



Making Decisions (🧠 A Cognitive Health Story)
(5th Grade – 10-11 yrs.)
Think, Pair, Share: Decisions, Decisions



STORY CONNECTION – SLIDE 2 (Approx time: 40-45 min)

We all know that your brain controls all the behaviors that you do. It helps you to eat, sleep, play, walk, talk...you name it – your brain helps you do it. For you to do all the behaviors you need to do all the time, every single day, your brain also must think and make decisions. These are known as cognitive behaviors. This story, Making Decisions, is going to help us understand how the brain can make all those decisions and why we need to help our brain to be sure we are making good decisions. Making good decisions helps our Cognitive Health.

Materials needed:

- Paper
- Pencils
- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Markers
- Tape
- Rate Your Decision-Making Skills (included below- optional)
- Decision-Making Scenario Cards (included below)
- Scissors

Preparation needed:

- Determine if student(s) will use the Rate Your Decision-Making Skills sheet
 - If so, print 1 per student.
 - If not, have questions readily available for student(s) to see and copy/respond to.
- Print out and cut apart the Decision-Making Scenario Cards
 - There are 8 scenarios included.
 - The cards included below can be used or scenarios can be tailored to the specific group of student(s).
- Copy the questions from step #12 on chart paper or the whiteboard or have them ready to digitally display for all student(s) to see.
- Determine student grouping for Part II: Decision-Making Scenario Cards.
 - There are 8 scenarios.
 - Student(s) can be grouped into 8 groups or scenarios can be repeated for smaller groups.
 - If student numbers are smaller, groups could discuss more than one scenario also.

Instructions:

1. In this activity, student(s) will use various scenarios to decide what decision they would make if they were in each situation and rate their own decision-making skills.

Part I: Decision Brainstorming

2. Pass out paper and pencils to the student(s).
3. Begin the activity by asking the student(s) to jot down how many decisions they think the average kid makes each day. Give them a minute to think and write down a number.
4. Next, have them turn to a partner and share/discuss their guesses.
5. Have the group come back together and share their responses.
6. After student(s) share, tell them it is about 3,000.
Note: 226.7 decisions alone revolve around food! (Source [here](#).)
<https://go.roberts.edu/leadingedge/the-great-choices-of-strategic-leaders#:~:text=Various%20internet%20sources%20estimate%20that,%26%20Labuzetta%2C%202013>).
7. Continue the activity by asking the student(s) to jot down how many decisions they think the average adult makes each day. Give them a minute to think and write down a number.
8. Next, have them turn to a partner and share/discuss their guesses.
9. Have the group come back together and share their responses.
10. After student(s) share, tell them it is a staggering 35,000. (Source [here](#).)
<https://www.pbsnc.org/blogs/science/how-many-decisions-do-we-make-in-one-day/#:~:text=Thousands%20of%20choices%20every%20day&text=It's%20estimated%20that%20the%20average,are%20both%20good%20and%20bad>.
11. Brainstorm as a group some of the things they must decide each day.
 - It should not take long for them to realize just how many decisions people make during the day.
 - These decisions might include:
 - What socks, pants, shirt, shoes, etc. to wear
 - Are you going to brush your teeth? Hope so!
 - Do you put your dirty clothes in the basket or leave them on the floor?
 - What do eat for breakfast: Milk or juice? Cereal or toast? Banana or apple?
 - Where to sit in the car or bus?
 - Do you hold the door for the person behind you or not?
 - Do you say “hello” or “good morning” to the bus driver?
12. Display the following list of questions for all student(s) to see.
 - Do all decisions have the same amount of weight or importance? Why or why not?
 - What decisions might be more important than others? For example, what college someone chooses to attend is a more important decision than what kind of pizza to order for dinner.
 - How would they define a good decision?
 - How would they define a bad decision?
 - Do all decisions have consequences?
13. Have the student(s) get with a partner and discuss each question.
14. After about five minutes, invite the whole group to come back together and briefly discuss their answers.

Part II: Decision-Making Scenario Cards

15. Explain to student(s) they will work in groups. Each group will be presented with a different scenario. They will follow a five-step process to discuss and determine as a group what to do in their specific situation. They will have an allotted amount of time to come to a consensus as a group and be prepared to share with others.
16. Go over the steps of the activity.
 - a. Have one person read the card/scenario.
 - b. Discuss the situation.
 - c. Come to a consensus as to what they would do in that situation.
 - d. Have one person take notes.
 - e. Have one person be the reporter.
17. Ask student(s) if they have any questions or need any clarification. Clear up any misunderstandings.

