

TITLE: Decision Making and Time Management

GRADE LEVELS: 9 - 12

CONTENT AREAS: Explore Your Path

STUDENT PATHS OUTCOMES:

2-3: Students use strengths to achieve goals and employ strategies to improve upon weak areas.

IN THIS LESSON, STUDENTS WILL:

- Reflect on routine decisions they make on daily basis.
- Participate in a teacher-led large-group discussion about the kinds of decisions they control each day.
- Record Three Keys to Effective Decision Making.
- Identify one important decision they've made and examine it through the lenses of the Three Keys.
- Share decision-making and time-management experiences with others in writing or video recording.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

ASCA STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

C:A1.5 – Learn how to make decisions

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE:

No prior knowledge necessary

MATERIALS:

Activity Handout, “Understanding How I Make Decisions”

Projector or board to present “Three Keys to Effective Decision Making”

Article from Student Paths, “At the Crossroads: Are You Ready for Decision Making and Time Management?”

LESSON OVERVIEW:

This lesson on Decision Making has four parts. The Activity Handout guides students through most of the lesson.

1. Students write and share about everyday decisions.
2. Whole class reads and summarizes article.
3. Instructor presents Three Keys to Effective Decisions.
4. Students reflect on one big decision.

LESSON PROCEDURE:

Write and Share Everyday Decisions (10 minutes)

Distribute the Activity Handout, “Understanding How I Make Decisions.” Instruct students to reflect and write on five decisions they usually make every day. No need to prompt them with specifics, but what to eat, with whom to talk, whether or not to participate in class and to do the assignment are decisions most students make every day.

After students have written five decisions and the reasons for making them, instruct students to find a partner and share these ev-



eryday decisions. Encourage casual sharing for a few minutes. Wrap up this section by having a few students summarize the kinds of decisions we all make every day.

Read about Decision Making and Time Management (10-15 minutes)

Distribute Student Paths and tell students to find the article, “At the Crossroads: Are You Ready for Decision Making and Time Management?”

Read this article aloud as a class. Have a different student volunteer to read each section, and pause for a minute to reflect as a group after each section. There are five main ideas for all students to garner from this article about decision making, especially in regard to time management.

1. Pause for time to reflect on decisions.
2. Evaluate all possibilities and consequences.
3. Anticipate what will happen in the future.
4. Heart, head, and gut are all parts of how we make decisions.
5. Time-management skills require schedules and identifying obligations.

Present Three Keys to Effective Decisions (5 minutes)

The instructor will present these three keys to students so they may complete Part 2 of the Activity Handout .

1. KNOW AND STAND BY YOUR VALUES –

Establish, examine, recognize and act according to the values and principles you live by. QUICK TIP: If what you decide doesn't “feel” right, you've probably gone against your own values.

2. KNOW AND USE OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION –

As #1 says, it's important to make decisions according to your values. Other information, such as how your decision will impact others may also be important. Be thorough with this information, going through all the necessary who, what, where, when and how questions. It is also helpful to rank other decision-related information according to what's most important, less important and least important.

3. BE STRATEGIC –

Put some thought into what you will actually do with the decision you make. Are there certain times/places, for example, when taking action would be a better idea than others? Who else should know about your decision, and why? Plan ways to maintain your values, improve yourself, and benefit society through your decision.

Reflect on a Big Decision (5 minutes)

After reviewing the Three Keys to Effective Decisions, instruct students to complete Part 3 of the Activity Handout. This task will be completed by each student and may be kept private. Conclude by reminding students that every second of every day is an opportunity to make a conscious decision. Both little decisions and big decisions create the character we become in life.

Extension activity and reflective assessment (10-60 minutes):

Invite students to write on their own about big decisions that change their life and little decisions that allow them to manage time. Students may write this advice to younger students and record a video as well. Another option: Educators could record videos with a group of students willing to give high-quality advice to other students.

Submit essays and videos to Sharon Hodge, managing editor of Student Paths, at shodge@studentpaths.com for possible use in the publication or on mystudentpath.com.

Understanding How I Make Decisions**Part 1: Everyday Decisions**

Take five minutes to write a complete response to this topic:

Write FIVE decisions you've made this week, with a quick explanation of why you made them.

You will be sharing some of these responses, so you may not want to write about sexual activity or substance use if you routinely encounter this kind of decision. Sensitive topics would be more appropriate for Part 3 of this activity that will be kept private.

<i>Decision I Made</i>	<i>Reasons I Made this Decision</i>
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Part 2: Three Keys to Effective Decision Making

In this space, record the Three Keys of Decision Making provided by your teacher.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Part 3: A Big Decision

In the introduction, you wrote about five decisions you make on an everyday basis. For this section, think bigger and write about one of the more important decisions you've made in your life. Get started by completing the sentence below.

One of the most important decisions I ever made was when I decided to ...

In the questions below, examine this decision in light of the Three Keys to Effective Decision Making.

PERSONAL VALUES: To make the above decision, my personal values influenced me by ...

OUTSIDE INFORMATION: To make the above decision, I did not think only of my personal values. I also thought about these pieces of information ...

