

# Say “YES” to a Healthy Lifestyle



Discovery  
EDUCATION



GRADE  
RANGE  
5–8

## SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING | CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

# ASK, LISTEN, LEARN: MAKING CHOICES

### Learning Objectives

Students will:

- **Understand** the definition of responsible decision-making
- **Analyze** decisions using a decision tree support tool
- **Explain** how they will apply this support tool to help them make responsible decisions in the future

### Description

This activity will focus on responsible decision-making. Students will begin by brainstorming their own recent decisions, which they will sort into split-second decisions & thoughtful decisions. They will then be introduced to the idea that thoughtful and responsible decision-making considers how the decision will affect others and themselves now and in the future. To help them make responsible choices, students will be introduced to a decision support tool called a decision tree, which they will use to analyze some of their personal decisions. The activity will then wrap up with a mini goal-setting session in which students consider how they could apply the decision support tool to help them make responsible choices in the future.

### Timing

45–60 minutes

### Materials

- Device with the ability to project video, one for the teacher
- *Today's Decisions* handout, one per student
- White board or chart paper, one for the teacher
- *Responsible Decisions* handout, two copies per student

### Procedure

1. **Warm-Up Activity:** Pass out one *Today's Decisions* handout to each student. Encourage students to independently brainstorm all of the decisions they have made today leading up to class and jot them in the handout's first column. (They should leave the second column blank for now.) Be sure students understand that *all* decisions should be included—choosing whether to get up when

their alarm went off, choosing what to wear, choosing how to respond when an adult asked them to do something, etc., all count!

2. Once students have jotted a list of decisions, write the following two terms on the board:
  - *Split-Second Decisions and Responsible/Thoughtful Decisions*  
Define *Split-Second Decisions* as decisions that are made in an instant without much thought.
  - Define *Responsible/Thoughtful Decisions* as decisions where you think about your options and the best choice to make.
3. Then encourage students to go back through their decisions list, consider how they made each choice, and use the right column to label each decision as *split-second* or *responsible/thoughtful*.
4. Next, lead the class in a quick discussion around their decision list. Questions to discuss include:
  - Are the decisions you have made so far today mostly split-second decisions, mostly responsible/thoughtful decisions, or a combination of both?
  - Who can share an example of a split-second decision you made? Why did you make this decision in this way?
  - Who can share an example of a responsible/thoughtful decision you made? What did you consider as you made this decision? Why did you think more carefully about this decision?
  - Why are some choices better suited for split-second decisions while others are better suited for responsible/thoughtful decisions?
5. Then tell the class that the rest of the session will focus on thoughtful and responsible decision-making. Elaborate on this type of decision and explain that in order for a decision to be responsible, it must consider how the decision will affect themselves and others now and in the future.
6. Distribute two copies of the *Responsible Decisions* handout to each student, and draw a copy of the diagram on the board as well (leaving out the text). Explain that this simple diagram can be helpful when making tricky decisions!
7. Provide an example of a situation where a decision must be made, such as: When you and your best friend are home alone, your friend asks if you'd like to try some alcohol. What do you do?
8. Then guide students through the following, as you help students understand how to use the decision tree as a support for their decision-making:
  - Top row:
    - Explain that the first box is for an overview of the situation.
    - Write “friend offers me a drink” in the first box.
  - Second row:
    - Explain that this row is for the choices you have and the different ways you could respond to the situation. Sometimes there are two choices, sometimes there are three choices, and

sometimes there may be more.

- Ask students: What positive and negative choices would you have in this situation?
  - Record students’ ideas in the boxes, and draw a couple more boxes to hold additional choices if needed. Be sure students describe at least one choice that involves saying yes as well as at least one choice that involves saying no.
  - Third row:
    - Explain that this row summarizes how each choice from the second row could affect them (the decision-maker) *and* other people. Students should think about immediate and future effects.
    - Write “me” in one of the boxes below every choice. Then encourage students to think about how each choice could affect them now and in the future, and record these effects in the “me” boxes.
    - Then work with the class to select at least one other person or group of people that each choice would affect. Record these people in the second box below each choice, as well as how the choice could affect them now and in the future. Additional boxes may be added, if needed.
  - Fourth row:
    - Explain that this row is for an explanation of their decision.
    - Encourage students to review the chart’s contents with a partner and decide which choice is the most responsible decision.
    - Ask several pairs to share the decision that they arrived upon and explain their reasoning.
    - Point to the final box at the bottom of the decision tree and reiterate that an explanation of the decision they selected can go in this space.
9. Then take the opportunity to explain that responsible decision-making does not mean that everyone makes the exact same choice nor does it mean that it creates a perfect solution for everyone. Reiterate again that responsible decision-making means that students think about how the decision will personally affect them and others now and in the future and then select the choice that will be best for those involved.
10. Now explain that students will use their copies of the decision tree organizer to think through decisions they are currently grappling with or decisions they may encounter in the future. Encourage students to map out at least two different decisions and then use the decision tree to make a choice and justify their selection.

**Tip:** *If students are having a hard time coming up with decisions, encourage them to think about situations that involve any of the following:*

- Rules they are supposed to follow
- Their relationship with their friends
- How they treat, or are treated by, their peers
- Their schoolwork
- Their responsibilities at home
- Their relationship with their family
- Decisions regarding their health: such as diet, exercises, drugs or alcohol

**11. Wrap-Up:** When there are about ten minutes left in the session, bring the class back together. Because of their personal nature, don't ask students to share their decision-making brainstorming. Instead, encourage students to discuss with a partner:

- What types of decisions may be difficult for you to make in the future?
- How could you use this decision tree support tool to help you make these decisions?

Then conclude with one more question to discuss as a full class:

- You may not always have the chance to pause and write about your choices when you need to make a responsible decision. Thinking about your future decisions, how could you use your knowledge of the decision tree support tool to help you make responsible decisions in real time?

## Extension

To help students further consider the consequences of their decisions, students may complete these [Brain Word Scrambles](#) as they learn more about the consequences of underage alcohol and cannabis use on the developing brain.

## National School Standards

### [CASEL SEL Framework](#)

- Responsible decision-making: The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations. This includes the capacities to consider ethical standards and safety concerns, and to evaluate the benefits and consequences of various actions for personal, social, and collective well-being.

### [National Health Education Standards](#)

- Standard 4: Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.
- Standard 5: Students will demonstrate the ability to use decision-making skills to enhance health.
- Standard 7: Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and avoid or reduce health risks.

### [Common Core ELA Standards](#)

- W.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- SL.1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

## Today's Decisions

What decisions have you made today?	Decision Type

## Responsible Decisions

What is the situation?

What choices do I have? (Fill in at least two)

Who will these choices affect and how could it affect them?

Review the choices you have and how each choice could affect you and those around you. Then select the responsible decision that will be best for you and those around you, and explain the reasoning behind your choice in the space below: