please make the selections carefully.)

Discuss what students read in the book. Talk about peer pressure as an element in decision making.

Homework

Have students keep a list of all the decisions they make during the day. (Tell them they can stop at 50 if they get tired.) When they are finished, students should rank the consequences of each decision on a scale of one to three, with one indicating an unimportant consequence.

Have students share their findings in small groups. Does the importance placed on particular types of decisions vary from person to person?

Additional Resources

Have students read selected chapters from *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff...and It's All Small Stuff* by Richard Carlson. This book provides strategies for keeping problems in their proper perspectives.

Have students choose a strategy from the book and create a poster about that strategy. Have them explain the strategy to a classmate.

HOT OR COLD?

Fill in the blanks to show who really made each decision. Write “hot” if Chris made the decision herself. Write “cold” if she actually let someone else make it for her.

1. Hi! My name is Chris, and I got a job at the supermarket on Saturdays. I got a job at this store because you can work in a different area of the store every week.

2. My first week, I worked in the meat department because my friend Sal works there, and he said that all the cool people work there. _____
3. But I didn’t know that when you work in the meat department, you have to mop the floor three times a day. Another person I know said she liked working in the produce department, so I started working there the next week. _____
4. But you spend a lot of time in produce spraying water on the vegetables to keep them fresh. I get sick pretty easily, and I knew I’d get a cold from all that cold water. So, the next week I moved to the dairy department. _____
5. Have you ever noticed how people always read the back of the milk cartons, and then the cartons slip out of their hands, fall to the floor, and break? Well, guess who cleans it up! My friends at the store told me that there wasn’t a lot to do in the cereal department, so the next week I moved there. _____
6. But it was so boring! There was really nothing to do, and I like having something to do. I started thinking about how I like working with numbers and talking to people. Now I’m running the cash register. _____
7. And I’m not going to change departments next week. _____

Answer Key: 1. hot 2. cold 3. cold 4. hot 5. cold 6. hot 7. hot

GATHERING INFORMATION



AGENDA

- Starter
- Any Takers?
- A Job Offer
- Mystery Interview
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

Objectives

Students will recognize that gathering information is an important part of the decision making process.

Students will recognize that asking relevant questions and actively listening to answers are effective ways to gather information.

Students will practice asking relevant questions in order to gather information and make informed decisions.

Materials Needed

- A paper grocery bag or cloth sack (Part I)
- One copy of the “Mystery Person #1” and “Mystery Person #2” activity sheets for each pair of students (Part III)

Starter (3 minutes)

Begin class today with the following anecdote that illustrates the importance of taking the time to get information:

A man was driving to Alaska. Halfway there, he ran into a huge snowstorm and got lost. He pulled over to wait out the storm. Finally the snow stopped and he noticed that there was a snowplow right in front of him. Relieved, he started his car and began following the plow as it cleared snow off the road.

After a while, the snowplow stopped. The driver got out and walked back to the man's car. "Where are you headed?" she asked.

"I'm on my way to Alaska," the man answered.

"Well," the plow driver replied, "you're not going to get there by following me. I'm just plowing out this parking lot!"

Ask students to explain why you may have told this story. Tell students that the point of this story is that if you don't find out the facts, you can end up making decisions that don't get you anywhere. Explain to students that today they're going to learn how easy it can be to get the information they need to make good decisions.

Part I Any Takers? (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students recognize that gathering information is an important part of the decision making process.

1. Students recognize that gathering information can change their decisions.

To illustrate how facts and information can change decisions, present students with the following scenario. Explain that if students wish to respond yes to a question, they should stand. If they wish to respond no, they should sit.

- If I offer you \$1,000 to go on a shopping spree, will any of you take it?
- There's one thing you should know: you will only be able to spend this money in certain stores. Will you still take it?
- If you take the money, you'll be required to spend half on yourself and half on someone else. Will you still accept it?
- Here are two more conditions: If you take the \$1,000, you'll have to spend it by the end of the week. You'll also have to spend it on something that will last longer than one year, like a smartphone, 4K TV, laptop, or video game system. How many of you will still take the money?

Take a tally of the number of students who are standing. Tell students to remain standing, and ask two or three volunteers to briefly explain why they would keep the money despite all the conditions you stipulated. When they have finished their explanations, read the last requirement:

- There's one very important thing I forgot to mention! If you take the \$1,000, you'll have to pay me \$6,000 by the end of the week. Do you still want the money?

2. Students explain the reasons for their decisions.

Invite students who stood and then sat down to explain why they changed their minds. Elicit responses acknowledging that the deal you offered did not actually benefit them in the end because it resulted in students owing you more money than you gave them. Ask students for suggestions on what they could have done to find this out earlier (e.g., asking if there was a catch).

Explain to students that it's very important for them to make sure that they have as much information as possible before making a decision. Assure students that getting information isn't a difficult thing to do; they just need to take the time to ask the right questions.

