

## II. Decision Concepts



## 1. Effective Decision Making

One can judge the quality of his/her decision when the decision is made, not after one has information about the outcome. Additionally, good decisions do not guarantee good outcomes. These distinctions are important and can be difficult to grasp, especially for young people who are constantly rewarded or punished based on outcomes that result from good or bad decisions. One can achieve a good decision by reaching quality in each of the six elements of the Decision Chain and by ensuring that one is decision fit and has reached a proper “head and heart” balance.

An individual can achieve a good decision when one:

- Recognizes an opportunity for choice and declares a decision
- Is clear on the problem that one is solving
- Identifies what one wants in terms of outcomes
- Knows the options related to the decision
- Uses the best information available
- Uses reasoning to identify the best option
- Is decision fit
- Chooses an alternative that makes sense and feels right
- Follows through on one’s choice



## Effective Decision Making Discussion/Fishbowl Prompts

- How do you judge the decisions that you make?
- Describe a time when you made a good decision but the outcome was undesirable. Now describe a time when you made a bad decision but the outcome was good. Were you aware in either case that the decision was separate from the outcome?
- When have you used an explicit process to make a decision? Was the process helpful? What would/could you have changed about your approach?
- Describe a time you wish you had help in making a difficult decision. What do you wish you had to make the decision process more effective?



## Effective Decision Making Case Study: Amanda

Amanda wanted to join the armed forces when she graduated high school. She had always wanted to serve her country, and knew she could gain real world experience and receive tuition assistance for college. She did a lot of research and arrived at her decision only after careful consideration and many discussions with her school counselor, the Army recruiter, and her parents. Amanda had the support of the adults she trusted. She believed she had made a good decision. After several months of being in the Army though, Amanda realized she was unhappy. She did not feel challenged, and Amanda's general experience was not what she had expected.

- Did Amanda make a good or bad decision? How would she know?
- What can Amanda do now if she believes she made a good decision, and in fact she can prove decision quality, but her outcome is less than desirable?



## 2. Empowerment

Decision empowerment is a vital component of good decision making among young people. Too often youth might feel or say that they have no power in life, and that the decisions they need to make are out of their control. There is a direct link between young people feeling powerless and increased risky behavior and lack of judgment on their part. The more they have the capacity to make good choices that can transform their lives, the more they will believe in the power of thoughtful decision making. Young people can make real, meaningful changes in their lives with the right tools. Feeling empowered, being aware of one's own agency, and declaring decisions are a great start. Having and using tools, such as the decision chain and process, set up a proactive and empowered approach to life and decision making.

Empowering young people is important because:

- Feelings of powerlessness lead to increased risky behavior and bad judgment
- Young people can make substantial changes in their lives with good decisions
- Being proactive opens up opportunities for reflection and agency in personal decision making
- Youth who feel empowered can steer situations in a positive direction for themselves



## Empowerment Discussion/Fishbowl Prompts

- Discuss a time when you felt powerless when faced with a decision.
- Describe a time when your ability to make a decision positively impacted your self image.
- What do you do when you are disappointed? How do you handle disappointment? What could you do differently?
- How can you gain more power when making decisions?
- How can you develop more trust with your parents and/or other adults?
- How can you help others feel more empowered when making decisions?
- Describe a time when you made a decision that made a positive difference in your life. In the lives of others?
- How do your decisions differ from those of friends? Do you feel confident about disagreeing with your friends' decisions?
- How do others influence your decision making?



## Empowerment Case Study: Janice

Janice is a pregnant teen. She lives at home with her parents and her younger sister. She used to think of herself as an average student with plans of having a career someday, but lately she feels she's losing control of her life. The biggest obstacle she faces is self sabotaging beliefs. Her family and community expect her to screw up, so Janice wonders why she should bother trying. She has become increasingly discouraged during her pregnancy. Her parents do not trust her to be responsible. They have stopped talking to her the way they used to, and Janice misses that connection. Janice's friends can't relate to her new circumstances either. Janice wants to be a good mother and to have a good life, but she can't see how anything positive can happen now that she's going to have a baby. She feels alone and unsure about what she should do to remain positive, regain the trust of her parents, and enjoy her life again.

- How can Janice minimize her feelings of helplessness?
- What can Janice do to feel more empowered?
- What can her parents and/or other adults in Janice's life do to help her feel more empowered?



## Empowerment Case Study: Aaron

Aaron has always been a good student, friend, and son. He makes good grades, follows rules at home, and has a good relationship with his parents and siblings. He's always been involved in extracurricular activities and his peers usually describe him as sociable and dependable. Lately, Aaron's best friend Chet has noticed that Aaron has been feeling down. Chet sees that Aaron doesn't seem to enjoy hanging out with friends and would rather be alone most days after school and on weekends. Chet and Aaron used to occasionally smoke pot together. They would usually have fun when they were high, but lately Aaron has seemed angry and confrontational when they smoke. Chet has also noticed changes in Aaron's general anxiety levels. Chet suspects Aaron could be depressed. Chet's not sure what to think or do, but he wants to help his friend.

