

# Communication, Day 6: Decision-Making

Special Education: Secondary, Lesson # 13

## Student Learning Objectives:

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To be able to...

1. Identify three different types of decisions
2. Identify a preference when given two options
3. Identify four steps involved in a decision-making process.
4. Demonstrate the four step process as applied to a given situation.
5. Identify their own decisions regarding relationships and touch.

## Materials Needed:

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1 of 4 step decision making process  
Copies (one per student) of the kinds of decisions worksheet  
Copies (one per student) of the decision-making worksheet

## Agenda:

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1. Defining decisions
2. What I did this morning
3. A four step decision making model
4. Worksheet
5. Debrief worksheet
6. Decision-making and relationships

Decision-making is the subject of this lesson. Many people with learning challenges have problems making wise decisions, largely because they haven't had opportunities to develop or practice decision making skills. Levels of decision-making range from simple to complex, with simple choices about preferences being at one end of a continuum, while decisions about behaviors and relationships may require a more sophisticated approach.

Ultimately, students must practice decision-making many times in many different contexts in order to become confident and skilled. As the teacher, you can support your students' learning about decision-making by providing frequent opportunities for practice in school and non-school settings. Invite your students to discuss their opinions, their preferences, and their decisions.

## Activities:

### “Making up your mind”

#### 1. Defining Decisions

- A. Identify decision-making as today's topic and ask the class to help you define the term. Some helpful language:  
*“Every time a person chooses between two different things; every time a person makes up their mind about what they want to do, or say, or think, or read, or wear, or eat; every time a person thinks about whether something is right or wrong or okay or not okay for them - it's called decision-making.”*
- B. Discuss with the class that there are three different kinds of decisions.
  1. Decisions that are made for us by other people - usually close family and friends or helpers.
  2. Choices that are easy, because we already know what we want.
  3. Decisions that are not as easy, that require more thought.
- C. Write three headings on the board or butcher paper.
  1. Made for us.
  2. Easy choices.
  3. Needing more thought.
- D. Brainstorm with your students some decisions that are made *for* us (and sometimes with us), by people who care about us.  
**Some examples:**
  1. What classroom we will be in at school.
  2. How many students will be in our class.
  3. Who our teacher will be.
  4. What we will study in school. (note student involvement in Individualized Education Plan - I.E.P. process)
  5. What kind of medication we will take to keep us healthy.
- E. Brainstorm with your students easy choices. Some possibilities:
  1. whether to have an apple or an orange in your lunch.
  2. whether to listen to music or watch television to relax.
  3. whether to wear your blue shirt or your red shirt today.

### “What is your choice?”

**“Harder choices” or  
“Need more thought”.**

F. Discuss that as we become adults fewer choices are made for us, and we have to make them for ourselves. Therefore it is a good idea to practice making choices and to learn how to make decisions that are not quite as easy. That is what we will work on today.

G. Brainstorm with your students examples of decisions that need more thought.

Some possibilities:

1. what to give your mother for her birthday.
2. whether or not to tell, if you see someone steal something in a store.
3. whether or not to ask someone you like to spend time with you, go on a date.
4. you are at a party with your family and someone offers you a beer. You have to decide whether or not to accept it.

**2. What I did this morning. Point out that everyone makes choices and decisions about their lives every day.**

**Roleplay or act out all the activities that occurred this morning. Then ask after each one:**

**“What did you decide?” and “Why?”**

A. Have the class help you to brainstorm about choices and decisions that everyone has made today in preparation for school.

Some examples:

1. whether or not to get out of bed
2. what to wear
3. whether to have a shower or a bath
4. whether to eat breakfast
5. what to have for breakfast
6. who to sit with on the bus, or walk to school with
7. whether to bring their lunch
8. what to put in their lunch

B. Categorize each of the decisions made this morning as:

1. Made for us.
2. Easy choices.
3. Needing more thought.

**3. A Four Step Decision Making Model**

A. Explain to the class that sometimes it helps to have “an approach” or “a plan” to help us think about decisions that require more thought.

B. Project or post the four step transparency as a reference point for students.

**Apply the model to something simple - like what kind of fruit to have in your lunch.**

**“What are my choices?”**

**“What will happen if I choose this or this.....?”**

**“How do I feel?”**

**“How do other people feel?”**

**“What do I think?”**

**“What do other people think?”**

**“banana, apple, orange, grapefruit, cherries”**

**“allergies, what’s available, cost, ripeness”**

**“I hate cherries. I had a bad banana yesterday. That apple looks really good.”**

**“An apple a day...”**

- C. Review the four steps:
  1. List choices
  2. Think about what could happen - pros and cons of each choice
  3. Think about feelings, your own and other people’s if someone else is involved
  4. Think about what you believe (sometimes it helps to find out what other people believe, too, to help you decide what you believe - talk to your family, clergy, or a trusted adult)

- D. Have the class pick one example of a decision that needs more thought. Write the situation/decision to be made on the board. Draw three columns under it. At the top of the first column write “Choices”. Above the second and third columns write “What could Happen”. At the top of the second column write “Good Things”. At the top of the third column write “Bad Things”. (Students don’t need to copy this, as they will receive a worksheet for individual practice.)