Part II A Job Offer (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students recognize that asking relevant questions and actively listening to answers is an effective way to gather information.

1. Students form small groups and listen to directions.

Divide the class into groups of four or five students, and ask each group to send a volunteer to the front of the room. Explain that the volunteers are to imagine that they have been offered a job, and that they must decide whether to accept it. Ask the volunteers to leave the room for a few minutes. Tell them to think about any questions they may have about the job while they are waiting. Suggest that, in order to determine which questions to ask, they think about what is most important to them (e.g., what they value, what they would like to get out of a job).

While the volunteers are out of the room, explain to the groups that they will be answering questions about the job. Have students write this information for their responses:

- The hours are from 3:00 pm to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday.
- The job is working as an assistant in the elementary school office.
- An assistant runs the copy machine, changes bulletin boards, and cleans and sets up classrooms.
- The supervisor is very strict but fair.
- Assistants must wear orange smocks while working.
- The pay is \$8 an hour.

2. Students ask questions to gather information.

Have volunteers come back into the room and join their groups. Explain that the volunteers may ask five questions about the job they have been offered. They are to ask one question at a time to each group member. Their goal is to find out as much information about the job as possible.

Tell the groups that they are only to respond to questions and give only the information that is requested. If a volunteer says, “Tell me about this job,” the response should be, “I can only answer a question.” If a volunteer asks a yes or no question (such as, “Is it a good job?”), the response can be either yes or no—nothing more.

Before the groups begin working, remind them that only five questions can be asked and answered.

3. Students identify effective questions.

When the class has finished, invite volunteers to report whether they decided to accept the job and explain their decision. Then, read aloud all of the details from the job description. Prompt volunteers to evaluate the effectiveness of the questions they posed to their groups by asking questions such as the following:

- How many of the details were you able to find out?
- Were you missing information that was important to you? If so, what?
- What kinds of questions did you ask?
- What kinds of questions should you have asked?

Encourage students to give examples of questions that were successful in gathering the necessary information. Through questions and comments, guide students to recognize that using who, what, where, when, why, and how questions is very effective when gathering information and details.

Point out to students that sometimes just asking questions may not get them all the information they need. When this happens, they may need to use other methods of research. Remind them that if the decision is important to them, they should take the time to gather information. Explain that they will feel much more confident about making decisions when they know they are making informed decisions.

Part III Mystery Interview (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students practice asking relevant questions in order to gather information and make an informed decision.

1. Students practice using their information-gathering skills in interviews.

Have students work with partners to conduct interviews. Give one student in each pair a copy of the “Mystery Person #1” activity sheet, and the other a copy of the “Mystery Person #2” activity sheet. Caution students to keep the details of their identities secret until their interviews.

Explain that students are to take turns interviewing their partners for a column in the school newspaper about new students. Then, give the following directions:

- As an interviewer, you have five minutes to ask questions. Your purpose is to find out as much as you possibly can about the mystery person in the interview. Remember to ask who, what, where, when, why, and how questions and to take good notes.
- As a mystery person, you have recently transferred to this school. Remember to listen carefully to the questions. If you are asked a question that isn’t answered on your activity sheet, make up an answer that fits your character.

2. Students make an informed decision.

When 10 minutes have passed, ask students to suppose that their soccer team needs another member who knows the game and who could be a key player. Ask them if they would invite the person they interviewed to meet the coach and try out for the spot.

Allow a few seconds for students to make a decision; then, call on volunteers to share their decisions and the reasons for them with the class. (Mystery Person #2 has played soccer since the age of four and is probably an excellent player. Mystery Person #1 is probably not interested in soccer because it is not listed as an interest or hobby on the activity sheet.)

Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students to summarize what they learned about asking effective questions to gather information. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Before making decisions, take the time to get the information you need.
- Asking the right questions and listening to the answers is an effective way to get information.
- Informed decisions are always the best decisions.

Student Assessment

1. In what ways is gathering information an important part of the decision making process?
2. List three things you can do to gather information.

LESSON EXTENSIONS

Using Quotations

“It’s better to be boldly decisive and risk being wrong than to agonize at length and be right too late.”

Ask, “Do you agree or disagree with this statement?” Have students write a paragraph supporting their choice, and hold a mini debate on the subject.

Math Connection

Provide students with math word problems. Have them work in pairs to distinguish between extraneous and necessary information before solving.

Have students check the solutions in small groups, explaining which information they needed and why.

Writing in Your Journal

Have students interview adults they know about important decisions they have made. Remind students to use who, what, when, where, why, and how questions. They should make sure the interviewees know that their profiles will be shared.

Have students present their work to the class. Have them share the questions they asked to gather the information they needed.

