**Lesson 2: Decision Making – Stop, Think, Choose**

**Overview**: Students will practice decision making skills by implementing the Stop, Think, Choose model.

National Health Education Standards:

**Standard 1:** Students comprehend functional health knowledge to enhance health.

**Standard 5:** Students demonstrate effective decision-making skills to enhance health.

Healthy Behavior Outcome (HBO):

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| Students will implement the *Stop, Think, Choose* decision-making model to support healthy choices. |

Lesson Objective — Students will be able to:

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| **Objective** | **Assessments** |
| 1. Identify situations or problems that require a thoughtful decision-making process. | Attachment 2.1 – Stop, Think, Choose |
| 1. Apply the Stop, Think, Choose decision-making model to make a healthy choice to prevent substance use. | Attachment 2.1 – Stop, Think, Choose |
| 1. Describe potential options for decisions involving substance use. | Attachment 2.1 – Stop, Think, Choose |
| 1. Describe short- and long-term consequences for each potential decision. | Attachment 2.1 – Stop, Think, Choose |
| 1. Evaluate the options and consequences to justify the healthiest option. | Attachment 2.1 – Stop, Think, Choose |
| 1. Identify resources and trusted adults that could support the decision or the decision-making process. | Attachment 2.1 – Stop, Think, Choose |

Introduction:

* How many squares do you see?

A grid of squares with black lines

Description automatically generated

* Initially, students will say 16 squares, but as they continue to analyze the chart, they will see more squares. This is a fun activity if you allow students to shout out their answers; the students who don’t see the additional squares are guided by the students who do see them (2x2, 3x3, the entire square, etc.).
* How is this activity related to decision making?
  + The more we analyze a situation, the more solutions we begin to think about. Decision making is a skill that requires thoughtful processing to reach a healthy outcome.
  + We will practice thoughtful decision-making skills by applying the Stop, Think, Choose model for defining the problem; generating alternatives and thinking through each one; and choosing a health-promoting option.

Teaching Steps:

Activity 1

* Decision making: We make a lot of decisions every day. Some we make quickly without much thought. Those might be what to eat for a snack, what to wear, or how to spend our time.
* There are also important decisions that require more thought because of how they could impact our health and well-being, our future, and those we care about. We need a decision-making process to help us process all the options to make the healthy and safe choice. We’ll use the Stop, Think, Choose model to make a healthy choice about substance use (alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs), but you can use the same model anytime you need to make a thoughtful decision.
* What part of the brain is responsible for decision making?
  + Answer — The prefrontal cortex ([PLoS Biology](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.1001293)). This is one of the last centers of the brain to be fully developed. The brain finishes developing and maturing in the mid- to late 20s. This is why it is so important to practice decision-making skills and give this region of the brain a workout to get stronger, just like we do for our muscles when we exercise.
  + We also need to be sure we’re using our prefrontal cortex, or “upstairs brain,” to make decisions. When we are stressed or experiencing big emotions, our brain switches and works “downstairs,” where our fight, flight, or freeze response is activated. Remember to use your regulation or stress management tools so your brain can get to work on making a healthy choice (Refer to HELPs Mental and Emotional Health Lessons.).
* Let’s start our brain workout!
* Review the steps of the Stop, Think, Choose model:
  + STOP:
    - Define the problem.
    - Does it require a thoughtful decision?
    - Will it require the support of a trusted adult or additional resources?
  + THINK:
    - What are your options?
    - List the potential consequences of each option as advantages/pros or disadvantages/cons for each option.
    - Does this option keep you healthy and safe?
    - What resources or trusted adults can help you make a healthy and safe choice?
  + CHOOSE:
    - What option do you think would be the healthiest choice?
    - What do you think may happen after this choice is made?
    - Do you still feel like this is the healthiest option, or is there another option to consider? Explain.
  + \*Remember to reflect and consider how your decision is working. If needed, reevaluate by using the Stop, Think, Choose method to consider refining your decision.
* Display the Decision-Making Template (Attachment 2.1) and review with a general decision-making topic such as brushing your teeth or wearing deodorant. While it seems to be a simple decision, this allows the teacher to point out that some decisions do not require a Stop, Think, Choose process. An example that would require the Stop, Think, Choose process could be: You arrive at a friend’s house and see your friends drinking.
* As a class, work through this example using the Decision-Making Template.
* Distribute Attachment 2.1 for each student or one paper per partner group. Students will pick (or be given) a scenario from Attachment 2.2 and can refer to the activity rubric (Attachment 2.3) for guidance as well. Select the case studies from Attachment 2.2 that best meet your students’ needs.
* Students can report out as a class or make new small groups where students can share with each other how they went through the decision-making steps to come to a health-enhancing decision for the character in the scenario.

Closure:

* Have students check in with you. Have them give you a thumbs up if they are very confident with the Stop, Think, Choose Decision Making Template; thumbs sideways if somewhat confident; or a thumbs down if they do not feel confident, in which case you can offer additional practice time.
* Ask students to review as a class what is important to think about when making a decision.
* What are your options?
* What are the advantages/pros or disadvantages/cons for each option?
* Does this option keep you safe?​
* How do you think the people who love and care for you would feel about these options?
* What are the possible outcomes?

