

# Decisions, Decisions, Decisions

## CONCEPTUAL BASE:

Our values, perceptions, needs, experiences, and feelings influence our decisions.

## OBJECTIVES:

1. To emphasize how any decision may involve several factors
2. To emphasize that we must take responsibility for our decisions

## TIME:

20–30 minutes

## INTRODUCTION:

“Every day we make a wide range of decisions. Most of them don’t require us to ‘think carefully,’ for example, to pick up a dropped pencil, to use a red marker instead of a blue. But other decisions, particularly about values, right and wrong, and decisions that may provoke conflicts, can have more significant outcomes. Let’s think about some of the things we have to consider in making those important decisions.”

## ACTIVITY:

1. Refer students to page S-32 and discuss everything except “Hassle Handler.” You may add other “Should I…” questions more directly relevant to your students, school, and community.
2. Discuss with students the likely consequences of each.
3. Have student form small groups.
4. In *Stretch Your Learning*, have students work together as the “Hassle Handler” to write responses to each of letters. Discuss responses.

## CLOSURE:

“In several of the last few lessons we’ve emphasized thinking ahead to the likely outcomes of our choices. We can’t always know exactly what may happen as a result of our decisions, because we can’t control other people and unknown circumstances. But we take responsibility regardless. When something turns out well, we can feel proud of that. When things go wrong, we can choose to emphasize solving the problem or to complain and blame. Which makes more sense?”

“Though we can’t control everything that happens, effective problem solvers take responsibility for their decisions.”

## EXTENSIONS OR ALTERNATIVES:

1. Discuss: When a person quits school, steals, vandalizes, or experiments with alcohol or other drugs, what consequences may follow for him/herself, family, victims, society?
2. Sometimes corporations seem to overlook or ignore the long-term consequences of their decisions. For example, a large chemical corporation made a decision to dump dangerous chemicals onto a vacant lot at a place called Love Canal in New York state. Years later, houses were built on this land. Many children living in these homes became sick. Scientists found the chemicals seeping into local homes. Only then did the company acknowledge the serious consequences of its decision.

Discuss other examples of decisions that had long-range effects on people, typically innocent and unknowing victims. (Unethical accounting and investment practices, automobile industry disregarding

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safety to save small amounts of money, shabby home construction and inspection, Agent Orange in Vietnam, nuclear and other toxic waste sites, etc.)

3. Put a “Hassle Handlers” mailbox in your classroom for students with problems to write unsigned letters for class brainstorming.
4. Have students write their own “Dear Hassle Handler” letters and exchange them with a classmate. Have them write replies. Share and discuss what each wrote.

## **INFUSION:**

*Language Arts:* Find other decisions in stories recently read that provide major turning points in the plot. What other decisions could the characters have chosen? What impact could those choices have made on the outcome?

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As an infant you made no conscious choices. As a young child, you still had most decisions made for you by parents and other adults. As you continue growing, however, you begin to make more and more decisions—and have to take more responsibility for the consequences. Your decisions matter.

Should I join the kids smoking?

Should I make an illegal copy of some music files?

Should I tell my parents what really happened?

Should I go see a movie my parents told me not to see?



- ◆ **NEEDS and WANTS:**  
I have to have this...  
I'd like to have this...
- ◆ **VALUES:**  
I know the right thing to do...
- ◆ **FEELINGS:**  
When this happens, I feel...
- ◆ **EXPERIENCES:**  
The last time this happened...
- ◆ **PERCEPTIONS:**  
It seems to me that...
- ◆ **CONSEQUENCES:**  
If I do this, I think I know what'll happen...

Some decisions we find relatively simple, if they don't have serious consequences: Which shoes should I wear today? Do I want fries with that? Other choices, though, may have more of an impact on us, so we need to put more time and thought into them. Your brain processes many factors—sometimes so many that you may not recognize them all consciously. Whatever you choose as the basis for any decision, you stand accountable for the results.

## STRETCH YOUR LEARNING

**Dear Hassle Handler**

You write a "Hassle Handler" column for your school newspaper. You receive letters from students who need help making decisions. Write a well-reasoned reply to the letter to the right, pointing out some issues to consider.

Dear Hassle Handler,  
I caught my best friend writing on the wall at school.  
This morning our principal talked to us about keeping our school clean. Mrs. Adams, our school custodian, has had to scrub the walls three times this week. I hate to squeal on my friend, but I know that what she did is wrong.

Sincerely,  
Caught Too