Using Technology

Visit www.youtube.com and perform a search using the term “newsreel.” Select newsreel footage of a critical moment in history and present it to the class. Explain that newsreels were often presented in movie theaters, and usually offered a rosy or humorous view of current events.

Have students discuss what information might be needed to form an opinion on the event in the newsreel. They should research it and decide how they would have acted had they been in charge.

Homework

Have the class plan and conduct a poll on factors that influence people's decisions about what music to buy. (Possible answers might include streaming sites, radio, movie soundtracks, reviews, recommendations, in-store play, price, etc.)

Tally the results in class, and have students create bar graphs to chart the results.

Additional Resources

Have each student clip or print a news article and list the details that correspond to the following questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? Students should also list how the article is relevant to their lives.

As a class, discuss the details of the articles and how asking the questions helped students discover the articles' relevance and what they were about.

MYSTERY PERSON #1

MIKA LEE

- ❖ You were born in Winnipeg, Manitoba. (Manitoba is a province in central Canada. Winnipeg is a city in southern Manitoba, not far from the U.S. border.)
- ❖ Your birthday is October 2.
- ❖ You have no middle name.
- ❖ You moved to the United States with your family last summer.
- ❖ You have one sister and one brother.
- ❖ Your sister is older than you, and your brother is younger.
- ❖ Most of your relatives live in Manitoba, but you have an aunt, uncle, and cousins who live in Fiji.
- ❖ Your family has two pets: a dog named Mister and a gerbil named Spike.
- ❖ You speak French as well as English.
- ❖ Your favorite foods are spaghetti, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, and ice cream.
- ❖ Your favorite color is orange.
- ❖ Your favorite sport is hockey.
- ❖ You like to ice-skate, swim, and ride your bike.
- ❖ You also like to collect stamps from around the world and draw.
- ❖ You would like to be a veterinarian someday.
- ❖ You would also like to be a professional figure skater.
- ❖ You would like to travel around the world someday.

MYSTERY PERSON #2

JERRY SOLO

- ❖ You were born in Cordoba, Argentina. (Argentina is a country in southern South America. Cordoba is a city in north central Argentina.)
- ❖ Your birthday is February 28.
- ❖ Your middle name is Rawson, which is your mother's maiden name.
- ❖ You are an American citizen, but you were born in Argentina. Your family moved back to the United States when you were four years old.
- ❖ Your family moved here on account of your father's new job.
- ❖ You have one sister.
- ❖ Your sister is younger than you.
- ❖ Your grandparents and most of your other relatives live near you.
- ❖ Your family has no pets.
- ❖ You speak English and some Spanish.
- ❖ Your favorite foods are burritos, pizza, and steak.
- ❖ Your favorite color is purple.
- ❖ Your favorite sport is soccer—you have played it since the age of four.
- ❖ You also like to play basketball, and you are learning to swim.
- ❖ You love to read adventure and mystery stories, go to movies, and cook.
- ❖ You would like to be a pilot someday.
- ❖ You would also like to be an actor or a chef.

IDENTIFYING OPTIONS



AGENDA

- Starter
- To Go or Not to Go?
- Many Possibilities
- Finding Options / Guest Speaker
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

Objectives

Students will recognize that identifying options is an important part of the decision making process.

Students will explore the benefits of considering multiple options.

Students will generate a list of options in response to a given situation.

Students will practice listening to information and identifying options that are available to them.

Materials Needed

- A guest speaker who will spend 10 to 15 minutes talking to students about options they might wish to consider when making decisions appropriate to their lives. (Consider topics that are currently issues in your school. For example, you might invite a school counselor to address handling personal problems; an administrator to address dealing with school rules; a high school counselor to address preparation for high school; a public health nurse or police

officer to address issues of personal health, safety, or the use of drugs, alcohol, or tobacco.)
(Part III)

Starter (3 minutes)

Write the words “options,” “choices,” and “alternatives” on the board. Prompt students to begin thinking about the concept of options by asking, “What do these three words have in common?”

Lead students to understand that these three words are synonyms and that they all mean “opportunities to pick what is wanted.” Tell students that they’re going to determine how important options can be when making decisions. (Leave the three words on the board for use in Part II.)

Part I To Go or Not to Go? (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students recognize that identifying options is an important part of the decision making process.

1. Students listen to a story.

Ask students to listen as you read the following story aloud:

Mike is at his father’s house today. He discovers that he has left his hair gel at his mother’s house. He’s upset with himself for forgetting it, since he made plans to go to the school play tonight and doesn’t want to go with bad hair. He fumes about it for a while, and finally decides not to go to the play.