ACTION STRATEGY: After making the above decision, I took action by ...

At the crossroads:

Are you ready for decision making and time management?— by Flora Richards-Gustafson



Peter Turla

Improving these two essential and intersecting skills can strengthen the foundation of your future. “Everything that you spend time on is based on a decision that you make. ... Tomorrow’s success depends on what you do today,” says time-management expert Peter Turla.



Life is full of choices. You make choices every day, from picking out an outfit to choosing what you want to eat for lunch. As you go through life, your brain gets into the habit of making decisions about simple things, and eventually those decisions become routines. For example, you don’t necessarily choose to put on your pajamas before bed; you just do it.

Decisions get tough when you have to make them about the unknown. Remember when you first had to make your class schedule and choose your electives? It was kind of tricky because you had never had to do that in the past. When it comes to decision making and becoming an adult, you get plenty of opportunities to practice, but the choices get tougher.

How do you deal when there’s a particularly tough choice or moving forward seems impossible? You need to know how to make good decisions and learn to prepare for the unexpected with good time-management skills.

Good decision making starts now

How often do you go with your gut feeling or intuition? How do you know that you can trust your gut? Intuition is a powerful tool that comes from experience and the results of past decisions. While going with your gut may work out if you’ve got nothing else to go on, there’s a better way: pause, evaluate and anticipate.

A good decision, according to time-management expert Peter Turla, is one that enriches you or society; it benefits the greater good. Making good choices starts with knowing when you’re faced with a decision instead of being in auto-pilot mode. Shari McGuire, author of “Take Back Your Time: 101 Simple Tips to Shrink Your Work-Week and Conquer the Chaos in Your Life,” explains, “In every second, (you) have a choice on how (you’re) going to spend (your) time, and you alone are responsible for that choice.” When you acknowledge that you can do this or that, your brain has a moment to evaluate the choices, remind you of past mistakes and avoid leaping to disastrous conclusions.

Pause

Most of the decisions that you make in life don’t have to be instant ones. When faced with a decision, especially an important one, pause and take a look at the choices you face. The ultimate choice you make should align with the goal you want to achieve.

Evaluate

It’s okay to say, “I need to think about it.” There’s no reason to rush to a conclusion if you don’t have to. Turla advises that when you are faced with a decision, it is wise to take a look at all your choices and evaluate their possible consequences and outcomes—the pros and cons—a

process known as the Benjamin Franklin technique. It’s also a good idea to ask someone who has faced a similar challenge for guidance. With practice, you’ll learn to make good decisions quickly and gain the wisdom to know which need a longer pause.

On the other hand, quick decisions can come in the form of choosing what to do this weekend to taking action when a sibling is injured and needs your help.

Anticipate

McGuire shares that “when you take responsibility for your choices, you will over time make better and better (ones).” Sometimes you know ahead of time that you’re going to have to make a big decision or a lot of fast decisions in the future. By preparing for them ahead of time, you’ll react appropriately and won’t feel rushed or overwhelmed.

An example of a big decision that you’ll face is choosing what to do after high school. After making a list of the choices that are best for you, narrow it down to one. Then use good time-management skills to achieve that goal.

When you think about your future and foresee important decisions that you’ll have to make in a limited amount of time, run through and evaluate the possible choices ahead of time.

Don’t always follow your heart

When making a decision, don’t just follow your heart. Get your head and gut involved, too. Turla explains that when your emotions get involved in decision making, don’t neglect instinct and logic. Figure out what your feelings and instincts are trying to tell you, and determine if those options are really the best and most relevant. Then use your experience and logic to process all the choices that your head, heart and gut give you. Evaluate which choice sits the best with all three and aligns with your ultimate goal.

Making mistakes

Not all the decisions that you make will be the right ones. It’s okay; it happens to everyone. What counts is what you do with the knowledge that you gain after making a mistake, according to Turla. Sometimes you’ll find that mistakes open doors to better opportunities or teach a life lesson that you wouldn’t have otherwise received. Don’t downgrade mistakes to negative marks in your personal history book. Instead, use them as a catalyst for change.

“Wisdom sometimes comes from bad decisions,” Turla observes. To learn from your mistakes, you have to pay attention to them. Evaluate what you did right and what went wrong. Consider all the factors that led to the consequence. Determine what you can do the next time a similar situation occurs to make the outcome better.

Time management

“Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that’s the stuff that life is made of.”
 – Benjamin Franklin

You have 168 hours in a week. The problem with time is that it isn’t tangible, according to Julie Morgenstern, author of “Organizing from the Inside Out for Teens” with her daughter Jessi Colón. You can’t see, feel, touch or smell time (unless you forgot to put on deodorant). Morgenstern compares time to a school locker that has a limited amount of space. Just as you can only fit so much into a locker, you can only fit so much into your schedule. To make time more of a concrete concept, think of it as blocks of empty spaces that you fill.

