

DECISION MAKING PROCESS

“Match Maker”

Purpose – The purpose of this activity is to focus on the five-step decision making process, using a group structured, problem solving approach. It illustrates the importance of thinking through tough decisions to make wise choices.

Overview - Prior to the activity, teach the five-step decision making process. This activity is designed to cover the entire process, involving every student in a given scenario. Students will work in groups to analyze each scenario and make recommendations based on what they have learned. While they are solving the problem, they will receive a twist to the scenario, making the problem solving process more challenging. This lesson will teach students that some problems can be solved on your own, some require the help of peers, and some need immediate attention from adults.

Character Connections – Responsibility, Self Control, and Patience

Group Size – 15 or more

Estimated Time – 30-45 minutes

Cultural and Age Considerations – Adapt the scenarios to make them more relevant to the age group you are working with

Materials – index cards, marker, pens and pencils, worksheet

Preparation – Cut out and copy the worksheet. Using the scenarios and example cards given, make six index cards for each group. Separate the challenge cards from the scenario cards. *(The challenge cards are to be kept secret until the activity in progress, and the students have located their groups.)*

Instructions – Prior to the activity, teach the five-step decision making process.

1. Shuffle the scenario cards. Pass out the cards face down, one for each student. Ask students to look at their card. In the next step, their goal is to mingle, looking for the other students with the same scenario cards. Each card represents a step in the decision making process for a certain person’s scenario (Nami, Natasha, Vitale, and Muno).
2. Ask the students to mingle. Their goal is to find other students that have the same scenario and the remaining steps for that decision making process. It is critical that the group members find each other, and that each member work together; step 4 cannot work without step 3, cannot work without step 2, etc.
3. Once the groups of five have formed, ask groups to find a place to sit and discuss their scenario, working together to complete the sentences on each card.
4. When the group work is in progress, distribute the challenge cards. These cards contain a twist to each scenario, representing an uncontrollable factor in the process. Remind students that you can offer assistance with challenging scenarios.
5. Once each group has finished the activity, bring all of the groups together to have a class discussion. Have each group describe the scenario they were given and the steps they took to make a decision.

Additional Options – Make up your own scenarios. Split up the class by gender. Have the girls handle female-oriented scenarios, and the boys work with the male-oriented scenarios.

Application and Insight – Remind students that our choices help form our character. They can be faced with situations such as these, as well as uncontrollable factors, where help from an adult

is necessary. Review each group's ability to systematically make decisions. Apply the five-step process to more real-life situations.

Going Deeper – Was it easier to make tough decisions with the support of your peers? With adult support? Do you think reflection on the five-steps decision making process will aid you in the future? Did you arrive at the right decision? How would this exercise help develop good character? Think of your mentors. How would they make decisions like these?

It Takes Courage to... Make the right decision even though it may not always be the easiest.

Quote – “The time is always right to do what is right.”
- Martin Luther King Jr.

Scenario 1 – Nami

Nami is not satisfied with her friends. She would rather be included in the popular group that everyone looks up to. They have wild parties on weekends and seem to be more grown up. Nami managed to get herself invited to one of their parties where there are no parents around. Most of the boys and girls start pairing off and going on walks.

Challenge Card – An attractive guy begins flirting with Nami and asks her to go for a walk with him.

Scenario 2 – Natasha

Natasha and her new friend have gone shopping. Natasha sees something she wishes she could buy but cannot afford. Her friend suggests that she should put the item in her bag when no one is looking. Her friend says it's easy and does it all the time without getting caught. Natasha looks around the store to see if anyone is looking. She really wants the item but has never thought of stealing before.

Challenge Card – A policeman walks into the store and grabs Natasha's arm.

Scenario 3 – Vitale

Vitale often has sex with many different girls. One of the girls he had sex with recently approached Vitale and informed him that she has HIV. She tells Vitale that it's in his best interest to get tested.

Challenge Card – Vitale is engaged to be married.

Scenario 4 – Muno

Muno is about to graduate from high school. He has been offered a nearby job where he can remain close to his family and friends. However, he has also been accepted to a college far away from home. The thought of leaving his family and friends really scares Muno because he has never been separated from them for long.

Challenge Card – Muno's mother has recently been diagnosed with a terminal illness. Her doctor told her she has less than a year to live.

RATIONALIZATION

“The Great Debate”

Purpose – The purpose of this activity is to explain to the students the concept of rationalization, justifying a bad behavior as a good behavior, in a familiar, real-life scenario. It illustrates the importance of not making excuses for wrong choices, but instead, making the right choices to begin with. When you do make the right choices you are building an ethical foundation from which to make further decisions.

