

KEY SEL SKILLS: RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

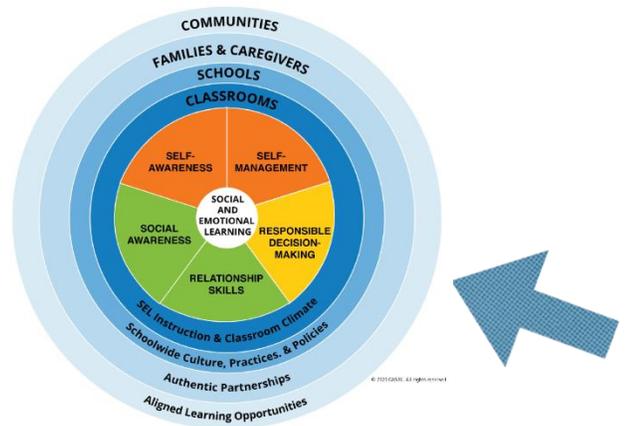
WHAT ARE RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING SKILLS?

Responsible decision-making refers to our ability to make a reflective choice that advances us toward a goal while considering the impact on individuals, groups, organizations or the environment in the short and long term while accepting any consequences of that decision.

WHAT DO RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING SKILLS LOOK LIKE?

Children with responsible decision-making skills:

- Make reasoned choices within limits. For example, parents can offer a child a choice on when to complete homework whether right after school or—if they need a break—before or after dinnertime.
- Ask relevant questions with an open mind and identify creative solutions to problems. For example, if a child has a challenge with a friend, instead of offering immediate solutions, ask open-ended questions that prompt the child’s careful consideration about her friendship and options.
- Pause and share feelings when upset or experiencing a challenging emotion taking time to calm down. This practice in self-management helps children to not base their choices on impulse or desire but on thoughtful consideration.
- Reflect on their actions. For example, if a parent gives a child a limit on the number of children who can be invited to their birthday party, parents can help children think about who to invite to their birthday party by talking about and thinking through the potential outcomes of that decision.



HOW CAN PARENTS FOSTER RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING?

Parents can...

- Recognize that the skill of responsible decision-making involves higher order thinking skills and requires practice over years to develop.
- Ask open-ended questions that prompt creative thinking generating multiple possible solutions (e.g., How do you think that made the girl feel when her puppy ran away?; What other choices did she have?)
- Present children with opportunities to make authentic, limited choices (e.g., “Would you like broccoli or green beans with your dinner?”).

PTA HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

- Help children repair harm in relationships and with things when they have caused it.
- Ask children to share the following when undesirable actions or behavior are observed:
 1. Why are you choosing this particular behavior?
 2. How do you think the action is making others feel; and
 3. What might be a different course of action in the future?

(e.g., “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 ask: “How can you repair your relationship? What can you do to make her feel better? And what could you do next time you're tempted by her toy?”

RESOURCES

[Family Responsible Decision-Making](#)

