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Lesson 2

The Power of Choice

TEACHER PREPARATION

KEY CONCEPTS

Making good decisions is important to having a successful and fulfilling life.

Consequences of choices must be considered to achieve good results.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

1. identify steps needed to help them make good decisions.
2. decide with peers the best choices in decision-making opportunities.
3. be encouraged and reinforced in positive choices they have made.

KEY TERMS

Choice: the act of selection.

Decision: the act of choosing by making a judgment.

Role Play: to experiment with or experience a situation by playing a role.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

One of the best gifts we can give to our students is to help them learn to make wise decisions. This lesson will give opportunities for practice and reinforcement of decision-making skills.

MATERIALS/PREPARATION

1. In **Exploring the Lesson**, the **older elementary students** will need their journals.
2. In **Discovering the Lesson**, write the 6 questions from the section on a paper for each group.
3. In **Applying the Lesson**, have paper, crayons or markers for the **younger elementary students**.
4. In **Going Deeper**, you will need to draw a large maze on the board or on paper and cover parts of it before the students arrive. (See note in **Going Deeper** section.)

LESSON

BEGINNING THE LESSON

[Say to the students:] **When we left our new friends Trish, Hector and Dugan, they were deciding whether to risk stepping through the Library door. Will they discover what lies on the other side of the threshold? Will they meet the person behind the voice? Let’s see what they have chosen to do!**

READINESS (5 minutes)

[Read to the students:] **Chapter 2 — Crossing the Threshold**

The three friends stood at the bottom of the stairs and peered in through the open door.

“Do come in!” said the voice as it retreated deeper into the gloom.

“Have you got any flashlights?” asked Dugan.

“Or some candles?” added Hector.

“Completely unnecessary, I assure you,” encouraged the voice. Trish took a deep breath and stepped through the doorway. As soon as she did, a string of dim lights illumined a book-lined aisle to her left.

“I guess we go this way,” she offered. The three stayed close together as they made their way along the lighted track.

“I get the strangest feeling this place is much bigger than your ordinary storm shelter,” whispered Hector. The first aisle came to an intersection.

“Which way?” asked Trish. “Left or right?”

“How would we know?” said Dugan.

“Oh, ah, Librarian! Which way should we go?” yelled Trish. In answer to her question, the string of lights that had guided them so far went out.

“Not good!” whispered Hector. “Not good at all!” As they looked back the way they had come, they could just make out the doorway at the bottom of the stairs. They watched the door close, leaving them in the dark. Hector pulled out his phone only to discover that it wouldn’t turn on.

“See if your phones are working,” he said. “We need some light.”

“They’re not,” replied Dugan.

“How could all three of our phones stop working at the same time?” asked Trish.

“I have a very bad feeling about this,” whispered Hector.

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“We can’t just stay here in the dark,” said Dugan, and he stepped to his right. As soon as he did, another string of lights illuminated another book-lined aisle. The pattern repeated itself over and over. One aisle ended and another was lit as soon as they stepped in that direction.

“Pretty amazing we’ve picked correctly each time so far,” exclaimed Dugan.

“What do you mean?” asked Trish.

“Well, each direction we’ve selected lit up as soon as we picked it,” said Dugan.

“So, why do you think that makes it the right choice?” continued Trish.

“I just figured the lights sort of confirmed we were going in the right direction,” said Dugan. At the next intersection, they decided two of them would step left and right at the same time to test Dugan’s assumption. Both aisles glowed from the dim overhead lighting.

“So, what does this tell us?” asked Hector. “Is one way as good as another? Or are we just wandering around, following whatever lighted path we happen to step on?”

“Sounds like a good question to ask about your lives,” said the voice they first heard at the door.

“I want to go home,” whispered Dugan.

EXPLORE (15 minutes)

[Say to the students:] **You make many choices every day. Some of them are pretty easy. For example, what you will have for breakfast or what you will wear to school (unless you wear a uniform to school, then the choice is made for you).**

What are some other easy choices you make every day?

Some decisions may be a little harder. For example, whom will you play with after school? Or, when will you do your homework?

Other decisions may be really hard. For example, should you just stand by and watch someone being bullied?

Should you do something that looks like fun but could get you into trouble?

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As you grow up, the number of choices you are faced with every day grows too! We are going to talk about how to make right choices, choices that will move you along the path to a successful life.

Making decisions can lead to consequences – some good and some bad. Here are a few steps you can take to help you make right decisions:

For Younger Elementary Students

[Discuss as a class the following steps to making good decisions. Have a situation in mind to discuss with the class. Some examples might be:]

Pete was late to recess because he had to help the teacher with a project. He wants to play football with the boys but they have already picked the teams.