2. Students identify and discuss options.

Begin a discussion about the story by asking students if they can understand or sympathize with Mike’s dilemma. Allow some discussion without making any comments other than to encourage students to explain their opinions. Then, focus the discussion on how Mike came to make his decision by asking questions such as the following:

- Why was Mike upset?
- What did Mike decide to do? Why?
- What choices did Mike think he had? (He thought he had only two choices: go to the play with bad hair or stay at home.)
- What else could Mike have done? (He could have borrowed some gel from someone at home or from a friend. He could have asked his father to drive him to the store to buy some gel. He could have asked his mother if she could bring the gel to him. If his mother lived nearby, he could have gone back to her house and picked up the gel.)

Point out that Mike had more choices than he thought he had. Make the observation that Mike did not take the time to consider all of his options before he made his decision to stay home; if Mike had given his situation a little more thought, he might have made a different decision.

3. Students are reminded of their personal power.

Circle the words you wrote on the board at the beginning of the class. Then, draw an arrow from the circle and write the words “personal power” after it. Tell students that each time they review options or choices before making an important decision, they are exercising personal power.

Part II Many Possibilities (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students consider multiple options, and then generate a list of options in response to a situation.

1. Students analyze information and identify decision makers.

Challenge students to consider a scenario in which someone makes a decision. Remind them to listen carefully and to think about how the decision was made. Then, read the following story out loud:

Lara and Alec are friends and are working together on a project. They get into a fight because Lara thinks she’s doing all of the work. Lara criticizes Alec, and they stop speaking to each other. The project is finished, but the friendship is broken.

To guide students in analyzing the information they heard, ask questions such as the following. If students disagree about a point, reread the paragraph aloud.

- Who made a decision in this story?
- What was the decision? (Lara made a decision to criticize Alec. If some students argue that Alec made a decision not to help on the project, point out that the information tells us only that Lara “thinks she’s doing all of the work,” and we don’t really know for sure if Alec is not helping or doing his share.)
- What was the consequence, or result, of the decision? (The friendship is broken.)

2. Students brainstorm lists of options.

Organize the class into groups of three or four students. Explain that students will work in groups to list options that Lara could have considered that wouldn’t have resulted in her losing a friend. Remind the class that this is brainstorming, so students should try to think of as many options as they can. Explain that no response is wrong; they are to list the first options that come to mind.

When most groups have finished, have members of each group read one of the options they listed. Summarize the response, and write it on the board. Continue having groups read the options they listed until students feel that they have explored every possibility.

3. Students review options and select the best ones.

Guide the class to review the complete list of options and identify two or three that Lara could have done that would not have resulted in her losing a friend. Suggest that students focus on options that seem most reasonable and realistic to them—options that they would consider doing if they were in the same situation.

Point out that like Mike and Lara in the two scenarios they discussed, students will find that some options will come to them quickly and easily. Remind them to avoid making decisions based only on the obvious options, because there are usually other options available. Tell students to always take a minute or two to think beyond the obvious options before making a decision.

Explain that if they just can't seem to think of any options, they should talk to someone; sometimes it helps to get more information or another point of view.

Part III Finding Options / Guest Speaker (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students listen to information and learn about options that are available to them.

1. Prepare the guest speaker.

Prior to class, explain to the speaker what students will be doing in this lesson. Be sure that the speaker understands the purpose of their visit and the time limit. Have the guest decide whether to entertain questions and comments during or after the presentation, and ask that they tell students about this preference. Suggest that the guest give some personal information and background before getting into the body of the presentation.

2. Students listen to the presentation.

Introduce the speaker to the class. Remind students to listen actively. Encourage them to take notes about what they learn or to write down questions they may wish to ask.

3. Students respond to what they have heard.

If time permits, invite students to share their thoughts about what they have heard. To prompt the discussion, ask students to comment about any options they now know about that they had never considered before, options they learned about that they think are unrealistic, or any of their own ideas or suggestions that were generated by the speaker's presentation.

If you do not have time for this discussion during class, you may want to have students write a review of the speaker's presentation as homework.

Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students to describe what they can do when they need to identify options. Ask them to explain how identifying their options will affect their confidence about the decisions they make. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Ultimately, decisions are always yours to make.
- Before making decisions, especially important ones, take the time to think of as many options as possible.
- If you need more information or help, ask for it.

Student Assessment

1. Why should you consider several options before making a decision?
2. When you are faced with a decision, what can you do to determine your different options?
3. Describe a situation in your life in which you made a decision without considering all of your options. Looking back, what other options were available? If you had seen these other options at the time, would your decision have been different? Why or why not?

LESSON EXTENSIONS

Using Quotations

“When a person acts without knowledge of what he thinks, feels, needs, or wants, he does not yet have the option of choosing to act differently.”

As a class, discuss the meaning of this quote. Have students draw pictures illustrating the quote.

Math Connection

Have students read the book *Spaghetti and Meatballs for All!* by Marilyn Burns.

Have small groups of students use tiles to construct different ways that the story’s hosts could arrange the tables to seat all their guests.

Writing in Your Journal

Have students write about a recurring decision that’s easy to make (e.g., what to eat for lunch, what to wear).