- What can Chet do to help his friend?
- How can Chet help Aaron realize that Aaron has power to improve his current situation?
- How can Chet help Aaron get help if Aaron needs it?



### 3. Declaring

Declaring decisions involves creating space for choices rather than passively or subconsciously “going with the flow.” It may be easy for young people to miss opportunities to declare decisions due to a lack of decision fitness, fatalistic attitudes, or response to peer pressure. Additionally, there may be conscious or subconscious choices that deter someone from declaring a decision. For example, fear of failure, guilt, shame, or other debilitating emotions can act as barriers to declaring decisions. In order for young people to avoid these obstacles and be successful decision makers they must actively recognize choices and select the best options for their lives. They must also seek a balance between head and the heart, reason and emotions. Young people might not always have control over the context of a decision, but they can in fact take ownership of their decisions and feel empowered through declaring. Setting goals, reflecting on the past, and planning for the future are all ways in which young people can prepare themselves to declare decisions (see Declaring Worksheet on page 118).

Declaring is an important, active process:

- It demands conscious choice rather than submitting to inertia
- It is possible if one can avoid the negative effects of bad habits and emotions
- It requires that one recognize an opportunity for choice
- In order to declare, one must seek a balance between head and heart



## **Declaring Discussion/Fishbowl Prompts**

- Discuss a time you could have declared a decision but went with the flow instead. How did you feel about the situation?
- Submitting to peer or group pressure is a choice. How have you consciously or subconsciously made choices by following a group?
- When did you make an unpopular decision? How did you feel about it? What feedback did you get from others?
- When did you make a decision that was unexpected or atypical? Why did you make the decision and how did you feel about it?
- When did you make a decision that was both right and felt good? What was the decision and what were its consequences?
- Picture yourself in two years. How can you change that picture? Now picture yourself in four years? How can you change that picture? What decisions do you need to declare and/or make, in order to come closer to these pictures?
- Compare who you were in the past with who you are now and who you want to be in the future. How do these identities compare and what can you do to create identities that make you proud?



## Declaring Case Study: Carlos

Carlos has always been interested in one of his baseball teammates, Joel. They have hung out together with friends before and Carlos always thought Joel was fun to be around and that the two of them shared many interests. One day after practice Carlos asked Joel if he had a few minutes to chat. Rather than let the opportunity slip once again, Carlos declared a decision and asked Joel out on a date. Carlos was a little nervous, but he thought, “If I don’t do it now, I might never.”

- It would have been easy for Carlos to never approach his crush. What made the difference? Have you ever seized an opportunity when it could have been easier or more comfortable not to?
- How might Carlos’ ability to declare a decision now impact his life when he’s an adult?



## **Declaring Video Case Study: *Road to Return***

This video case study is taken from *Road to Return*. For a free download of the clip go to the following link: [http://www.reentrymediaoutreach.org/mediagallery\\_doc.htm](http://www.reentrymediaoutreach.org/mediagallery_doc.htm). The video is also available for purchase online.

21 year old Davidson Lewis is one of the individuals that viewers meet in *Road to Return*. Davidson leaves prison with no high school diploma, a criminal record that will make it difficult to find a job, no marketable skills, a history of drug use for which he received no treatment while in prison, a mounting debt of \$43 per month for supervision fees, a check for \$10 which he cannot cash without legal identification that he lacks, and some clothing.

- What are the greatest challenges he faces?
- What are the decisions that Lewis will need to declare now and in the weeks after his release, in order to increase his chance for success?
- Which decisions might Lewis be likely to not declare, because of his previous behavior or experiences?
- If you could add things to Lewis' departure kit that would increase his chance for success, what would you add?



## Declaring Video Case Study: *A Justice That Heals*

This video case study is taken from *A Justice That Heals*. To view the clip for free, go to the following link: [http://www.reentrymediaoutreach.org/mediagallery\\_doc.htm](http://www.reentrymediaoutreach.org/mediagallery_doc.htm). The video is also available for purchase online.

Maurine Young finds “justice and healing” when her son is murdered by another boy the day after both boys graduate from high school. In the video Maurine says that she realized she had a decision to make. She took a bold step and made the unusual, and unpopular, decision by forgiving the boy who murdered her son and by embracing him into her life. Although she could have justifiably acted on her grief and anger under the circumstances, Maurine consciously declared a decision that changed her life and her community forever.

- Maurine’s decision to forgive her son’s murderer was unexpected and seen as highly unusual by others. She took a bold step by declaring the decision to forgive Ramos. What allows someone to make a decision that is unexpected?
- Was there a time when you decided to act in a way that surprised you or someone else?
- What would you have done if you had been a member of the victim’s family?
- If you have had a personal experience of extreme anger, hurt, or loss, how did you react? Why? Were you vengeful, forgiving, or both?
- Maurine had a positive outcome to her decision; she changed the life of her son’s murderer, Mario Ramos, and helped her own family heal. Would she have made a good decision if her meeting with Mario Ramos had gone badly?
- What are all the different ways that Maurine’s meeting with Mario could have gone? Do any of these possibilities represent bad decisions? Good ones?