Attachment 2.1: STOP, THINK, CHOOSE!

**Directions:** Pick one scenario from Attachment 2.2 and work through the Stop, Think, Choose decision-making model to help the character in the scenario make a health enhancing decision.

**STOP:** What is the problem?

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1a. Does it require thoughtful decision-making? YES NO

1b. Will this decision require additional information from a trusted adult or resource?

No Yes If yes, list the resource or trusted adult: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**THINK**: Use the table to guide you through the thought process.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **List two options.** | **Option 1** | **Option 2** |
| List positive outcomes or advantages of this option. |  |  |
| List negative outcomes or disadvantages |  |  |
| Does the option keep you safe and healthy? Explain. | Yes No | Yes No |
| Why? | Why? |
| How would the people who care about you think about this decision? |  |  |

**CHOOSE:**

What option would be the healthiest choice?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Option 1 | Option 2 |
| Why? | |

**Circle substance use principle(s) that apply to this situation.**

1a. Know to No! *Substance Use Prevention Principles*

* Substances such as tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs have harmful consequences on our health and well-being.
* Don’t touch, take, or taste; ask a trusted adult for help.

1b. Know to No! *Medication Safety Principles*

* Only take medicine as directed from a trusted adult.
* Never take someone else’s medicine.
* Properly store and dispose of medications.
* We make healthy choices using Stop, Think, Choose.
* Recognize and reach out to resources to support healthy and safe choices.

Circle your answer.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **How confident are you in using the Stop, Think, Choose model to make healthy choices?** | Very confident | Confident | Somewhat confident | Not confident |

Attachment 2.2: STOP, THINK, CHOOSE Scenarios

**Scenario 1:**

Shelly and Heather have been studying for a big test the next day. Shelly starts to yawn and doesn’t know how she will stay awake to study for another hour. Heather offers Shelly *speed* and says how it will help her to pull an all-nighter.

**Scenario 2:**

Trey and Paul have been working out in the weight room for four weeks. Trey is convinced that he will never have the build he is working toward. Paul offers Trey steroids and claims it will help him reach his fitness goal. Trey wants to build muscle but is not sure if taking steroids is the right thing to do.

**Scenario 3:**

Steve has been dealing with a lot of stressors at home; going to school is a break from the chaos. When he gets to school, he is still feeling angry from the morning events that took place at home. He meets up with a group of friends before the morning bell, and they offer him a dab pen to calm him down.

**Scenario 4:**

Lizzie is underage and made the unsafe decision to consume alcohol at a friend’s house and is now feeling the intoxicated or under the influence of alcohol. She looks at the time and realizes she is past curfew. She is not sure if she should drive, but she is concerned about being home on time.

**Scenario 5:**

Julia’s parents both smoke, and she has become used to the smoky environment. One night her parents go out to dinner, and she stays home to watch her favorite movie. She looks over and sees that her dad left a partial pack of cigarettes on the end table. She is curious about why her parents smoke, and she is considering taking a cigarette out of the partial pack to see what it is like to smoke.

**Scenario 6:**

Last week, Leo had his wisdom teeth removed and was fortunate to not need the pain relief medications prescribed for him. His friend Noah asks, “Hey, do you still have those painkillers? I hear they give you a good high.” Leo is surprised by his friend's question and is not sure what to do.

**Attachment 2.3: Rubric for Decision Making**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Objective** | **3** | **2** | **1** |
| **Stop: Define the problem.** | Clearly describes in detail the problem that needs analysis and correctly determines if it is a thoughtful decision. | Identifies the problem and correctly identifies whether it requires a thoughtful decision. | Does not identify the problem and/or whether it requires a thoughtful decision. |
| **Resources** | Identifies a trusted adult and specific a school or community resource that would support a healthy choice. | Identifies a resource, support, or positive influences that can support the decision. | Does not identify a trusted adult, resource, support, or influence that can support the decision. |
| **Think: Options** | Clearly, with detail, describes two separate options. | Describes two separate options for the identified problem with little detail. | Attempts to describe only one option for the identified problem. |
| **Outcomes** | Lists clear advantages and disadvantages for both options, aligned with each option. | Describes the advantages or disadvantages for each option. | Describes advantages and/or disadvantages that do not align with the options or fails to describe the outcomes. |
| **Is this option healthy and safe?** | Can explain how each option keeps them safe or would not be safe. | Explains how one option keeps them safe or would not be safe. | States yes or no without explanation. |
| **How loved ones might feel about the decision** | Clearly describes how loved ones would feel about both options. | Somewhat describes how loved ones would feel about one option. | States feeling(s) with no reason. |
| **Choose: What option is the healthiest choice?** | Identifies a healthy choice that prevents substance use and describes the consequences of the decision. | Identifies a healthy and safe choice that prevents substance use. | States the option but does not describe why it is a healthy and safe choice OR does not identify the healthy and safe choice. |
| **Substance use prevention principles** | Identifies the correct principles that apply for this situation. | Identifies at least one correct principle. | Does not identify a correct principle. |