Overview – Prior to the activity, teach the concept behind and the common methods of rationalizing wrong behavior. Emphasize that when you rationalize you are twisting the truth, and ultimately making excuses for a bad behavior. This activity is a great way for students to identify general rationalizations that can be made for a wrong action. It also provides an excellent means of discussing the six common methods of rationalization. These include:

1. The Payback – Justifying our wrong actions because someone has wronged us. “She’s only getting what she’s done to others.”
2. The Damage Assessment – If no one gets hurt then it can’t be wrong. “Nobody got hurt; nobody is going to get hurt either.”
3. The Comparison – Evaluating our actions based on what others are doing. “I’m not doing anything less than what everyone else is doing.”
4. The Reward – When we believe we are owed. “I know I lied, but I deserve this, I worked hard for that promotion.”
5. The Need – The argument that states that the end justifies the mean. “I had to cheat or I would have failed.”
6. The Law – Determining what is right and wrong based on “rules”. If there is a not a rule to say it is wrong, then I’m justified. “No one said I couldn’t do it.”

Character Connections – Responsibility, Self Control, Patience

Group Size – 10 or more

Estimated Time – 30-60 minutes

Cultural and Age Considerations – This activity works best with an age group that understands court room procedures.

Materials – Role Cards, additional props as available (*desk or table for the Judge and/or parties, several chairs for the courtroom players and a specific chair for the witness stand*)

Preparation – Cut out the Role Cards. Change the court case to one that is familiar and relevant to the age group you are working with. Make additional case scenarios. Ask for seven volunteers. Briefly explain the case to the volunteers and allow them time for group discussion before the case.

Instructions -

1. Have the volunteers pick from the five Role Cards (*from a hat, or laid out face down*).
 - a. Judge – (*The teacher*) mediates and directs the case. The Judge should be seated at the front of the room, facing the class.
 - b. The Defendant – (*Student*) defends behavior and actions through rationalizations when called upon by the judge. The defendant should be seated with the defense lawyer.
 - c. The Defense Attorney – (*Student*) represents the Defendant and argues the case using rationalizations.

- d. The Prosecuting Attorney – (*Student*) presents the facts of the case to dispel any rationalizations made by the Defense. The Prosecuting Attorney should be seated on the other side of the room.
 - e. The Witnesses – (*Four students*) Two witnesses will testify for each side. For the defense, their goal is to rationalize the Defendant's actions. For the prosecution, their goal is to discredit the Defendant's rationalizations with facts. They can be seated with their parties or in the jury.
 - f. The Jury – (*rest of the class*) will listen to the case, deliberate, and decide the fate of the Defendant's case.
2. The Judge will begin the court session by introducing the case (*as is written on the Role Card*). It reads; "_____ (*defendant*) has been charged with stealing money from a neighbor." *Please encourage students to elaborate on the case scenario. The more creative you make this story, the more fun the class will have with it.* Then the Judge will call on the Defendant.
 3. The Defendant will take the stand (*seated next to the Judge*) and make a statement describing the crime. He/she will explain why they did it (*using rationalizations*).
 4. The Prosecuting Attorney has the first opportunity to ask the Defendant questions (*stating facts to discredit any rationalizations*).
 5. The Defense Attorney has the chance to lead the Defendant in questions to help rationalize his/her actions.
 6. Once all questioning has finished, the Defendant may leave the stand and return to his/her seat.
 7. The Judge may call on the attorneys to select witnesses for questioning in the same method as was described for the Defendant (*steps 3-6*).
 8. After all the witnesses have been called, the Judge will ask the Defense and Prosecuting Attorneys to make any closing arguments. The attorneys should briefly explain why the Defendant is guilty or innocent of the crime.
 9. The Judge will ask the Jury to discuss within their group and deliberate the fate of the Defendant, and his/her punishment. Once the jury has decided, they must select a representative to state their decision to the court.
 10. After the decision has been made, the Judge will give closing remarks on the case and adjourn the court.
 11. Following the case, conduct a class discussion. How many rationalizations were used throughout the case?

Application and Insight – Review the methods that were used to make rationalizations in the case (see Overview). How would the case have ended differently if the Defendant would have faced the facts and told the truth? Emphasize the examples of poor character in the scenario. Explain why rationalizing is equivalent to lying, to yourself and to others. Emphasize the importance of telling the truth.

Going Deeper – Think about how often you rationalize in your daily life. What are some other examples of rationalization? How do your rationalizations affect others? How do they affect your life? Will you commit yourself to telling the truth and not justifying your bad behavior in the future?

It Takes Courage to... Be true to yourself and others Take the less traveled path (as opposed to the easy path...to take the straight and narrow path)