

Problem Solving & Decision-Making Skills Activity Guide Grade 3-5



Know Your Neuro

Quiz Questions

- 1) What does problem solving & decision-making NOT involve?
 - A. Choosing between possibilities
 - B. Brainstorming possible choices or solutions
 - C. Impulsively choosing what looks good
 - D. Choosing with the best outcome in mind
- 2) Kids and teens primarily use their _____ to problem solve and make decisions while their _____ is growing?
 - A. Limbic system (accelerator); Frontal Lobe (brake)
 - B. Frontal lobe (brake); Limbic system (accelerator)
 - C. Limbic system (brake); Frontal Lobe (accelerator)
 - D. Amygdala; Medulla Oblongata
- 3) Kids and teens are more likely to:
 - A. Let emotions get in the way of making good decisions
 - B. Overestimate rewards & downplay the risks
 - C. Act impulsively when making decisions
 - D. All of the above
- 4) What are the first three steps of problem solving & decision-making?
 - A. Gather information & ask open-ended questions
 - B. Go with your gut and choose off the top of your head
 - C. A and D
 - D. Analyze, evaluate, ask clarifying questions & choose the best solutions
- 5) What is NOT a danger of making assumptions?
 - A. Assuming you know the answers can lead to incorrect choices.
 - B. Assumptions lead to good communication and equity.
 - C. Assumptions can cause miscommunication.
 - D. Assumptions can damage creativity and exploration.
- 6) What is that last step in problem solving & decision-making, and what can interfere with it?
 - A. Sticking to the wrong choices because of your ego.
 - B. Making a series of bad decisions and not asking for help.
 - C. Self-correcting once your ego has gotten out of the way.
 - D. Defending your decisions even when you know they are wrong.

Classroom Activities

Decisions, Decisions, Decisions

In a small groups or share pairs, ask students to use the four steps of problem solving & decision-making to make the best choice in the following scenarios:

- Someone tells you that you should be on a diet to lose weight and should stop eating. What would you do?
- Your parents' rule is 'no friends over if they are not there' but they will be out of town next weekend. Should you sneak a friend over while they are gone and tell the sitter that your parents said it is okay?
- Two people in your peer group of five like to gossip and say mean things about others including the other peers in the group. What should you do?
- You stay on video games longer than you should and find yourself lying to your parents about it by telling them you were on for less time? What should you do?

Obstacles to Critical Thinking

Ask students if they encountered any of the obstacles to critical thinking below when thinking about the decision scenarios or in real life situations. If yes, ask students how they can overcome these obstacles.

- **My Belief Bias:** Believing new information is true because it is similar to what you already think or believe.
- **Know-It-All Error:** The idea that you know everything and are always right. You are unable to see from another's perspective.
- **Fake News:** Changing the truth a little bit or lying about information to make it sound true so that others will make decisions in your favor.
- **Assuming:** Believing you know the answer or solution before asking others what they think or want to do.
- **Never Wrong:** Refusing to admit when you are wrong or made a mistake.

Critical Thinking

Critical Thinking is the ability to use problem solving and decision-making steps to slow down, gather information, analyze the pros and cons of possible solutions, choose with the best outcome in mind, and self-correct if necessary. In small groups, share pairs, or with the entire classroom, ask students to use the four steps to problem solving & decision-making to help solve their own real life problems or decisions.

Technology is connecting and disconnecting youth in different ways. Ask students to have a discussion and:

1. List the pros and cons of using technology.
2. Discuss how to know when technology use has negative effects.
3. Brainstorm possible solutions that will reduce the negative effects of technology overuse.