Have students share their choices with the class. Were there some choices that were easy for some students, but not for others? Why?

Using Technology

Have the class view *The Yearling*, the 1946 classic based on the novel by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. In it, a young boy raises a pet fawn, which his father must eventually destroy.

Have the class talk about what Jody’s options were when the deer was critically injured, and why he came to the decision he did.

Homework

Have students watch their favorite TV show. Have them write a paragraph about a decision the show's main character faced, whether the character considered all of their options, and what the character could have done differently.

Discuss students' work as a class. Create a class chart to compare the results.

Additional Resources

Have students search for a recent article that focuses on teens and mentions, either directly or indirectly, a decision these teens have made.

Have students read the article and identify a decision the teens made. Have students brainstorm a list of options the teens may have had before making their decision.

WEIGHING OPTIONS AND CONSEQUENCES



AGENDA

- Starter
- Have Two Tickets
- Make It Easy
- + or -
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

Objectives

Students will recognize that weighing options and consequences is an important part of the decision making process.

Students will practice using a simple method that will help them organize and think about options and consequences.

Students will evaluate pros and cons in order to weigh options and consequences before making a decision.

Materials Needed

- One copy of “The Friends” activity sheet for each student (Part I)
- Two copies of the “Make It Easy” activity sheet for each student (Part II and Conclusion)

Starter (3 minutes)

Write this sentence on the board: “Look before you leap.” Ask if anyone has heard this proverb before. Invite volunteers to first explain what a proverb is. (Students should mention that a proverb is a short, familiar saying, usually from an unknown source, that very simply captures and expresses some truth or piece of wisdom.)

Then, invite volunteers to explain what the proverb means. Challenge students to write another short sentence that expresses the same thought. (Students might respond: think about the consequences before you act.)

Tell students that they will explore another step of the decision making process: weighing options and consequences.

Part I Have Two Tickets (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students recognize that weighing options and consequences is an important part of the decision making process.

1. Students prepare for the activity.

Divide the class into groups of three to five students. Try to mix personalities and friendships within the groups. Then, give the following information:

Imagine that you and four other people not in this class have been a tight group of friends since the third grade. All of you do everything together. You have been waiting for a certain concert for months. When tickets go on sale, each person tries to get as many tickets as possible. None of you are successful, but I am able to get a ticket for each person in the class, plus a few extras. I will give each group two extra tickets and you must decide which two of the four friends not in this class will go to the concert. The decision is up to the group.

2. Students make group decisions.

Distribute copies of “The Friends” activity sheet to each group. Tell students that they have five minutes to discuss the list of candidates and make their decisions. Remind students that group members have equal votes, so they must make decisions based on the majority opinion.

3. Students review their decision making process.

As volunteers share their group’s decisions, ask them to describe exactly how they reached decisions about whom to include. Direct students to focus on the fact that in order to make their decisions, they considered positive and negative information about each candidate, along with the long-term consequences of that information.

Point out to students that they have just completed a very important step in the decision making process—they weighed options and consequences. Tell students that whether they realize it or not, they do this with every decision they make. In order to become better decision makers, it is important to become aware of how they think through this step.

Part II Make It Easy (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students learn how to use a simple method that will help them organize and think about options and consequences.

1. Students consider a hypothetical situation.

Tell students that they are going to imagine another situation in which they will think through options and consequences. Then, read the following paragraph out loud:

A few of your friends want to skip school tomorrow. They want to take the bus to the mall and hang out. One of your friends won't go if you won't go. If you go, you will also miss an after-school activity. If you miss any meetings, practices, or games, you will have to give up the activity. What will you do? Will you skip school tomorrow?

2. Students make a list of options and consequences.

Distribute one copy of the “Make It Easy” activity sheet to each student. Explain that this activity sheet will help students organize their thoughts and help them make a decision.

Review the chart and explain that students are to do the following:

- Fill in the decision question to be answered at the top of the chart. (For this exercise, the question is, “Will I skip school tomorrow?”)
- List their options in the first column. In this case, students have only two options to consider: yes or no. They do not need to fill in every row.
- List the consequences of each option in the second column.

Tell students that they will discuss the last column a little later. Remind students to think through all the possible consequences of each option, and think about how each option will affect other people. They should also think about long-term effects—a decision may feel good now, but worse later.

Part III + or - (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students evaluate pros and cons in order to weigh options and consequences before making a decision.

1. Students assign pros and cons.

Write plus and minus symbols on the board, and explain that these symbols are sometimes used to represent pros and cons. Ask a volunteer to explain what pros and cons are. (Pros are positive characteristics or reasons for something. Cons are negative characteristics or reasons against something.)

