



Making Better Choices



You're faced with lots of choices every day. Choices that you didn't have when you were younger. Choices that could impact your future.

Part of growing into a responsible, successful adult is learning how to make the right choices—and learning from your mistakes. But remember: Nobody's perfect. Learning how to make decisions is a skill that must be practiced just like any other.

Look inside for tips on how to make decisions, how to anticipate consequences and how to learn from your mistakes.



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Control your natural impulses

Do you usually act first and think later? When it comes to making decisions, this could get you into trouble.

Learning to control your impulses is a key part of decision-making. The easiest solution isn't always the best.

If you're faced with making a quick decision, here are two tips:

1. Wait three minutes.

Spend those minutes asking yourself questions like, "Is this the right thing to do?" "What will happen if I do it?" "Do I have any other choices?"



2. Trust your instincts.

If your friends ask you to do something you know is wrong, it's OK to say "no."

Consider upcoming decisions

Often you can anticipate decisions you may need to make. So when you can, try to decide what you will do in advance.

Consider the following situations:

- **Jane is invited to a party where she suspects kids will be smoking pot**—and possibly drinking. All of her friends are going to the party, but Jane isn't sure if she should go. What would *you* do?
- **Mike didn't study for his math test.** He sits next to the brightest kid in the class. It would be easy for him to sneak a little peek at his neighbor's test. What would *you* do?
- **Sara got a DM from a stranger.** After chatting for several days, she

and this stranger have agreed to meet in person. What would *you* do?



Making decisions is a skill

Ever notice how an athlete learns a new skill? The coach breaks it down into smaller parts, then lets the athlete practice until the skill is mastered.

That's a good way to make better decisions. You can make better decisions, too. Follow these six steps:

- 1. Think about the problem.** What is it you need to do or decide? What do you already know about this issue?
- 2. Gather information.** If you are facing a decision about a tough situation, don't make a choice until you have all the information.
- 3. List all your possible choices.** Try not to think of all decisions as either/or choices. There may be several alternatives.
- 4. Consider the consequences.** Write each choice on a separate piece of paper. Then draw a line down the center of each. On the left side, write the positive consequences from the decision. Write negative consequences on the right side.
- 5. Consider your feelings and values.** Sometimes, the best decision on paper may not *feel* right. Discuss your options with someone you trust.
- 6. Choose the best possible course of action**—then do your best to make it work!



Learn from your mistakes

You made a bad choice. You've put off finding sources to research a big paper. Now you won't be able to turn your paper in on time. Obviously, you've made a mistake. But you can learn from it by following the four R's:

1. Responsibility.

Don't blame others. Learn to own up to your mistake. "I waited until the last minute. When I couldn't find a primary source, I didn't have a backup plan."

2. Recognition.

What could you have done differently? "If I hadn't waited so long, I could have done more than a quick Google search. I could have changed topics. Next time, I will start earlier."

3. Reconciliation.

Did your mistake hurt another person? If you yelled at your mom because you were stressed out, apologize to her.

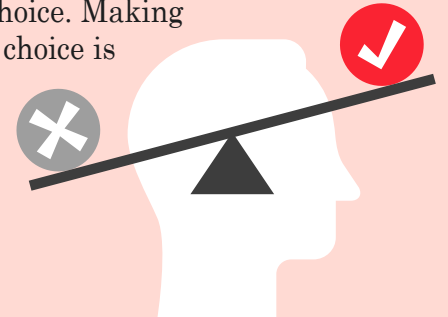
4. Resolution.

How can the problem be solved? Talk to the teacher—you might be able to do some extra work to make up for the low grade.

Some people say the biggest mistake is *not learning* from our mistakes. So the next time you mess up, remember the four R's.

Let your conscience guide you

When you have to make a choice, be sure to listen to that powerful built-in guide you always have available: your conscience. Especially when you're faced with many choices—the choice that would be the most fun, the one that would be the easiest, the fastest, the cheapest or the coolest—listening to the quiet voice of your conscience will help you make the RIGHT choice. Making the right choice is always the best choice!



“One’s philosophy is not best expressed in words; it is expressed in the choices one makes ... and the choices we make are ultimately our responsibility.”

—Eleanor Roosevelt

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