Maria is new to school. When it is time for lunch, all the girls in her class run to sit together under the tree.

1. *What is the problem?*
2. *What can we do?*
3. *What might happen?*
4. *What is the best decision?*

For Older Elementary Students

[Say to the students:] Write these good decision-making steps in your journal. [Write the underlined portions below on the board for them to copy. Read the steps out loud as a class and discuss each one.]

1. **Define the problem: Write out what decision you have to make.** *For example, should I play with my sister after school as I told her I would or should I go to my friend's house to play?*
2. **Brainstorm all the possible solutions:** *For example, I will not go home after school; instead, I will go directly to my friend's house. I will tell my friend I can't go to his or her house.*
3. **Evaluate all your ideas and consider what would be the consequences of each.** *For example, one consequence might be considering whether it will hurt my sister's feelings if I don't play with*

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her because I would be breaking a promise to her. Another consequence might be that I would let my friend down and he or she might never invite me again.

4. Decide: Based on your considerations on 1-3, choose a solution and carry it out.

- Sometimes you may need to do some research to help you find possible solutions.*
- You may need to find out more about the problem.*
- You may need to ask advice from a trusted adult.*
- You may need to think about your feelings and the feelings of others.*
- You may need to find out more about the consequences and think about what might happen as a result of your decision.*

Talking things over with someone you trust is always a good idea. A trusted adult will help you, will keep your problem confidential, and has your best interests at heart.

DISCOVER (10 minutes)

For Younger Elementary Students

[Plan to discuss the questions below as a class.]

For Older Elementary Students

[Divide the class into small groups. Choose one student to be the leader in each group to read the questions. The groups should discuss possible answers to the questions. Hand out these questions on a paper to each group and suggest they discuss as many of the questions as time allows. Monitor the groups by walking around and helping encourage the discussion time.]

- 1. What would you do if you found money on the playground?*
- 2. What would you do if your friend asked you to miss school with him or her?*
- 3. What would you do if your friend asked you to cheat on a test at school?*
- 4. What would you do if you were supposed to go right home after school, but you wanted to go to your friend's house instead?*

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5. *What would you do if you had homework to do, but you wanted to play outside instead?*
6. *What would you do if you wanted some candy at the store, but you did not have enough money to buy it?*

[Have each group share their answer to one question with the class as a whole. You are an impartial listener at this point, letting the class direct the answers to the correct moral conclusion. If the class rejects the correct moral choice, then you need to lead the class to the morally correct conclusion by sharing some thoughts to direct their thinking.]

APPLY (15-30 minutes)

For Younger Elementary Students

[Have each student draw a picture of a time when they made a good decision using paper, crayons or markers.]

For Older Elementary Students

[Help each group develop a role-play that shares an example of a good decision they have made.]

SHARE (20-30 minutes)

For Younger Elementary Students

[Have volunteers share their pictures with the class. Say to the students:]

What happened as a result of your good choice?

For Older Elementary Students

[Have each group share their role-play of a good decision with the class. Say to the students:] **What happened as a result of your good choice?**

ENDING THE LESSON

[During this lesson, we discussed steps to take in order to make good decisions. Review those steps as you wrap up this lesson. Throughout the year, it would be a good idea to review these decision-making steps as a reminder to your students of how to make wise choices and to consider the consequences of their choices.]

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GOING DEEPER (optional)

[Before students arrive, draw a maze, large enough for all the students to see clearly, either on the board or large paper. If you do not have access to oversized paper, you can create your own by attaching a number of smaller pieces of paper together to form a large one. After you've drawn the entire maze, cover each of the choice points (places on the maze where you have to choose which way to go) with separate pieces of paper that can be removed, one by one, to reveal each succeeding choice point. Make sure most of the choice points eventually lead to dead ends, and that only one series of choices will lead all the way through the maze. You can reproduce one of the mazes at the end of this section, copy one of them by hand to the board or paper or create one on your own.]

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The oldest known example of a maze is the Egyptian Labyrinth built on the shores of a lake near the Nile River in ancient Egypt. The 5th-century B.C. Greek historian Herodotus visited the maze and described it as a wonder that surpassed the pyramids at Giza. The 1st century B.C. Greek geographer Strabo described the maze as a series of "winding passages communicating with one another, so that no stranger can find his way either into any court or out of it without a guide." It is believed the maze was built in the 19th century B.C., or about 4,000 years ago.