Students should now consider each consequence listed on their chart. If the consequence is something positive, or something that they want to happen, students should mark a plus after it in the last column of the chart. If it is something negative, or something that they do not want to happen, they should mark a minus in the last column. Suggest that if a consequence is especially good or bad, students can make a double plus or a double minus symbol after it.

When students have finished, ask them to add up the pluses and minuses for each option, and write the totals in each option box.

2. Students reflect on the pros and cons.

Ask students to share the consequences they wrote for each option and the evaluation symbols they assigned to those consequences. Write student responses on the board. The list for option 1 (skip school) might include the following:

- Make friends happy +
- Have fun +
- Get detention –
- Miss test +
- Have to make up test –
- Get behind in class work –
- Miss assignments –
- Anger parents –
- Get grounded –
- Miss club meeting –
- Anger others in club –

The list for option 2 (don't skip school) might include these consequences:

- Disappoint friends –
- Friends might call me names or put me down –
- Be where I'm supposed to be +
- Avoid trouble at school +
- Avoid trouble with parents +
- Avoid trouble with team's coach +
- Keep up with schoolwork +
- Avoid trouble with school police +

3. Students evaluate pros and cons.

Have volunteers add up the number of plus and minus signs by each option, and write the totals on the board. It is important that you stay one step ahead of students. If it seems as though option 1 (skip school) is going to have fewer negative consequences, present additional consequences of skipping school that you know will be negative for students. Have students identify the option with the most positive consequences and the least negative ones. (Students should say option 2.)

Point out that option 1 has the most negative consequences and the fewest positive ones. Ask students to draw a conclusion about which option seems to be the most logical choice. (Students should say option 2.) Ask them to explain why it is more logical.

4. Students take responsibility for their decision.

Explain to students that, in the end, each of them must make the decision for him- or herself. They have considered and weighed the options and their consequences, but there is still one thing they must do: decide.

Give students time to review the information on their own charts and to make a decision. Tell them to write their decision at the bottom of the chart. Remind them that the decision belongs to each individual student and that they alone are responsible for it.

Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students to describe techniques they can use to help them make good decisions. Distribute the remaining copies of the "Make It Easy" activity sheet, and suggest that students use the sheet the next time they have a decision to make. Ask students to explain how using these steps will help them to make better decisions in less time. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- It is important to think through and weigh options and consequences before making decisions.
- You can do this by listing options and their consequences, and then evaluating the pros and cons of each option.
- You alone are responsible for the decisions you make.

Student Assessment

1. In the decision making process, what does it mean to weigh options and consequences?
2. How can a pro/con list help you make a decision?

LESSON EXTENSIONS

Using Quotations

“Once a decision was made, I did not worry about it afterward.”

Have students tell whether they think this is a good philosophy.

Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

Have students brainstorm a list of decisions that have a variety of options. Write this list on the board.

Have students choose one of these decisions and create a “choose your own adventure book” that shows positive and negative consequences of that decision.

Have students share their books with a partner.

Writing in Your Journal

Have students fold a page of their journals down the middle, labeling the left column “To Buy” and the right column “Not to Buy.” Have them list reasons for and reasons against buying the latest, greatest pair of sneakers in the columns. Then have them evaluate each reason with a + or –, make a decision, and then write a sentence explaining their decision.

Have students share their sentences with the class.

Using Technology

Show the class a movie, television show, or documentary about heroes from history (e.g., George Washington, the firefighters of 9/11).

Divide students into small groups, and have them identify the different options available to the heroes and list the positive and negative outcomes of each option. Have students discuss how the heroes shown decided what to do.

Homework

Have students interview adults about decisions they have made in the past. They should ask the adults if they would have made different decisions had they examined their various options and consequences.

Have students share their work with the class.

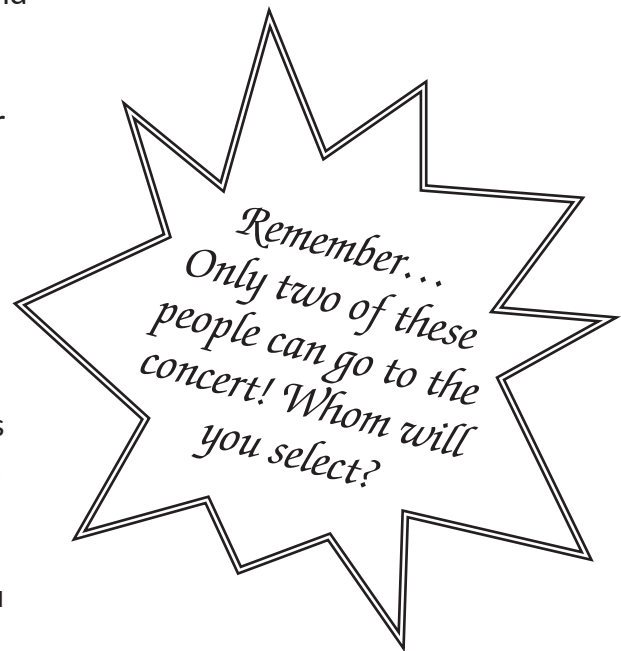
Additional Resources

Have students read the “Against All Odds” activity sheet.

