

Decision Making

YouthZone Life Skills



Decision making requires a lot of practice and for you to trust and learn from your experiences. Since we lack a crystal ball, we must look to the clues around us to determine the possible positive and negative outcomes both in the immediate future and further into the future. In this packet, you will find several methods of making decisions as well as scenarios that you might encounter in your life.

Power and Decision Making

When you learn to calmly assess a situation and determine a path forward that allows for more positive outcomes, you gain a level of control over your life. You can decide to pursue activities that enrich your life. You can choose who you hang out with. You decide to do hard things to set yourself up for the life that you would like to live. No one decides where they are born but everyone decides how to live the life they have.

Sometimes when it feels as though you are not making a decision, you are actually making a decision to be powerless. When people decide to let life happen to them, they decide to be at the mercy of others who will make decisions for them. When you relinquish your decision making power to someone else, you are still the one who suffers the consequences.

Imagine a scenario where you are hanging out with your friends and driving around in your car. One of your friends pulls a beer out of their coat and starts to drink it. You decide to not say anything for fear of annoying your friend. You get pulled over by a police officer and get a ticket for having an open container in your car as well as a Minor in Possession. You now experience the consequences of a ticket and fines even though you did not decide to say anything. *Not making a decision is making a decision.* Consequences do not know the boundaries of intent.

We do not have control over many things in our lives but we do have control over how we respond to what happens and what decision we make. With careful decision making and practice, you can mitigate the effects.

Activity one: Complicating Factors

Decisions are rarely straightforward and can be complicated by multiple factors. Does your decision affect others? Does your decision require you to sacrifice something you hold dear? Naming the complicating factors will help you see the whole picture more clearly. Read the example below and think of all the elements that make the decision more difficult.

It is lunch time, everyone is in the cafeteria. You pass your homeroom and notice that there is someone in the room. You stop and peek in out of curiosity. Just as you do, you see one of your best friends reach into another person's bag and

take something out of it. You quickly move past the door before you are seen. Just before the end of school, the student whose bag you saw your friend reach into, walks up to the teacher. A moment later the teacher announces that this student's entire pencil case with pencils, pens and lunch money in it has been stolen. What do you do?

What elements make this decision difficult?

What responsibility do you have in this scenario? After all, you were a witness, not the perpetrator.

Activity Two: Your Experience

Please think of the hardest decision you have ever had to make and write a one page hand-written reflection. How did you go about making the decision? Were you happy with the outcome? What consequences (both negative and positive) did you experience as a result of your decision?

Activity Three: Write it Out

It can be helpful to put your decision making thought process down on paper. Decision Making Trees allow you to untangle thoughts and clearly see the way that you are thinking in a slightly removed manner allowing for greater clarity.

Below you will find four scenarios, please choose two to work through on the list of questions that follow. Try to think of the problem from as many angles as you can.

1. A new friend who you are excited to get to know better is having a party this weekend. You get invited, as do most of your friends. Your best friend was left out, on purpose. How would you handle this?
2. You finally have a date with that person you have been checking out. However, your best friend calls you and tells you that they have an extra ticket to your favorite band's concert. You have been waiting and hoping for this date for a long time.
3. Your friend does not have enough money to go to the football game. He/she wants you to sneak into the ballgame without paying.

Below, you will find a list of questions designed to help you slow down your decision making and assist you in making the best decision. Choose two scenarios from above.

Senario One (# _____)

1. Describe the problem. What are the key aspects? (Who, what, when, where, why?)
2. Who does this effect? (Self? Friends? Family? Strangers/community?)
3. List all available options you can think of, get creative.

4. Choose the best two or three options and describe them below.

Choice One:

Choice Two:

Choice Three:

5. What are the Pros and Cons of each choice?

Choice One:

Pros:

Cons:

Choice Two:

Pros:

Cons:

Choice Three:

Pros:

Cons:

6. How would the choices affect others?

Choice One

Choice Two

Choice Three

7. Is there anyone (trusted adult, friend, family member) who can help?

8. What are your rational thoughts?

9. What is your gut feeling about all of it?

10. What is your conclusion?

Scenario Two (# _____)

11. Describe the problem. What are the key aspects? (Who, what, when, where, why?)

12. Who does this effect? (Self? Friends? Family? Strangers/community?)

13. List all available options you can think of.

14. Choose the best two or three options and describe them below.

Choice One:

Choice Two:

Choice Three:

15. What are the Pros and Cons of each choice?

Choice One:

Pros:

Cons:

Choice Two:

Pros:

Cons:

Choice Three:

Pros:

Cons:

16. How would the choices affect others?

Choice One

Choice Two

Choice Three

17. Is there anyone (trusted adult, friend, family member) who can help?

18. What are your rational thoughts?

19. What is your gut feeling about all of it?

20. What is your conclusion?

Activity Four: After some Decisions Have Already Been Made

Sometimes, you discover you have a problem when you are well into it, having already made decisions you wish you hadn't. Below, you will find some of those possible scenarios. Choose two to work through, take time to thoughtfully answer the questions below.

Scenarios (choose 2)

1. You are standing by your locker talking with a few of your friends. You are about to head to your last class for the day when one of your friends suggests that you all cut class to go to the mall. You know your science teacher is reviewing for a big test at the end of the week, but you figure you can always worry about that later. You grab your backpack and slip out of the side door with your friends.
2. Your math teacher hands back a test you took last week. When you see your grade, you can't believe your eyes. A 55! You have no idea what you were doing the night before the test, but you're pretty sure it wasn't studying. You're starting to get worried that you're going to fail.

3. For two years, you've been part of a mentoring program. You are assigned to an adult "Big Sister," and every other Saturday you get together and go see a movie, play laser tag, or go out to lunch. Lately, you've been wanting to spend more time with your friends on the weekend. This Saturday, you don't wake up till 10:30, too late to be at your Big Sister's house by 11:00 (when you said you'd be there).
4. You and your mom have been fighting a lot. She just found out you've been talking on the computer to kids she doesn't know, and she's furious. You say a bunch of mean things, go into your room, and slam the door.
5. Example You stay after class talking to your 4th-period social studies teacher about making up an assignment you missed. The bell rings before you get to your 5th period class. You try to slip in quietly and sit down, but the teacher starts making a huge deal about how late you are. Everybody is watching.

Senario One (#____)

1. What choice has this person already made?
2. What choices can this person no longer make due to the decisions they have already made?
3. Who can you turn to for help?
4. Write the CHALLENGE facing this person now.
5. List as many CHOICES as you can.

6. Choose one of the choices listed above and list the CONSEQUENCES (Pros and Cons) in the boxes below.

ULTIMATE CHOICE:

Pros	Cons

Scenario Two (#_____)

1. What choice has this person already made?

2. What choices can this person no longer make due to the decisions they have already made?

3. Who can you turn to for help?

4. Write the CHALLENGE facing this person now.

5. List as many CHOICES as you can.

6. Choose one of the choices listed above and list the CONSEQUENCES (Pros and Cons) in the boxes below.

ULTIMATE CHOICE:

Pros	Cons

Sources:

University of Ohio Special Education

PECentral: Lesson Plans for Physical Educators (2018)

Australian Government Teacher Resources