*[Say to the students:] **There is an old saying, "It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness."** [This saying is often quoted as an ancient Chinese proverb. The first known instance of it in print was by British author William Lonsdale Watkinson in 1907.]*

What do you think this saying means? *[Accept some answers and affirm those who have answered and then continue:]*

Imagine a group of children sitting in a dark room. One girl says, "It's so dark in here, I can't read my book." A boy says, "Yeah, it's so dark I can't see well enough to throw a ball to my friend!" Then all the kids start mumbling and complaining about how dark it is in the room. Silly, isn't it? It's especially foolish if one of the kids has a match and a candle or if

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there is a working light switch on the wall, and none of them thinks to turn on the light!

[Say to the students:] We are going to play a game where we all try to get through a maze together. [If you are not sure all your students can clearly see the maze, you may want to invite some from the back to come closer and sit on the floor.] Here is a maze, but we can see only the entrance and our first choice of paths. Each time we come to a choice, we are going to vote as a class on which way to go. If there is ever a tie, I'll cast the deciding vote. Okay, here is the first choice point. If you think we should go this way, please raise your hand. If you think we should go the other way, please raise your hand. Now, I'm going to uncover the next portion and we'll vote again. [Continue until the class has made it through to the finish.]

[Say to the students:]

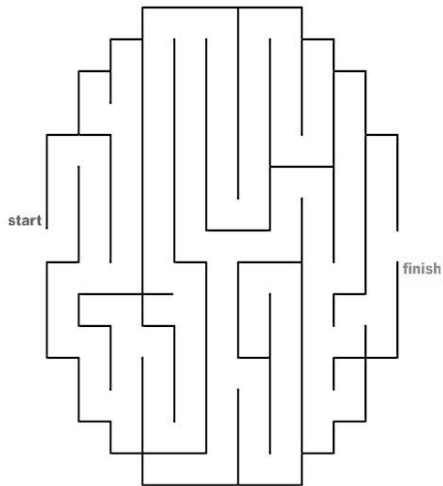
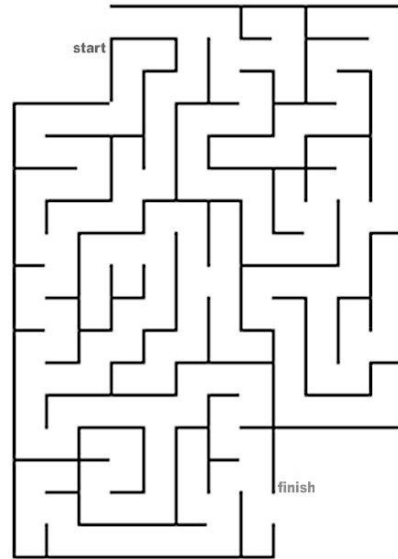
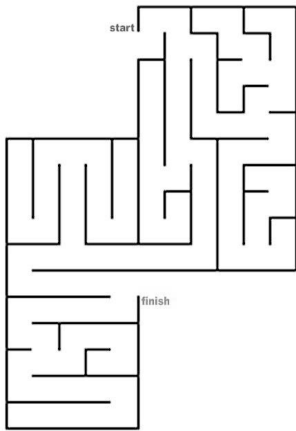
- **How did you feel about trying to solve the maze this way, with parts covered until you had made your choices?**
- **Was that fun or frustrating?**
- **What could we have done to make it more fun to solve this maze?**
- **What could we have done to make it easier?**

Earlier we talked about the saying, “It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.” What do you think are some connections between this saying and our maze game?

Everything in life is better when you can see the whole picture or clearly see what lies ahead. The older you get, the more your life may feel like a maze and you will often have to make choices without knowing everything about what will happen in the future.

In this class, we will be showing you a preview of some of the choices you will have to make. We will try to “turn on the light” of wisdom to help you when you face important decisions.

Examples of Simple Mazes



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PARENT-TEACHER CONNECTION

This week's *DreamMakers-DreamBreakers* focus was about making good decisions. Hint: One way you can encourage your child to talk honestly is to keep eye contact with your child while he or she is talking.

Questions you might ask your child:

1. Can you tell me the story your teacher read? (The three friends explored making decisions with minimal knowledge about the problem.)
2. How did the class explore making decisions? (After learning about how to make good decisions, the teacher asked us to decide what we would do in several situations.)
3. What were some of the situations you thought about? (After giving your child an opportunity to answer, describe one of the best decisions you have made in your life.)

Parents, describe a decision you wish you could go back and change.

