

Decision-Making

Grades 4-6, lesson #6

Time Needed

50-60 minutes

Student Learning Objectives

To be able to ...

1. Identify two ways people can make decisions (actively or passively.)
2. List and demonstrate the steps in making a decision actively.
3. Recognize that, although feelings affect decisions, people CAN decide not to act on a feeling.

Agenda

1. Explain the importance of decision-making in sexuality.
2. Explain ACTIVE vs. PASSIVE decisions.
3. Use brainstorm to show that students are already decision-makers.
4. Explain the 4 steps in making an ACTIVE decision.
5. Use blackboard to walk the class through one ACTIVE decision.
6. Use the *Decision-Making Worksheet* or easel paper as individual or small group exercise to help students practice the model on another decision.
7. Answer "Anonymous Question Box" questions regarding decision-making.
8. Summarize the lesson.

This lesson was most recently edited August, 2009.

Materials Needed

Classroom Materials:

- 5-10 sheets of butcher paper
- 5-10 felt-tip markers

-- *OR* --

Student Materials: (for each student)

- *Decision-Making Worksheet*

Activity

1. Introduce lesson by discussing what decision-making has to do with sexuality.

Examples of sexuality decisions we all face at some time in our lives include: Whom to choose as friends, how to act toward friends, whom to choose as a boyfriend or girlfriend and at what age, whether to "go with" anybody, whether and when to marry or have children, whether and when to go to the doctor about our private parts, whether to talk about sexuality with our families or friends, and even how to treat a person who likes us but whom we don't especially like.

2. Explain the difference between ACTIVE and PASSIVE decisions.

- a. ACTIVE decisions involve conscious thought (sometimes 30 seconds' worth, sometimes 5 year's worth). ACTIVE decisions involve a choice between at least two alternatives, where one can know or guess some of the consequences of each alternative. In making ACTIVE decisions, people consider their feelings (e.g. fear, anger, tenderness), their beliefs and their family's belief e.g. "friendship is important, but honesty is more important."), and the possible consequences, good and bad, of each alternative.
- b. Passive decisions are those where the person has a choice, but allows someone else, or time, or chance to decide. Having red hair is NOT a decision, because there is no choice. Having short hair because your hairdresser or barber chooses it is a PASSIVE decision. Having short hair because you prefer it is an ACTIVE decision.
- c. There is nothing inherently "good" or "bad" about ACTIVE vs. PASSIVE decision. In fact, if we consciously decided about every step we took, we'd be late getting where we were going!

3. Use brainstorm to show that students are already decision-makers.

- a. Help students brainstorm all the decisions they have made so far today. Your list may look something like this:
 - whether to get up
 - what to wear
 - whether to bathe
 - whether to eat breakfast
 - what to have for breakfast
 - whom to sit with on the bus, or whom to walk to school with
 - whether to bring lunch
- b. Help them identify which ones they made ACTIVELY, and which, PASSIVELY. For example, if someone in your family always cooks breakfast and you all eat together, you may not even think of it as a decision; you just do it. For you it's a PASSIVE decision. If, instead, you decide when you wake up each morning whether you're hungry and what to fix yourself, that's ACTIVE.

4. **Explain that people make ACTIVE DECISIONS in 4 steps** (sometimes carefully, even in writing; other times, quickly):
 - a. List alternatives (people often forget this step!)
 - b. Consider the consequences, positive and negative, of each alternative
 - c. Consider feelings (your own and, if someone else is involved, theirs)
 - d. Consider beliefs (your own...but sometimes to decide what you believe it helps to find out what other people you trust believe--parents, clergy, a family friend)

5. **Use blackboard to walk the class through one ACTIVE decision: what to have for breakfast.**

Walk students through the four step process introduced in Activity #4, above.

- a. What are my alternatives? List a few on the blackboard under the heading "alternatives": skip breakfast; coffee and donut; eggs, grits, bacon, juice, toast, and milk; leftover tortilla with cheese.
- b. What are possible consequences of these alternatives? Make two columns to the right of "alternatives", entitled "consequences, good" and "consequences, bad". Help the class fill in the chart. You might end up with something like this:

Alternatives	Consequences	
	Good	Bad
1. Skip breakfast	On time to school Get to sleep a little longer	Feel cranky Get yelled at for not eating Do poorly on test
2. Coffee and donut	Quick energy Good taste	Even more tired when sugar/caffeine is gone Cavities
3. Eggs, grits, bacon, juice, toast milk	Do well on test Not hungry all morning	Late to school Gain weight
4. Tortilla, cheese	Don't waste leftovers Good nutrition	Sick to my stomach

- c. How do you feel this morning? Hungry? Sleepy? (If so, I might prefer to "sleep in" rather than to eat.) Scared about today's test? (If so, I may want to eat to get my brain in gear.)
- d. What do I believe about this issue? That breakfast is the most important meal? That being on time to school is more important than breakfast? That it's wrong to eat sugar? That you should always eat before a test?

6. Use the *Decision-Making Worksheet* or easel paper as individual or small group exercise to help students practice the model on another decision.

Choose one of the following, or your own:

- a. You see your friend shoplift; nobody else seems to have noticed.
- b. A guy or girl in your class asks you to "go [steady] with" them. Your parents have said you can't go steady until you're 15.
- c. Your old friend invites you to a party this Friday and you say "yes". Then a really cute boy or girl invites you to watch video movies with their family the SAME night.
- d. A friend invites you and some other kids to spend the night. You know that their bodies have all started to mature. Yours hasn't and you think you'll feel embarrassed changing clothes in front of them.
- e. Your older brother or sister has friends over to your house who are passing a bottle of wine. Someone passes it to you.

Break the class into groups of 3 to 5 students per group. All the groups can work on the same "problem situation." Have them use the DECISION WORKSHEET or butcher paper to:

- list alternatives (Make sure a group comes up with at least 4 alternatives before they begin weighing them.)
- consider consequences (they should think of at least one good consequence and one bad one for each alternative.)

Give the groups no more than 15 minutes. Then post or read aloud parts of each group's results, to make the point that **the more alternatives a person thinks of, and the more thoughtful s/he is about each one of them, the better the chances of a good decision**. Have them consider, aloud, how they might **feel** in the specific situation and what **beliefs** might affect the decision.

If your class is unfamiliar with small group work, or is particularly immature or rowdy, you may find it more productive to do this activity (#6) as an individual learning exercise. The "Decision Worksheet" can be filled out by each student and discussed.

7. Answer, or help the group to answer, "Anonymous Question Box" questions about decision-making.

8. Summarize by pointing out that your students

- are already decision-makers
- make some decisions ACTIVELY and others, PASSIVELY
- will face some big decisions in life about which they will feel better afterwards, if they make them in an ACTIVE way...maybe even on paper.

Related Activities For Integrated Learning:

A. Language Arts

If students are gradually generating glossaries, have them add "alternative," "consequence," "active decision," and "passive decision".

B. Language Arts

Students may write short stories, describing a problem situation, with alternative endings depending on the decision of the protagonist.

C. Social Studies

Repeat step 6 of this lesson plan, using a different problem situation.

Homework:

Students' options:

- Discuss with an adult in the family "the hardest decision you (the adult) has ever had to make." They can ask the adult what his/her feelings and beliefs were. They can ask what the alternatives were and how the adult reached a decision.*
- Watch T.V. for at least an hour, and describe a decision made by any character.

*see "Preparing Parents" page 6-7

Decision-Making Worksheet

NAME _____ DATE _____

ALTERNATIVES	CONSEQUENCES	
	+(GOOD)	-(BAD)

