



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS ON PROMOTING RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

WHY SHOULD I OFFER MY CHILDREN CHOICES?

Giving your child(ren) opportunities to make choices develops their:

- Ability to identify their likes and dislikes
- Awareness of the rewards of responsible decision-making
- Awareness of the consequences of unwise or unhealthy choices
- Ability to predict and weigh the pros and cons in real-life scenarios
- Self-confidence
- Self-management
- Critical thinking skills

WHAT SKILLS ARE INVOLVED WITH RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING?

SELF-AWARENESS

- I can identify my feelings.
- I can share my feelings with another to seek support and understanding.
- I can sense my impulses.

SELF-MANAGEMENT

- I know that all actions have consequences or results.
- I understand that my choices impact the consequences or results I face.
- I act with agency to set and attain goals.
- I implement strategies to regulate my own emotions.
- I do not act on impulse since my first reaction may not be my best reaction.

SOCIAL AWARENESS AND RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

- I know that my choices impact others.
- I can take social cues through verbal communication and body language.
- I can empathize and see from the others' perspective to inform my choice.
- I can respect diverse perspectives and recognize injustice.
- I can manage my relationships in healthy ways and work through conflict.



CHOICE-MAKING

- I make sound choices within limits (two to three options or parameters).
- I take action to get results and work toward my goals.
- I learn lessons from my choices and apply them to my future course of action.
- I consider my values and beliefs and how my actions align with them.

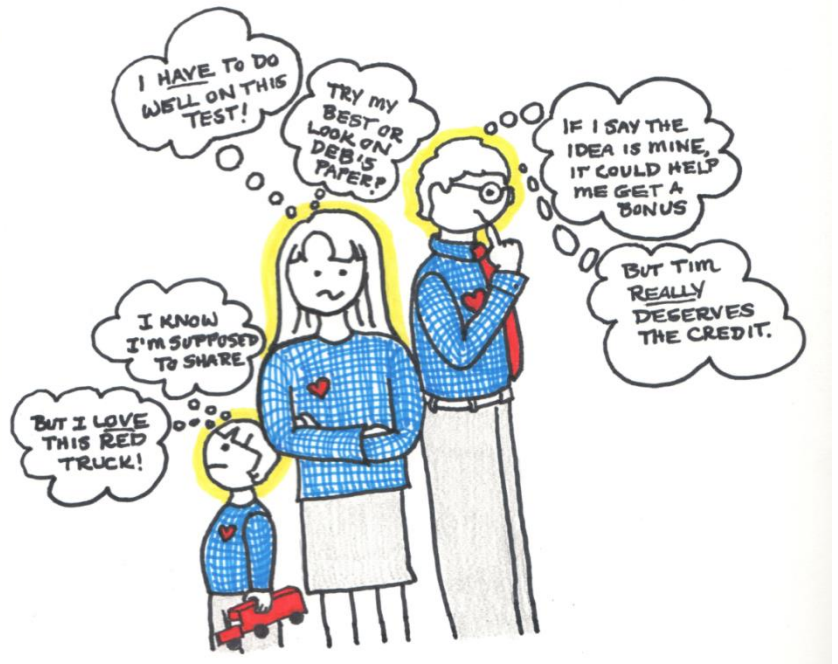
CRITICAL THINKING

- I ask relevant questions.
- I identify creative solutions to problems.
- I think analytically and thoughtfully about my actions and behaviors.
- I identify my choices and their results/impact/consequences.

WHAT ARE OTHER WAYS YOU CAN PROMOTE RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING SKILLS?

Reflecting on news stories, social media or incidents you hear about at school and in your neighborhood can offer plenty of opportunity to reflect and make meaning of decisions. When poor choices are made that have a ripple effect, you might ask family members, “how can we empathize with what she was feeling when she made that choice? What other choices did she have? If she had made a different decision, what could have resulted?”

Noticing and recognizing when your child makes positive choices that result in healthy outcomes is an important way to promote more of the same. Whether it’s hard work that results in a high test score or acting kindly toward a friend who is hurting, parents can promote more positive choices by calling those out as examples of a child’s responsible decision-making ability.



Read together and reflect on the decisions of characters—evil or beloved. Ask open-ended questions about the choices made. Make predictions together about what might occur in the future pages considering choices made. What if just? What impact did it have?



Find ways to show care. Serve in your neighborhood or community addressing an issue that your child is particularly interested in. Meet individuals through service that you, in your everyday life, may not encounter. Discuss social issues whether it's helping those who are homeless or the need to protect the Planet, why they occur and what small actions your family can take to help. Children need to develop a sense of agency, that they can affect positive change in their communities by taking small steps.

Use restorative justice practices when it comes to discipline. When your child makes a choice that harms another, ask open-minded, open-hearted questions to discover motivation. You might ask, "how were you feeling when you made that choice?" and see what you can discover through empathy. Then you might prompt them with questions about how they can take steps to repair the harm caused. Surely if they broke something, they'll need to fix it. But what about a relationship? Allow your child to come up with ideas for mending a relationship. Can they apologize in person? Write a letter? Draw a picture? Do a kind gesture?

Separate behavior and love. Though we may know that our love for our child is not tied to their actions, they don't. Especially on days when a child has made a poor choice, they need reassurance of our unconditional love no matter what.

WHAT IF THEY ARE TOO YOUNG TO MAKE THEIR OWN DECISIONS?

Even infants are slowly developing their ability to express their needs, wants and desires through their first form of communication—their cry. No matter the age of your children, they can begin taking small steps toward making choices for themselves with your help and guidance.

WHAT IF THEY STRUGGLE WITH POSITIVE CHOICES?

While every child is unique and develops at their own pace. It is important to keep these things in mind to prevent them or you from feeling too frustrated:

- Start small – Begin with everyday decisions like what to wear or play
- Take baby steps – Gradually move from simple choices to unlimited options
- Avoid comparisons – Honor your child(ren)'s developmental timeline by not expecting them to make decisions at the pace of other children

NEXT STEPS...

[Family Fighting? Use Peace Rose](#) – This helps your children try out a problem-solving process with one another taking responsibility for their own conflict management.

[Stop, Think, Go! Problem-solving Practice for your Family](#) – Here's a game to try out to practice problem-solving.

[Citizen Kid](#) – Learn more about promoting community connection and service with your family.

