

## Health Skill:

# Decision-Making



## Background Information

The health skill, *Decision-Making*, focuses on the fact that people make decisions everyday. These decisions can be everyday decisions, impulsive decisions, quick decisions, or thoughtful decisions. Identifying the level of importance for each decision allows for an intentional process to be utilized when needed. Taking the time to make thoughtful decisions, especially regarding one's health, helps maintain positive health behaviors and change unhealthy behaviors. It is important for students to understand that the use of this skill allows them to sort through problems, brainstorm options, analyze the outcomes, follow-through, and reflect on the choices they make. When applied to health, the steps in this health skill model gives students the ability to make decisions individually, or collaboratively, to improve their quality of life. The health skill also allows students to make decisions outside of high-risk and high-stake contexts, increasing the likelihood of making healthy choices when facing potentially unhealthy situations. Mastery of *Decision-Making* empowers students to work through difficult situations by keeping the impact of the decision on their health in mind. Mastering *Decision-Making* prepares students for the other health skills, such as *Goal-Setting*, *Self-Management*, and *Advocacy for Self & Others*.

### Notes on Grade Level Progression

Activities, vocabulary, and language throughout the grade levels are vertically aligned and build upon one another.

If students require scaffolding, refer to previous grade levels for additional ideas for activities and instruction that address gaps in student skills. For enrichment activities, look at higher grade levels in order to provide additional practice opportunities or for ideas on how to deepen understanding.

#### PreK-2

- Identifying decisions related to health
- Knowing when to get help
- Choosing between two options
- Learning from decisions

#### 3-5

- Identifying options
- Predicting outcomes
- Reflecting on decisions

#### 6-8

- Defining different types of decisions (everyday, impulsive, thoughtful)
- Analyzing collaborative and individual decisions
- Predicting and evaluating outcomes
- Using strategies to help follow-through on decisions
- Identifying potential obstacles to health decision-making

#### 9-12

- Using more complex prioritization strategies (pro/con lists, values rating)
- Using collaborative decision-making strategies

### NATIONAL HEALTH EDUCATION STANDARD 5 (NHES):

Students will demonstrate the ability to use *decision-making* skills to enhance health.

*National Health Education Standard Rationale: Decision-making skills are needed to identify, implement, and sustain health-enhancing behaviors. This standard includes the essential steps that are needed to make healthy decisions as prescribed in the performance indicators. When applied to health issues, the decision-making process enables individuals to collaborate with others to improve their quality of life.*



## Grades 6-8 Framework

In grades 6-8 for *Decision-Making*, students work to identify the different types of decisions they will have to make. Since all decisions made throughout a person's day cannot all go through a decision-making process, middle school students spend time delineating between decisions that require a thoughtful decision-making process from everyday decisions or impulsive decisions. After identifying decisions that require more thought, students utilize strategies to make healthy decisions, such as listing options and predicting outcomes. Making the decision and follow through on the decision are important steps to name for middle school students since internal and external influences can make it hard to make and follow through on healthy decisions. Finally, to ensure students learn from decisions, reflection is a crucial step in decision-making, allowing students to connect choices to their future.

Mastery of *Decision-Making* for grades 6-8 means students are able to identify important health-related decisions, use decision-making strategies, make a healthy decision, follow through on that decision, and reflect on their decisions.

## The Steps:



### Step 1: Determine Importance of a Decision

**Step Overview:** The main goal of this step is to develop awareness for when decisions need to be made using a thoughtful decision-making process. It is important for students to understand that they do not have to go through these steps with every decision they make because that can be unrealistic and overwhelming. By focusing on the important decisions related to their health, students are better able to recognize when they need to slow things down. It also allows them to make decisions ahead of time rather than in stressful moments where it is more difficult to make healthy decisions. In addition to distinguishing between when a thoughtful decision-making process is needed, students also explore when decision-making must be done with others because the decision affects more than just themselves. For example, students should explore important decisions that require agreement or consent from another person.

#### Sub Skill(s):

- Define different types of decisions (Everyday, Impulsive, Thoughtful, etc.)
- Determine if a situation requires a thoughtful decision
- Determine if a situation requires an individual or collaborative decision



### Step 2: Use a Prioritization Strategy

**Step Overview:** In Step 2, students use strategies that aid in prioritizing in decision-making: listing options, identifying if help is needed, and predicting outcomes. The Sub Skills included in this step are only a few of the many strategies students can use to aid them in making healthy decisions. Teachers should use additional strategies to meet the needs of their students.

#### Sub Skill(s):

- List options for thoughtful decisions
- Determine if help is needed when making a decision
- Predict the outcomes of different options



## Step 3: Make a Decision

**Step Overview:** Once a person has listed options and predicted outcomes, it is important to make the decision and follow-through. It can sometimes be easy to get stuck in Step 2 because it is hypothetical. However, it is important that a decision is actually made. Step 3 provides students opportunities to practice making decisions.



## Step 4: Follow Through

**Step Overview:** Learning to follow through on decisions is especially important for middle school students as they encounter challenges to healthy decision-making, such as peer pressure. If students are struggling to make healthy decisions or follow through on healthy decisions, review the work they did in *Analyze Influences* to help them review the influences that help or hinder their ability to make healthy decisions. It is important that teachers provide strategies to follow through on decisions, such as communicating decisions clearly and making a plan. The Sub Skills for this step provide three strategies, however, teachers should use additional strategies to meet the needs of their classroom.

### Sub Skill(s):

- Communicate decisions
- Identify when it is easy or hard to follow through on healthy decisions
- Make a plan for when a healthy decision is difficult



## Step 5: Reflect

**Step Overview:** Learning to reflect takes practice and intention. After a decision is made, it is important to learn from the consequences, both positive and negative. This step allows students to take time to connect this decision to future decisions. Developing metacognition in decision making allows a person to make decisions more quickly in moments where they don't have time to go through all of the steps explicitly.

### Reflection Question(s):

- How did the decision make you feel?
- What options did you think about at first?
- Why did you choose the option you did?
- What might happen next after that decision?
- How did asking for help make your decision healthier?
- How does this decision affect others?
- How does this decision affect my relationships?
- How does this decision align with my values?
- How does this decision affect my goals?
- Would you make that decision again? Why or why not?
- What do you want to remember next time you have to make the same decision?



## Teaching Tips

- Teach *Decision-Making* for each health topic covered. Prompt students to identify decisions they will need to make related to that health topic. For example, when substances, such as tobacco, marijuana, and alcohol, have students use the steps to decide whether or not to use these substances.
- Implicitly teach the decision-making processing by modeling decisions you make and structuring learning activities to be centered around student choice.
- Provide opportunities for students to role play communicating their decisions to others and asking for support. Communicating decisions increases the likelihood that an individual will follow through.
- Allow students to use decisions they are facing in order to apply the decision-making process to their life.
- Pair Decision-Making with *Stage 2: Refusal Skills & Boundary Setting of Interpersonal Communication* to help students follow through on decisions when facing difficult situations.

See *Teaching Progression* for suggested learning activities.