	<b>What Could Happen</b>	
<b>Choices</b>	<b>Good Things</b>	<b>Bad Things</b>

- E. Have students brainstorm all possible choices they can think of. Write down all responses. Be sure the group comes up with at least four possible choices.
- F. Next have students consider the good and bad things that could happen with each choice. Write down their ideas under the appropriate heading, restating them if necessary.
- G. Explore some feelings about the decision and the choices. Share your own feelings only if they are widely held by other people. Language like, *“Many people feel...”* and *“Some people think...is...,”* may be helpful.
- H. Explore a range of possible beliefs about the situation and the choices. Share your own belief only if it is widely held by others. Language like, *“Many people feel...”* and *“Some people think...is...,”* may be helpful.
- I. Ask students to decide which choice is best, based on the things that could happen, feelings and beliefs explored. Ask for a show of hands. Discuss the importance of the process. If the person in the situation had not gone through the process, he/she might have made a decision that was not as good. It is important to emphasize that the process doesn’t always take this long. Usually it is not

even written down. But it is always important to consider choices, things that could happen, feelings and beliefs when making decisions that require more thought.

J. **Follow-up Supporting Activity.**

Ask students to consider an important decision they made recently. (Or a decision made by someone they know).

Ask how they think things turned out.

How would things be different (in looking back) if a different decision had been made?

Are they pleased with the result of the decision?

What did they learn from the decision?

**4. Worksheet - pros & cons**

A. Hand out the Decision-Making worksheet and ask students to choose a second situation.

B. Completing the worksheet can be done in class on an individual basis, in small groups, or as homework.

**5. Debrief Worksheet.** Ask for volunteers to share their situation, decision-making process, lists of things that could happen, and especially their final decision with the class.

**6. Decision-Making and Relationships.**

Teacher Note: Sexual Decision-Making is covered in greater detail in a future lesson. This activity provides essential background for the exploitation unit.

A. Tell your students that:

“Decisions about sexual touch (touch on private parts of the body) and relationships are some of the most important decisions we ever make. They usually are decisions that “need more thought” and should not be made lightly.

It is VERY important to think about our feelings and beliefs when we make decisions about sexual touch and relationships, and to understand how these decisions affect other people.

Some examples of decisions about sexual touch that teenagers often think about include:

1. what to do/where to go on a date
2. how to treat someone you care about
3. how to show you like someone
4. whether or not it is okay to masturbate. (Be sure to remind your students that masturbation is a private behavior – i.e. done by yourself alone, in a private place, with the door closed.)

**Use magazine pictures of people touching in different ways. Tell students that they can choose how they will be touched by other people.**

**Show (or model), a hug, a kiss, holding hands, arm around the shoulder, shaking hands, standing apart.**

**Ask students to point to the picture of touch they sometimes choose with:**

- a) their mother
- b) their best friend
- c) their teacher
- d) their doctor
- e) the bus driver

5. whether or not it is okay to kiss and hug someone in a sexual way.
  6. whether or not it is okay to have sexual intercourse
- B. Discuss with students that people have different beliefs about sexual touch like kissing, masturbation and sexual intercourse.  
Encourage students to talk to their family about what they believe, or to ask a trusted adult for help in making decisions about sexual touch.

# Dear Trusted Adult,

In class we talked about decision-making. We discussed the fact that everyone makes up their mind about things every day. We explored three main types of decisions. They are:

1. Decisions that are made for us by other people - usually close family and friends or helpers.
2. Choices that are easy, because we already know what we want.
3. Decisions that are not as easy, that need more thought.

We talked about examples of each of these types of decisions and then practiced a four-step approach to help in making decisions that require more thought.

1. **List choices** (people often forget this step, but it is a key to good decision-making!)
2. **Think about what might happen** - pros and cons of each choice
3. **Think about feelings**, your own and other people's if someone else is involved
4. **Think about what you believe** (sometimes it helps to find out what other people believe, too, to help you decide what you believe - talk to your family, clergy, or a trusted adult)

You can support this learning by:

- discussing the most important decision you ever made, and how you made it.
- offering many opportunities for making simple choices (e.g. what type of fruit would you like in your lunch? what would you like to do after chores on Saturday? etc.).
- reminding students that they make decisions all the time. Point them out when they occur.
- asking students to watch television for one hour and describe a decision made by any character
- considering a decision your family has recently made, (a purchase, a job change, a vacation destination) and analyzing it in terms of the four steps. Another approach is to think of an upcoming decision and discuss the decision-making process, applying the four steps.

If you have any questions or comments, please call me.

Sincerely,

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Teacher, Principal or Nurse

**NOTE: All Trusted Adult Exercises are Optional.**

## **Decision Making Steps**

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- 1. List choices**
- 2. Think about what could happen (good things, bad things)**
- 3. Think about feelings, your own and other people's if someone else is involved**
- 4. Think about what you believe and what your family believes**

## Decision-Making Worksheet: Problem

Choices	What Could Happen	
	(Good Things) +	(Bad Things) -