

# Making Decisions

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responsibility

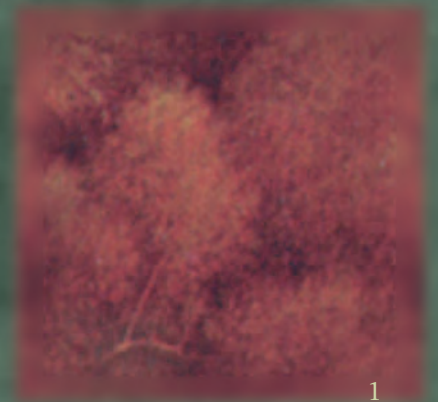
## It's Up to You

When you were small, your parents made most decisions for you. (Maybe it feels like they still do!) But you can probably see that today you make many more decisions than you did when you were just a little kid.

As you grow, more and more choices will be up to you. Some will be easy, and some will be really tough. This course cannot make any decisions for you, but it can help you think about the process of making decisions and being responsible for the decisions you make. The course provides time for you to practice making good decisions. It helps you name your values and line up your decisions to fit with those values. And it helps you find ways to forgive yourself (and others) when you fail to make good decisions.

The course provides good tools for you to become a good decision maker. The rest is up to you!

Growth  
challenge



# Pick and Choose

What is your style? How do you go at making a decision? As your teacher reads these descriptions of decision-making styles, think about which ones you use most often.



**Philip DeCoin**



thinks everything is either-or, so he just flips a coin—and does not give his decision another thought.



**U. R. Wise**



believes that her friends and family give good advice, so she asks for their opinion before she decides.



**Ima Lister**



always makes lists of the pros and cons of the decisions she has to face. Then she chooses.



## Choose Life!

In the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses instructed the Chosen People to be faithful to the Lord. Moses delivered these words as a spokesman for God:

I call heaven and earth to witness the choice you must make: I set before you life and death, a blessing and a curse. Choose life then, so that you and all your children may live in the land for generations to come. Love the Lord your God. Pay close attention to God's voice and hold fast to the Lord. This is the source of life for you, who will inherit the land promised to your ancestors. (Adapted from Deuteronomy 30:19–20)





**C. Mefollow** 

does whatever his friends suggest. He goes with the flow.



**Candy Side** 

thinks over her options and trusts her own judgment most of the time.



**Willy Wait** 

tries not to make any decisions ever. He often dithers around until it is too late to make a sound decision.



**Bea A. Butterfly** 

thinks everything is so wonderful that she wants to pick everything. She changes her mind right up to the last minute. She likes to have it all and hates to choose.



# Choose Life!

The idea of the Lord giving human beings freedom of choice is discussed in the Book of Sirach:

The Lord despises evil of all forms. Those who reverence the Lord will also despise evil. In the beginning the Lord created human beings and left them free. They could choose to keep the Commandments and remain loyal to God. Water and fire were set before them, and they could stretch out their hand and choose. Life and death were set before them, and they could choose.

The Lord's wisdom is immense. The Lord is mighty and all-seeing. The Lord understands our every deed. (Adapted from Sirach 15:13–19)



I am trying to decide about . . .

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# You Are at My Side

*Leader.* O Lord God, you are my shepherd;  
I shall not want.

*All.* The Lord is at my side.

*Leader.* In verdant pastures you give me repose.  
Beside restful waters you lead me.

*All.* The Lord is at my side.

*Leader.* You refresh my soul.  
You guide me in right paths  
for your name's sake.

*All.* The Lord is at my side.

*Leader.* Even though I walk in the dark valley  
I fear no evil;  
for you are at my side.  
Your rod and your staff give me courage.

*All.* The Lord is at my side.

*Leader.* You spread the table before me  
in the sight of my foes.  
You anoint my head with oil;  
my cup brims over.

*All.* The Lord is at my side.

*Leader.* Only goodness and kindness follow me  
all the days of my life;  
and I shall dwell in your house  
for years to come.

*All.* The Lord is at my side.

(Adapted from Psalm 23, in Nancy Schreck and  
Maureen Leach, *Psalms Anew*, page 40)



# Tell Me Why

People often do or fail to do something for some reason. In other words they have a *motive*. Here are three levels of motivation, three basic reasons why people do or fail to do something.



I'm

## First

"I'm first" decision makers consult only their own wants and feelings. They do not even think about how their decisions will affect others. Self-centered decision makers act like small children who often yell out: "Me first! Me first!" They look for whatever feels good, tastes good, or is satisfying or convenient for them.

