

We Make Decisions Every Day, Big and Little

Transition Skills, Tips & Tools

Solving Problems and Making Your Own Decisions



1. **Learning to make good decisions is a skill that can help you** grow up and be more independent and responsible as an adult.
2. **Parents play a critical role** in supporting children as they learn to make decisions on their own. Decision-making is an incredibly important skill. Parents should help their children develop their own decision-making abilities so they can achieve greater independence. Allowing your teen to identify a problem, figure out solutions, and come to a conclusion will give them confidence and problem-solving skills. These skills will serve them well for the rest of their lives.
3. **Build your decision-making skills.** This process takes time, patience and practice.
4. **Study which decisions get you more of what you want** (more fun, independence, time with friends, control over your daily life, etc.). Also note **which decisions lead to what you do not want** (arguments with parents, conflicts with peers, social drama, loss of privileges, adults telling you what to do, etc.). This process will help you learn to make good decisions.
5. **Learn from mistakes.** Choices always have consequences, some good and some bad. Mistakes play a very important role in life. Any mistake is an opportunity to learn how to handle a situation better the next time. It is not an opportunity for an adult to criticize. Parents should stay involved in this process and help model proper actions.
6. **Work through the decision-making steps and make more of your own decisions.** You can use the SODAS model below to help remember some of these steps:

- S** = Situation
- O** = Options
- D** = Disadvantages
- A** = Advantages
- S** = Solution

7. **Keep a decision journal** to write down and review all the decisions made during the day. A journal can help you see how well you handled decisions and learn how to do better, if needed.
8. **For more information** on building good decision-making skills, check out:
 - Decision-making (SODAS Method) resources to help your child make better decisions in any situation, www.smarterparenting.com/decision-making-education/.
 - Fact Sheet: “Decision Making/Problem Solving With Teens,” ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/5000/pdf/5301.pdf.
 - American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU): “When Do I Want Support?” tool can help identify your support needs, www.aclu.org/other/when-do-i-want-support. The information in this form can help you fill out a Supported Decision-Making Agreement, if needed. Another resource is the ACLU’s “Know Your Rights” page at www.aclu.org/know-your-rights.
 - The Arc’s Center for Future Planning at futureplanning.thearc.org/ provides information and tools to help people with intellectual and developmental disabilities make decisions. Handouts include:
 - “Decision-Making Plan Tool,” thearc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Future-Decision-Center-for-Future-Planning.pdf.
 - “Decision-Making Supports,” <https://thearc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Decision-Making-Supports-Center-for-Future-Planning-1.pdf>.
 - Illinois’ Supported Decision-Making Act ensures people with disabilities can get the help they need to make decisions for their own lives. The Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission has many resources to explain the Supported Decision-Making Act. Use the search term “supported decision-making” at www.illinois.gov/search-results.html?q=supported+decision+m&contentType=everything.

Steps to Decision-Making and Problem Solving

1. What problem do you need to solve? (Or state the problem.)

2. Why is this a problem?

3. What are my desired results? (What do I want to see happen?)

4. List three possible solutions. (What can I do to get my desired results?) As you look at these, ask yourself:
- a.) How will I feel afterward?
 - b.) How will others I value feel about me after this decision?
 - c.) Would I suggest the same solution to a friend?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Look at your first solution. List what may happen if you go with number 1.

Look at your second solution. List what may happen if you go with number 2.

Look at your third solution. List what may happen if you go with number 3.

Which one works best for solving the problem? Pick from numbers 1, 2 or 3.

5. Is this the best time to make this decision?

6. What resources do I need to carry out my choice?

7. Try out your chosen idea and test it. Did it solve the problem?

We're here to help.

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