Have students discuss the article and the options and consequences not presented.

THE FRIENDS

- ❖ For as long as you can remember, this friend has been to your birthday parties. He is always there to listen when someone needs a friend. He is the only one in your group of friends who has never been to a concert, and he doesn't really enjoy music. He wants to go to this concert because he doesn't want to miss out on any fun.
- ❖ This friend is a great storyteller and tells hilarious jokes. This is her favorite band, and she has been talking about the concert for months. She is always fun to be with, but she shoplifts every time you go somewhere. Part of the reason she can't wait to go to the concert is because she is excited about the items she will steal from vendors there.
- ❖ This friend is very responsible and street smart, and everybody's parents love her. If she goes to the concert, you can all stay out later. Parents feel that if this friend goes to the concert, you will all be safe. She is also somewhat of an outsider; she isn't always fun to be with. Lately, she has been spending less time with the group.
- ❖ This friend has the most money in the group, and always spends it on his friends. You know that if he goes to the concert, he will buy you souvenirs and food. This friend also has an early curfew. If he goes to the concert, you all have to leave the concert early.



FINAL ANNOUNCEMENT

These two people will go to the concert:

- 1.
- 2.

MAKE IT EASY

Question:		
OPTIONS	CONSEQUENCES	+ or -
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
Decision:		

AGAINST ALL ODDS

Liberty Franklin leads the Boys & Girls Clubs as its Youth of the Year.

When she was younger, Liberty Franklin would come home after school to a dark apartment and find her alcoholic mother sobbing. She never met her father and lost her only picture of him. Her older brothers were in and out of jail, and her older sister was a drug addict.

Liberty, now 17, grew up with a lot of pain. But she didn't let it bring her down. "I weighed things out," she says. "I decided I wanted a better future for myself."

How did she pursue this? In sixth grade, when her friends began drinking, Liberty began going to the local Boys & Girls Clubs for help with her homework. There, she says, "the staff members took me under their wing. At the club, I was able to get away from the drug peddling and violent gangs on the street and the negative things in my family."

At the club, she tutored children and helped organize events like Breakfast With Santa and a back-to-school clothing drive. She also joined a leadership group for girls, where they talked about things "like peer pressure and family life," Liberty says. She gained confidence, enough to speak honestly

to her mother and persuade her to stop drinking. "Now she's in her third year of sobriety," Liberty says proudly.

Liberty also began taking more responsibility at home. To help out financially, she worked as a bank teller and fast-food cashier even as she kept up with her schoolwork.

Now a senior at Everett High School, she's ranked as one of the top students in her class. This spring she will be the first one in her family to graduate from high school.

For her leadership and academic efforts, in September Liberty was named the Boys & Girls Clubs' National Youth of the Year and was given a \$10,000 scholarship.

As the representative of 3 million club members, she has met the President and will travel around the country to discuss important youth issues with business and government leaders.

Liberty says her goal is to help boys and girls overcome obstacles such as poverty, crime and family problems.

"All I've done is to avoid the cycles of negativity. Little did I know I was leading my life by example," she says. "Now I'm proving to my peers that they can do it, too."

—Nancy Vittorino

"At the club, I was able to get away from the drug peddling and the violent gangs."

MAKING A CHOICE



AGENDA

- Starter
- The Five Steps
- What's Best for All?
- What's Best for Me?
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

Objectives

Students will recognize that decision making is a process.

Students will collaborate with each other to make a decision about their school.

Students will demonstrate the decision making process and make a personal decision.

Materials Needed

- Three copies of the “Circle Me!” activity sheet for each student (Starter)
- A small poster board or flip chart page (Part I)
- One copy of the “Make It Easy” activity sheet for each student (Part II)

Starter (3 minutes)

Place a packet of three “Circle Me!” activity sheets face down on each student’s desk. Give the students the following directions:

- I will give you 30 seconds to circle as many numbers as you possibly can.
- You must wait for me to tell you to start.
- Numbers must be circled consecutively (one, followed by two, three, four, etc.).
- You must stop when I say time is up.

Have students begin. When 30 seconds have passed, ask them to share which number they circled last. Repeat the above activity two more times. Each time students finish, ask them to share the last number they circled.

Explain that experience doing something usually makes it easier and makes us feel more confident about doing it. Tell students that today they will continue building their confidence and strengthening their skills by making more decisions.

Part I The Five Steps (10 minutes)

Purpose: Through a review of the steps used to make decisions, students recognize that decision making is a process.

1. Students review the process of decision making.

Guide students in conducting their own review of what they have learned about decision making. Prompt students by suggesting that they do the following:

Think about what they would say if they were going to teach someone who is not in this class how to make a decision.

