

Decision-Making

Grades 4-6, lesson #6

Time Needed

50-60 minutes

Student Learning Objectives

To be able to ...

1. Demonstrate how to effectively communicate needs, wants, and feelings in healthy ways to promote healthy family and peer relationships.
2. Identify how to make active decisions
3. List and demonstrate the steps in making an active decision.
4. Identify the bystander role.

Agenda

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

This lesson was most recently edited November 2021.

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Materials Needed

Classroom Materials:

- 5-10 sheets of newsprint
- 5-10 markers

OR

Student Materials: (for each student)

- *Decision-Making Worksheet*

Activity

1. Introduce lesson by discussing the importance of decision-making.

There are many important decisions people have to make throughout their lives. When we are thinking about dating and other types of relationships in the future, some examples include: Who to choose as friends, how to act toward friends, who to choose to date and at what age, when to go to the doctor about sexual health concerns, whether to talk about sexuality with families or friends, and even how to treat a person who likes us but who we don't feel the same way about.

2. Explain the difference between active and passive decisions.

- a. Active decisions involve conscious thought. Active decisions involve a choice between at least two alternatives, where one can know or guess some of the consequences of each alternative. When making active decisions, people consider their feelings (e.g., fear, happiness), their beliefs and their family's beliefs (for example, "honesty is the most important thing in a relationship"), 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 the person who cuts your hair chooses it is a passive decision. Having short hair because you prefer and you asked them to cut your hair short is an active decision.
- c. There is nothing inherently "good" or "bad" about active vs. passive decisions. In fact, if we consciously decided about every step we took, we'd be late getting where we were going!

3. Use a 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:
 - when to get up
 - what to wear
 - whether to bathe
 - whether to eat breakfast
 - who to sit with on the bus
 - who to walk to school with
 - what to do on the playground
- b. Help students identify which decisions they made actively, and which they made passively. For example, if someone in your family always cooks breakfast, 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 what to make yourself for breakfast, that's active.

4. Explain the steps to an active decision:

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Here are the steps to an active decision. Sometimes the steps are followed carefully, even in writing. Other times, people do them quickly or only do a few of the steps, but it can still help them make an active, healthy decision.

- a. List alternatives (people often forget this step!)
- b. Consider the consequences, good and bad, of each alternative.
- c. Consider feelings (your own and, if someone else is involved, theirs).
- d. Consider beliefs (it helps to find out the beliefs and values of people you trust, such as a parent, guardian, or other adult who is like family).
- e. Make the decision.

Sometimes a decision is easy. Other times, a person might be feeling pressured, nervous, or distracted. When people feel like that, making decisions can be much harder. Some people always find it hard to make a decision, no matter the circumstances. We are going to practice using these steps today in class so they will feel easier in real life, even in a tough situation, but no one should ever feel bad if they have difficulty making a decision.

5. Walk the class through one active decision: when to do my homework

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

- a. What are my alternatives? List a few on the blackboard under the heading "alternatives": do homework right after school, do homework before bed, do homework a few minutes before it's due, don't do homework at all
- b. What are possible consequences of these alternatives? Make two columns to the right of "alternatives", entitled "good" or "positive" and "bad" or "negative". Help the class fill in the chart. You might end up with something like this:

Alternatives	Positive (good)	Negative (bad)
1. Do homework right after school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Will have time to try hard• Won't have to think about it rest of night	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have other responsibilities after school• Need time to relax first
2. Do homework before bed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Won't have to worry about it the next day• Have time to do other things after school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Might be tired• Might not have enough time to finish it
3. Do homework a few minutes before it's due	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have more time for other things	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Might not do as good a job
4. Don't do homework	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More time for other things	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Won't learn as much• Won't be happy with grades

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- c. How do you feel when you get your homework done? Do you like the feeling of getting it out of the way? Do you feel more successful with it if you've had a chance to play first?
- d. What do I believe about doing homework? What does your family or adults who are like family believe about getting homework done? (e.g. it's important to do all chores and homework before playing? It's important to make time for playing after a long day?)

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

Break the class into groups of 3 to 5 students per group. Assign each group a scenario from below, ensuring that all four scenarios are assigned. Have them use the *Decision-Making Worksheet* or easel paper to:

1. List alternatives (Make sure a group comes up with at least 4 alternatives before they begin weighing them.)
2. 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 they are 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.

When debriefing Scenario A, point out that this is a situation in which the student is a bystander – that is, a person who is witnessing bullying or harassment. Bystanders have a lot of power and can do many things to help.

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-Making Worksheet* can be filled out by each student and discussed.

- a. Your friend is being mean to another kid in class, blocking their way from leaving the room and calling them names. (You are the bystander.)
- b. Someone in your class asks you to be their boyfriend or girlfriend. Your parents have said you can't date until you're 15.
- c. Your old friend invites you to a party this Friday and you say "yes". Then someone you have a crush on invites you to watch movies with their family the same night.
- d. Your older sibling has friends over to your house who are passing a bottle of wine. Someone passes it to you.

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7. **Answer, or help the group to answer, "Anonymous Question Box" questions about decision-making.**
8. **Summarize by making the following observations:**
 - They are already decision-makers.
 - Practicing active decisions helped us all get better at it in different ways. In this class, we can keep getting better at the skill of making active decisions by practicing together and helping each other.

Related Activities for Integrated Learning:

A. Language Arts

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

B. Social Studies

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

Homework:

Students' options:

- Family homework: What do you do when you have to make a hard decision?
- Individual homework: Describe a time you had to make a hard decision.

Decision-Making Worksheet

NAME _____ DATE _____

Decision you're trying to make:

Step 1: List alternatives below

Step 2: List the consequences of each alternative below, both the good and bad

Alternatives	Positive (good)	Negative (bad)

Step 3: Write your feelings about this decision (and other people's feelings, if others are involved)

Step 4: Write beliefs about this decision (it helps to find out the beliefs and values of people you trust, such as a parent, guardian, or other adult who is like family)

Step 5: Write your decision