



CHOICE-MAKING AND CRITICAL THINKING

WHAT ARE CHOICE-MAKING AND CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS?

Choice-making refers to our ability to select our actions or paths forward, based upon the information we have. **Critical thinking** refers to our ability to think analytically about those choices, as well as our ability to problem solve.

WHAT DO CHOICE-MAKING AND CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS LOOK LIKE?

Children with strong choice-making and critical thinking skills:

- Make sound choices within limits (e.g., choosing whether to play outside or play board games during free time).
- Ask relevant questions and identify creative solutions to problems.
- Think analytically and thoughtfully about their actions and behaviors (e.g., if a parent gives a child a limit on the number of children who can be invited to their birthday party, that child might exercise analytical and thoughtful thinking by determining who to invite to their birthday party and thinking through the potential outcomes of that decision).

HOW CAN PARENTS FOSTER CHOICE-MAKING & CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS?

Parents can ...

- Ask open-ended questions that prompt creative thinking and have multiple possible solutions (e.g., How do you think that made the girl feel when her puppy ran away? Why do you think it is best to listen to others' points of view?)
- Present children with opportunities to make everyday choices within healthy limits (e.g., "Would you like broccoli or green beans with your dinner?").
- Approach Discipline with Curiosity! Ask children to share the following when undesirable actions or behavior are observed:
 - Why are you choosing this course of action or behavior?
 - How do you think the action or behavior is making others feel?
 - What might be a different course of action in the future?
 - For example, if children are fighting over a toy, say: "*Help me understand why you snatched the toy away from your little sister.*"
 - After the child answers, acknowledge their answer and say: "*How do you think that made your sister feel?*"
 - After the child answers that question, acknowledge their answer and say: "*What do you think could be a better solution next time?*"