Look through the activity sheets in their folders to help them recall what they have done in previous sessions.

2. Students outline what they have learned.

Through questions, comments, and a few revisions, guide students to write an outline on the board that identifies these five basic steps of the decision making process:

1. Define the problem.
2. Gather any information you may need—ask questions.
3. Identify options available to you—think of as many as you can.
4. Weigh the pros and cons of the options and the consequences.
5. Decide.

3. Students recognize decision making as a process.

Through discussion, encourage students to describe as many details about each of the steps as they can recall. Help students reach a consensus that this outline represents a process that they can follow whenever they need to make a decision.

Ask for a volunteer to make a poster that presents the five steps of the decision making process. Display the poster in the room.

Part II What's Best for All? (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students collaborate with each other in using the five steps of the decision making process to make a decision about their school.

1. Students prepare for the activity.

Decide whether you wish to have students work as a class or in smaller groups for this activity. If you prefer to have everyone work together as a class, write a few questions such as the ones below on the board, and have the class choose one question to discuss and make a decision about. Choose topics that are of interest to your students.

If you prefer, divide the class into two or three smaller groups. Keep groups large enough to ensure that a number of opinions will be represented. You might assign each group a question, or list a number of questions on the board and allow each group to choose one.

The following are possible topics/questions that groups can consider:

- Should our school require students to wear uniforms?
- Should schools enforce a dress code for their students?
- Should students get a passing grade at the end of the year even if they have not completed all of the work?
- Our school can support only five after-school programs. Which programs should it support?
- What should be done about students in our school who are caught writing graffiti and committing other acts of vandalism?
- Should students be allowed to use AI to help write papers?
- What should be done about students who harass other students?

2. Students use the decision making process to make a decision.

Distribute copies of the “Make It Easy” activity sheet, and suggest that students use them to organize their thoughts and ideas.

If the class is working in smaller groups, give students a time limit (perhaps 10 minutes) to discuss and make a decision. Try to leave enough time at the end of this activity for each group to share briefly the options they considered as well as their final decision.

Part III What's Best for Me? (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students practice using the decision making process to make a personal decision.

1. Students reflect on decisions they are currently dealing with in their own lives.

Explain that students will have the opportunity to make one more decision before they leave class today. Ask them to think about what is happening in their lives. Suggest that they think about relationships with friends, what might happen in the future, or anything else that they need to make a decision about. Or students may want, instead, to reconsider a past decision that had negative consequences.

2. Students work through the decision making process.

Tell students to make their own pro/con lists to help them organize their thoughts. If students need information, suggest that they make a list of questions and write down whom they need to ask. Explain that they have the remainder of the class period to think about options and consequences, and to evaluate the pros and cons for each.

Tell students that they do not need to actually make their decision today—especially if they need to gather information. The goal is to at least start the process.

Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students if they think that people who are successful in life are good decision makers. Ask them to explain their answers. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Use all the steps of the decision making process when making decisions that are important to you: define the problem, gather information if needed, identify options, weigh options and consequences, and decide.
- The best decisions are thoughtfully made, so take the necessary time to make them.

Student Assessment

1. List the five steps of the decision making process.
2. What makes a decision thoughtful?
3. Write a scenario in which all the steps of the decision making process are used.

LESSON EXTENSIONS

Using Quotations

“Nobody ever did, or ever will, escape the consequences of his choices.”

Have students create an acronym that will help them remember the five steps of the decision making process (e.g., “CROWD” for “consequences, research, options, weigh choices, decide”).

Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

Have students write about a choice that seemed completely out of their hands. Have them write about available options that might have yielded a different outcome.

Have interested students anonymously address unresolved concerns to “the Source,” as in Lesson 1.

Have students role-play alternate solutions.

Writing in Your Journal

Have students write about a recurring choice that’s difficult to make (e.g., withstanding peer pressure to smoke, resisting tempting alternatives to doing homework).

Have students share their writing in small groups. As a class, create a list of tough decisions that come up on an ongoing basis. (See the “Homework” extension below for a follow-up activity.)

Using Technology

Have students prepare a list of questions about decision making. (It may be helpful to narrow this to a single topic.) Have them record video or audio interviews with students from other classrooms.

If possible, edit the recordings so that answers from different students are interspersed throughout.

You might also have students transcribe the answers. Invite guests to class to see the finished product.

Homework

Have students create posters with advice about a choice that could be difficult to follow through on (e.g., saying no to smoking, doing homework daily). They should include three consequences of following (or not following) the advice.

Display the finished posters around the classroom.

Additional Resources

Have students read selections from *Baseball in April and Other Stories* or *Local News*, both by Gary Soto.

Have students write about a character's decision, whether they would have chosen similarly, and why.

CIRCLE ME!