Making a schedule

Organizing your schedule is like organizing your locker. Morgenstern explains that an organized locker has similar items grouped together so they’re faster to find. For example, your books are in one spot and your backpack and coat are in another. An organized schedule has similar activities grouped together throughout the week (e.g., doing homework every day between 3:30 and 5:00 p.m. or going to bed and waking up at the same time) so your days have some consistency.



Shari McGuire

Non-negotiable obligations

When creating a schedule, look at a calendar that has hourly blocks of time. Morgenstern advises that you first fill in the “non-negotiable” activities into the empty slots. These activities include sleeping, going to school, homework, sports practice, family obligations, chores, a job and personal free time. “When you see your non-negotiable obligations in the schedule,” Morgenstern explains, “you’re more motivated to not waste time and make better decisions about what you do with it.”




Julie Morgenstern

Filling in your schedule

After plugging in your non-negotiables, use the empty slots for activities that are more flexible – hanging out with friends, hobbies or finishing a school project. The extracurricular activities you choose should be ones you truly enjoy, Morgenstern says. Do things that bring you joy and help you feel energized and fulfilled.

Instead of wasting time everyday figuring out what to do, Morgenstern advises that you plan ahead. For example, at the end of each day, take a look at your schedule for the next three days. “When you plan ahead, you plan for the unexpected,” she says. Seeing how different activities fill your day helps you prioritize and make better decisions. Just like with a school locker, don’t completely fill your schedule: Give yourself some flexibility and room for unexpected events, such as homework taking longer than usual or a friend needing to talk.

Decision making and time management are skills that you’ll use, build and refine for the rest of your life. Practicing each daily will help give you a sense of control over your life and, as Morgenstern asserts, “Control matters.” 

VIDEOS

Student contributors offer their tips and advice on time management.



Marisa Berti: Four steps to managing your time.
<http://bit.ly/1jk6UJj>



Abby Johnson: Maximizing time starts with a list.
<http://bit.ly/1nT4OR0>



Alyssa McComb: Add notebook and calendar, then divide tasks.
<http://bit.ly/1gR50Vo>

Quiz: How organized are you?

- 1. I keep track of my schedule by:**
 - a. Relying on my memory (and my parents and friends).
 - b. Keeping a to-do list that I look at sometimes.
 - c. Using a calendar and an assignment book.
- 2. My friend calls the night before the first day of school to see what I'm wearing the next day:**
 - a. I say that I'll figure it out tomorrow.
 - b. I look through the closet and see what my friend thinks about some of my outfit choices.
 - c. I have my outfit already picked out so I don't waste time in the morning.
- 3. I organize my email:**
 - a. Never. Why bother with folders?
 - b. At least once a month.
 - c. At least once a week.
- 4. Normally, my locker is filled with:**
 - a. I have no idea, but there's probably a book in there.
 - b. Lots of stuff. It looks messy, but I can find anything in an instant.
 - c. The things I need, like notebooks, pens and a sweater.
- 5. I get my homework done:**
 - a. The class period before it's due.
 - b. Usually before it's due.
 - c. After school, on the same day it's assigned.
- 6. Do I ever cancel plans because I forgot about other plans that I made?**
 - a. Yes, my friends say I do it all the time.
 - b. Sometimes, like when my mom or cell phone don't remind me.
 - c. Never, I always use a planner.
- 7. The place where I study and do homework is:**
 - a. Anywhere I can sit.
 - b. At my friend's house.
 - c. A quiet spot in my house or at the library.
- 8. It's only the beginning of August. My plan for getting school supplies is:**
 - a. See what I need to get after the first day of school.
 - b. Reuse my stuff from last year. Backpacks and binders don't go bad.
 - c. School-supply shopping spree! I need new pens, paper and folders now.
- 9. I use the following to carry my books and schoolwork:**
 - a. My arms—that's what they're for.
 - b. A bag that's kind of small, but it looks cool.
 - c. A backpack with all the essential pockets.
- 10. During the last week of summer, I get an email reminder about the summer reading assignment, so I:**
 - a. Cram as much reading as I can before school starts.
 - b. Feel good that I already kind of started reading. I'll be caught up before I get any assignments about the book.
 - c. Don't sweat it. I already finished the books and made notes.

If you answered mostly A's, you have an untroubled spirit:

You live carefree and in the moment, which is fun—but also sometimes stressful. Having better time-management skills and making better choices can help you get rid of that unneeded anxiety, especially if you feel like you have too much to do and not enough time to do it, or bad things always seem to happen to you. Start getting organized by setting up a routine and getting in the habit of writing down your responsibilities.

If you answered mostly B's, you've found balance.

You pretty much have it together. You're organized when it counts and know how to take time out for yourself, but are sometimes scatterbrained. When your brain is overloaded with to-dos, ease the stress of trying to remember everything by using a magnetic calendar or dry-erase board in your locker and bedroom.

If you answered mostly C's, you're in control.

You're the king or queen of organization! You're so good that you even help your friends keep up with school and other activities. While being a master planner (and even a perfectionist) may come naturally to you, don't let it go too far because you'll quickly burn out. Plan breaks in your day to do what you enjoy and find fulfilling.