18. Put the student(s) into predetermined groups.
19. Give each group one of the decision-making scenario cards and allow them to begin discussion.
Suggestion: 5-10 minutes should be an appropriate amount of time for discussion.
20. After the allotted amount of time is over or all groups are finished, come back together as a group and discuss each scenario in the following way:
 - a. Have the reader read the scenario.
 - b. Have the reporter share out what the group would do in that situation.
 - c. Ask the other groups if they would have done anything differently.
 - d. Allow anyone to share any other thoughts before moving on to the next group.
 - e. Complete the process until all groups have shared.

Part III: Self-Reflection

21. Finally, explain that now the student(s) will reflect on their own decision-making skills.
22. Pass out the Rate Your Decision-Making Skills sheet and explain it.
23. Ask student(s) if they have any questions or need any clarification. Clear up any misunderstandings.
24. Allow a few minutes for the student(s) to complete it independently.
 - This is meant to be a self-reflection exercise, so the student(s) should not be forced to share, however, if time permits volunteers can share some responses.
25. In closing, review that they will be making thousands of decisions each day. While some decisions are more important than others, they all have consequences and can affect them in a positive or negative way. Making good decisions helps their cognitive health, making their brain happy, healthy, and SPECTacular!

Scenario Ideas Credit: [https://www.twinkl.com/blog/3-decision-making-scenarios-for-elementary-student\(s\)-to-explore](https://www.twinkl.com/blog/3-decision-making-scenarios-for-elementary-student(s)-to-explore)

Rate Your Decision-Making Skills

Name:

How would you rate your decision-making skills? Circle one.

1 Help!!!	2 Need Some Work	3 Fine	4 Pretty Good	5 Excellent
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Why did you give yourself this score?

Give an example of a good decision you made today? What made this a good decision?

Give an example of a bad decision you made today? What made this a bad decision?

How could you become a better decision maker?

Decision-Making Scenario Cards

You and a friend arrive early to your classroom and there are no other students or teachers in the room. There is a huge open bag of candy sitting on the teacher's desk. Your friend thinks you should both take a piece. After all, the bag is so big the teacher would never notice a couple of pieces missing and no one will ever know. What would you do?

A new girl moved into your apartment building. You invited her to hang out after school with you and another friend after school. At lunch, you tell your friend that you invited her to hang out and your friend is not on board. She thinks the new girl is weird and dresses funny and she is NOT hanging out with her. She tells you to go over to her and tell her you changed your mind about hanging out. What would you do?

There is a big science test today and your best buddy tells you he was too busy to study last night. He asks if you mind if he sits next to you during science so he can see your answers since he knows you love science and you did study last night. You owe him a favor since he helped you last weekend when you needed help passing a hard level on your favorite video game. What would you do?

You are walking home with a friend after school. Your friend wants to stop by the park for a while. You tell your friend you cannot because you promised your parents you would come right home and clean your room since they have been on you to do it all week. Your friend pushes and says your parents will never know since they will not even be home from work until after you are back from the park. What would you do?

It is book fair week at school. It is the last day and you forgot to bring your money for the book you really want. You walk by the book fair on your way to the library and notice that no one is there right now. You see the book you really want sitting on the table. You look around. No one is in the hallway who would see you go in and take the book. What would you do?

You walk into the restroom at school just as some kids are stuffing paper towels in the toilet. They are laughing and talking about how awesome it is going to be when the toilet starts to flood. You leave and decide to use another restroom. Later that day, the principal comes in and talks to your class about what happened in the restroom that morning. They ask for anyone with any information to let the teacher know so the vandals can be identified and punished. What would you do?

You are on the bus one afternoon and some of your friends start picking on a kid in 3rd grade. The 3rd grader is annoying, but they are being really mean. You tell them they should stop before the bus driver notices and they all get in trouble. Then they start making fun of you saying you are being a loser and that they did not know the 3rd grader was your new best friend. What would you do?

You and some friends are playing at the playground, and someone finds a bag filled with what looks like candy. You look at them and think they could be pills. Some of the kids think everyone should try one and see what they taste like. What would you do?