

BUILDING RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING IN YOUR CHILD

A child's future ability to succeed in school, in college, and in the workplace, and to achieve long-term happiness will depend on their ability to make responsible decisions. Students who learn to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms, as well as realistically evaluate the consequences of various actions, and have a consideration for the well-being of themselves and others, are well on their way to future success. In school students are taught how to identify problems, analyze situations from a variety of angles and practice methods for implementing solutions in order to solve problems. Students have many opportunities in school to reflect on ethical and moral dilemmas related to their decisions and to evaluate what happened and what can be changed and improved upon in their next decision-making opportunity.

Parents and families are critical partners in helping their children develop relationship skills. This resource offers guidance, tools, and activities for parents and families to help their children in developing Social Emotional Learning (SEL) at home.

OPPORTUNITIES TO TEACH RESPONSIBLE DECISION MAKING

- **Observe.** Engage your child to observe their surroundings to notice social interactions, decisions being made or even environmental concerns. This will allow your child to process situations on their own with parental guidance to recognize problems and possible solutions.
- **Stop and Think.** When a problem occurs, encourage your child to stop and analyze the decision or behavior that led to the problem in order to learn and understand how problems begin, process their role and make a more responsible decision.
- **Picture Plans and Option Walls.** Help your child brainstorm all the possible choices and connect them with possible outcomes in a drawing or chart. Post it to help guide them in making more informed decisions in the future.
- **Decision Trees.** Use an If/Then Decision Tree to help your child map out decision options for specific situations. Include all the possible avenues and repercussions in the map to help guide them to make better choices.
- **Decision Reflection Templates.** Allow your child opportunities to reflect on their choices and evaluate their appropriateness to become more thoughtful about their decisions in the future



FAMILY MOVIE NIGHT

The Lion King (1994, rated PG)

A young lion's rebellion teaches him a series of lessons that bring him back closer to his roots. Sometimes responsibility is not fun, but the end result is worth it. With themes of loyalty and friendship, it is the moral and ethical dilemmas and decisions and the questions around responsible decision-making that are at the core in this film.

A Bug's Life (1998, rated G)

When an ant's colony is raided, he bites back. He organizes an effort to stand up for what he believes in. This film inspires individuality, courage and diligence when a cause calls for us to speak up. Responsible decision-making can often be tough, but this film teaches us that usually in doing the right thing, we are in fact, doing the responsible thing.

Brave (2012, rated PG)

Set in Scotland in a rugged and mythical time, featuring a Scottish princess who is an aspiring archer and impetuous daughter of royalty. She makes a reckless choice that unleashes unintended peril and forces her to spring into action to set things right. Brave features themes of independence, self-efficacy and diligence in assuring that the end goal is met even when the goal is correcting a mistake.

Spiderman (2002, rated PG-13)

With great power comes great responsibility. While facing his own obstacles as teenage boy, he rises above and becomes a hero concerned with the moral responsibility to protect civilians.



DISCUSSION STARTERS

TEACHING RESPONSIBLE DECISION MAKING

ELEMENTARY

My Choices Make Me Who I Am by Mutiya and David Vision

This story introduces the concepts of responsibility and accountability as a child learns the value of making conscious choices that positively shape and define his or her destiny. A parent's guidance along with this book, can indeed inspire children to make the right choices.

1. What are some choices that you make everyday?
2. What are some things you can do to help you make wise choices?
3. What are some difficult choices that you may have to make that show who you are?

Stanley and the Class Pet by Barney Saltzberg

Finally! It is Stanley's turn to take the class pet home for the weekend. He can't wait to show Figgy to his mother and spend some quality time taking care of the bird, but when Figgy flies the coop, Stanley is faced with a very tricky problem. What to do? And whose fault is it, really? Is it his, for agreeing to open Figgy's cage, which he knew was a bad idea, or Larry Finchfeather's for suggesting it?

1. Stanley knew that opening Figgy's cage was not a good idea. What are some reasons why he decided to do it anyway?
2. Discuss peer pressure. What are some ways that people give into peer pressure?
3. Who do you think is responsible for the decision Stanley made? Why?

Froggy Gets a Doggy by Jonathan London

Mom has agreed: Froggy can have a pet. Off to the pet store they go. Mom prefer a bunny or some mice, but Froggy and his little sister, Pollywogilina, have their hearts set on a doggy. When doggy sees the little dog with big brown eyes, he begs to take her home. Froggy promises he will take care of Doggy, put her on a collar, take her for a walk, and teach her to sit up and beg. Doggy proves to be harder than Froggy anticipated...

1. What did Froggy think the moon looked like?
2. Having a pet is a big responsibility. Why do you think it is a big responsibility ?
3. What are some other things that are big responsibilities?

SECONDARY

The Forgetting Spell by Lauren Myracle

Most people in Willow Hill think Darya is the prickliest of the Blok sisters. What they do not realize is that on the inside, Darya is soft and gooey from feeling everything, all the time. When Darya turns thirteen, the goo gets stickier and as Darya's Wishing Day approaches, all she wants is to forget the silly tradition ever existed. Ten years ago, a wish made by Darya's mother splintered their family into pieces. Last year, Darya's sister Natasha wished for their broken mother to return. This year, Darya has a chance to wish away parts of the past, and who would not want to do that? Darya, that's who! The past is something you're supposed to leave behind. Which is why Darya has locked and sealed her most painful memories inside the far corners of her mind, where they can no longer hurt her. When some of them begin to leak out, Darya realizes the decision about what to wish for and what not to wish for is probably the most important choice of her life.

1. Have you ever had to make a really important decision that you felt might have impact on the rest of your life?
2. What things do you consider when making an important and difficult decision?
3. What might be some strategies you can use to help you make difficult decisions?

Inside Out: Real Stories about the Inner Choices That Shape Our Lives by Chandler DeWitt

A teen-authored text with authentic perspectives about the choices teens make that build or destroy character. Twenty-six chapters, correlated to nationally recognized character traits, feature discussion and self-reflection questions and journaling activities, designed to help launch peer-to-peer and parent-child communication.

It's Your Decision for Teens: A Common Sense Guide to Making Better Choices by Al Foderaro and Denise Schmidt

Teenage years are a kind of bridge between being a child and becoming an adult. The better teenagers become at making decisions, the more likely they are to have a more satisfying adult life. The more effort a teenager puts into making good academic and career decisions, the brighter their future will be. This book will help teens to make better decisions by helping them understand the decision-making process. They will learn practical, common sense approaches to help them make good initial decisions regarding their education, the field of study they choose, the best career choices, relationships, the living and work environments they spend time in, the quality of their health and wellness, and how they choose to spend their free time. Learning to make better decisions will give them a sense of satisfaction and increase their confidence in the choices they make when they experience positive results. This will help them to accept responsibility for making the academic, career, and personal decisions that lie ahead.