



**Making Decisions (🧠 A Cognitive Health Story)
(5th Grade – 10-11 yrs.)
Worksheet: Be a STAR!**



STORY CONNECTION – SLIDE 14 (Approx time: 20-25 mins)

So, how can you be sure that you are making good choices? The first that you need to do is... stop and think. Risky behaviors are necessary if you are like the cavemen and not figuring out how to get around the Sabor-toothed tigers will result in you dying from hunger. But – unlike the cavemen – you have choices. We have so many more options than the cavemen had and there are so many other ways to learn – other than “trial and error” learning. Remember, your brain’s job is to help keep you alive and even though your brain is still growing, if you stop and think of all the possible outcomes of doing something dangerous then your brain will come up with other options. Stop and think. If you have any questions about how you should be behaving, then you should not be doing what you are doing. Be selfish and protect yourself. It is your job to protect yourself and your brain. The changes that are going on in your decision-making part of your brain can only help you if you live long enough. And just a thought...but are friends who want you to hurt yourself by doing potentially dangerous things good friends?

Materials needed:

- Paper
- Pencils
- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Markers
- STAR worksheets (included below)

Preparation needed:

- Familiarize yourself with the STAR model
- Choose a problem to use as an example/whole group activity using the STAR model
- Create a large version of the STAR worksheet on chart paper/whiteboard to use during the example/whole group activity.
 - The worksheet can also be projected if that is an option.
- Print STAR worksheet (1 per student)

Instructions:

1. In this activity, student(s) will be given a tool to help them “stop and think” so they can avoid risky behaviors and help their developing brain make good decisions.
2. Review with the student(s) that...

- unlike caveman, they get to make thousands of choices and decisions daily.
 - many of these decisions are quick, on the spot choices like chocolate or strawberry milk or lunch in the cafeteria.
 - other decisions are more complicated and can carry serious consequences.
3. Pass out paper and pencils.
 4. Ask student(s) to take a few minutes and jot down a list of choices they have had to make or anticipate making in the future that they would consider complicated, serious, or important.
 5. Next, ask for volunteers to share their ideas and record them on the chart paper or whiteboard.
 - Ideas might include:
 - Choosing classes for middle school
 - Deciding to try cigarettes or alcohol at a friend's house
 - Making fun of someone because your friends are doing it
 - Cheating on a test
 - Lying to your parents/teacher about something
 - Going along with the group even though you feel uncomfortable
 - Keeping a secret for a friend who was in trouble
 6. Show the student(s) the STAR worksheet and go over each section with them.
 - **S is for STOP**-your initial reaction might not always produce the best results. Take a minute to stop and take a breath so you do not do something you will regret or cause a negative consequence.
 - **T is for THINK**-take a second (or longer) to think and ask yourself some or all the following questions:
 - How am I feeling right now?
 - Should I say something or just keep quiet for now?
 - Is this something I should just let go?
 - Are there going to be positive or negative consequences to my actions?
 - Will my decision affect only me or are others involved?
 - Is there a way to make this situation good for everyone involved?
 - Have I had to react to something like this before? How did that work out?
 - **A is for ACT**-now that you have taken the time to think about the situation, now is the time to act. Try to produce a resolution that is best for everyone involved and one that does not harm you or anyone else.
 - **R is for REFLECT**-reflect on how your choices, decisions and actions worked in the situation. Is there anything you would do the same or differently next time? How do you feel about the resolution? Are you feeling differently now than when you were at the beginning of the process?
 7. Using the predetermined problem, go through the star process with the whole group using the STAR worksheet that is on the chart paper or whiteboard.
 - The student(s) do not have their own papers and are not writing at this point.
 - The facilitator fills in the chart with the student(s)' ideas as each section is discussed.
 8. Next, explain to them that...
 - this method is a tool to help them make good decisions as their brains are still developing.
 - as they use this process and as they mature, it is something that starts to become second nature
 - they will not need it except for a reminder or refresher now and then.
 9. Give each student a copy of the STAR worksheet.
 10. OPTIONAL: If time permits, partner the student(s), and have them choose one of the items from the brainstorming session at the beginning of the activity and go through the STAR process. Discuss after and answer any questions the student(s) have.
 11. In closing, remind the student(s) they must make many choices each day. They need to remember that their brain's job is to help keep them alive and even though their brain is still growing, if they stop and think of all the possible outcomes of doing something dangerous then their brain will produce other options. By stopping, thinking, acting, and reflecting (STAR) they will help keep their brain happy, healthy, and SPECTacular!

12. Problem Image Credit: <https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcRNGX-QgopPZZKm2EkaXwRzn0bCergycpApXs3LQqCsCBaXX6A&s>
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Be a STAR



For a Problem that needs to be solved or a decision that needs to be made “be a **STAR**”.



Stop...
and take a breath.



Think...

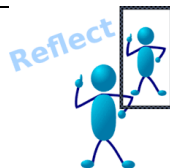
about the following:

- ★ How am I feeling right now?
- ★ Should I say something or just keep quiet for now?
- ★ Is this something I should just let go?
- ★ Are there going to be positive or negative consequences to my actions?
- ★ Will my decision affect only me or are others involved?
- ★ Is there a way to make this situation good for everyone involved?
- ★ Have I had to react to something like this before? How did that work out?



Act...

now that you have thought about the situation. What will you do?



Reflect...

on how your choices, decisions and actions worked in the situation.

- ★ Is there anything you would do the same or differently next time?
- ★ How do you feel about the resolution?
- ★ Are you feeling differently now than when you were at the beginning of the process?