## I'm Afraid

"I'm afraid" decision makers act or refuse to act because they fear rejection or punishment. They think about others, but mostly to worry a great deal about what those others think about them or might do to them. Sometimes fear causes people to make the right decision. But most often it causes people to make the wrong decision, or it paralyzes them so that they make no decision at all.



## I'm Responsible



"I'm responsible" decision makers carefully think through the consequences of their decisions and balance their own needs and the needs of others who will be affected by those decisions. Responsible decision makers are willing to recognize and reject decisions that are self-centered or that have negative consequences for themselves or others.

# I Know Why

Each of the following open-ended situations lists a number of actions that someone in the situation might take. Circle the level of motivation that would guide the decision maker in each possible action.

1 This Sunday Kevin's mom is working the morning shift at the hospital, and Kevin's dad has to stay home with Kevin's sister, Carrie, who has the measles. Kevin's dad says that Kevin will have to walk to church, but that his mom will pick him up in front of the church after Mass. When Kevin is two blocks from the church, three of his friends come by and invite him to join them at the convenience store a block away.

- a. Kevin joins his friends because it will be fun.

What is Kevin's motivation?

I'm First

I'm Afraid

I'm Responsible

- b. Kevin goes to Mass because he does not want to get caught skipping.

What is Kevin's motivation?

I'm First

I'm Afraid

I'm Responsible

- c. Kevin goes to Mass because he thinks prayer is important.

What is Kevin's motivation?

I'm First

I'm Afraid

I'm Responsible

- d. Kevin goes to Mass because he will get to see his best friend there.

What is Kevin's motivation?

I'm First

I'm Afraid

I'm Responsible

2 Amy and Sue are next-door neighbors and were friends all during their years at Bridgeview Elementary. But now that they are in junior high, they have gone their separate ways. Sue hangs around with a crowd that seems wild, and Amy hangs around with a new group of girls whom she likes but who often gossip about Sue and the other kids in their class. Amy has just found out that Sue is seeing a counselor about a drinking problem. This is really big news, and Amy knows that her new friends would love to hear it.

- a. Amy keeps Sue's situation secret because she considers Sue her friend.

What is Amy's motivation?

I'm First

I'm Afraid

I'm Responsible

- b. Amy tells her new friends about Sue because she wants to be popular with them.

What is Amy's motivation?

I'm First

I'm Afraid

I'm Responsible

- c. Amy does not tell her secret because she thinks Sue might get her wild friends to harm Amy in some way.

What is Amy's motivation?

I'm First

I'm Afraid

I'm Responsible



# 3

Barbara and her family are visiting her cousins in a neighboring state. On Friday night Barbara’s older cousin, Seth, invites her to a party. They drive to an abandoned mill at the edge of town. Soon all the kids are drinking beer and getting out of control. Seth does not pay any attention to Barbara, and he is soon too drunk to drive. Barbara knows that her cousins’ house is within walking distance.

a. Beth stays at the party but does not drink any alcohol.

What is Beth’s motivation?

I’m **First**

I’m **Afraid**

I’m **Responsible**

b. Beth stays at the party and decides to drink.

What is Beth’s motivation?

I’m **First**

I’m **Afraid**

I’m **Responsible**

c. Beth walks to her cousins’ house and sneaks in unnoticed.

What is Beth’s motivation?

I’m **First**

I’m **Afraid**

I’m **Responsible**

d. Beth walks to her cousins’ house and wakes up her parents to tell them that she came back alone and that she is worried about Seth driving home.

What is Beth’s motivation?

I’m **First**

I’m **Afraid**

I’m **Responsible**



## Choose **Life!**

Many who followed Jesus thought they would be chosen by him simply because they were God’s chosen people. But Jesus wanted everyone to follow him—people who were left out and considered sinners, everyone! Jesus wanted his followers to be *choosing* people. And he wanted them to know that it was never too late, so he told a group of them a parable:

“Now, what do you think of this?” Jesus said. “Once a man who had two sons went to the older son and said, ‘Please go to the vineyard and help out today.’”

“The older son said, ‘I don’t want to,’ but later he changed his mind and went to the vineyard to work after all.

“The father said to the younger son, ‘Please go to the vineyard. The vinedressers need help today.’”

“The younger son said, ‘Yes, sir,’ but he did not bother to go to the vineyard.

“I ask you,” Jesus said, “Which of the two sons did their father’s will?”

“The older one,” the people replied.

“You are right,” Jesus said. (Adapted from Matthew 21:28–31)