

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.

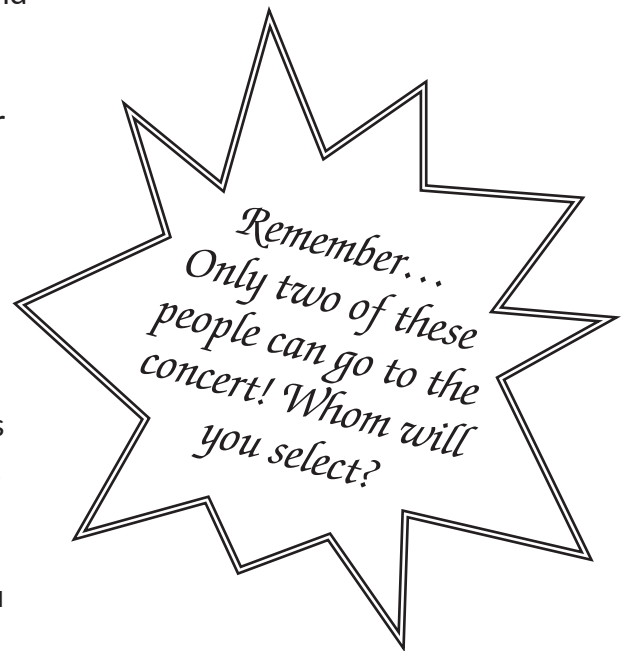
Additional Resources

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."