## Declaring Declaring Worksheet

Use the included *Declaring Worksheet*, found on page 118 in the worksheet section of this guide, to have students identify how they interpret and respond to what adults say. Emphasis should be placed on how students could change their reactions to what they are being told. The goal of completing the worksheet is to have students recognize that they can respond to others in ways that are honest and ultimately help them get what they want.

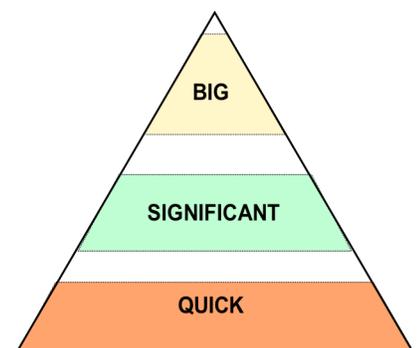


## 4. Types of Decisions

Not unlike adults, young people face a variety of decisions. It is helpful to categorize these decisions into three types: 1) big, life shaping decisions; 2) significant decisions; and 3) in the moment decisions that require an immediate response. For young people, big decisions might involve whether to go to college or take a “gap” year before doing so. A young person might also need to make a big family decision, like determining which parent to live with after a divorce. Significant decisions are more contained and might be about a young person’s relationships in high school or about deciding the right balance between athletics and academics. In the moment decisions can be inconsequential and minor, like determining whether to go to a party, to life changing – whether to engage in risky behavior at that party. Different decisions require different processes, so it is important to be clear about what kind of decision one is making. Asking oneself probing questions, seeking help from others, and practicing good decision habits all help young people become more adept at identifying the correct type of decision and the appropriate process for handling it.

Some points to remember when thinking about types of decisions:

- Decisions come in all shapes and sizes, but one can generally think about three levels of decisions (big, significant, and in the moment)
- Determining the type of decision will direct the type and intensity (time, amount of deliberation, involvement of others) of the process one uses to reach the decision
- Asking probing questions is helpful
- Seeking guidance from others to help size up the decision type is also useful
- Practicing good decision behavior until it becomes a habit allows one to more easily identify and categorize decisions one faces



## **Types of Decisions Discussion/Fishbowl Prompts**

- Discuss a time you were confused about the type of decision you were facing. How great was the commitment and what was at stake?
- Think about a time you made a decision that could not be reversed. Did you change your thinking or approach because of the permanence of the decision?
- Discuss a time you decided not to stop and think before making a decision. What prompted you to be impulsive?
- How much time do you typically spend making decisions? Does the time you spend on decision making match the types of decisions you face?
- Discuss a time you procrastinated making a decision and suffered, or could have suffered, serious consequences. What contributed to your procrastination, and how could you change the situation to avoid procrastinating in the future?
- Do you ever get bogged down in insignificant decisions? How and why?



## 5. Raising Issues

Decisions are often complicated because there are many stakeholders, multiple uncertainties and competing values to consider. A decision context can be difficult to understand and navigate, especially if one tries to tackle a complex decision alone. Raising issues while accepting help from others and seeking out resources that clarify a decision context, can help one make quality decisions. It is especially important for young people to be clear about all the issues surrounding a decision. It may be relatively easy for them to become overwhelmed when faced with decisions, or confused about what constitutes critical information and where to get it. It may also be difficult to separate all the relevant parts of a decision problem in order to see it as it really is, as a set of complex, and sometimes competing entities. By understanding as many parts of the decision problem as possible, one can become adept at making good decisions and improve the quality of his/her decisions.

Raising issues is important because:

- Decisions can be highly complex
- Decisions can be overwhelming
- It is important to see and understand all the parts of a decision problem, including multiple perspectives and agendas
- One can achieve decision quality if all the issues are acknowledged and understood to some degree



## Raising Issues Case Study: Dale

Dale is a 17 year old currently on probation until his 18th birthday for driving under the influence, which resulted in Dale injuring a passenger in his car. As a result, Dale had his license revoked, has an early curfew, and his parents make a restitution payment of over \$500 each month. Dale has a minimum wage part time job to help cover the costs of the restitution, but his contributions are minimal. He has turned much of his life around and that has earned Dale the privilege of some leeway in his curfew for school events such as homecoming, sports, and prom. However, he still has great difficulty in making good decisions – especially following house rules – and then living with the consequences. His parents recently caught Dale drinking at home with two friends. Dale's father wants Dale to take more responsibility for his life, and he believes that requiring Dale to pay the entire restitution cost each month will force Dale to grow up. Dale's mother is worried that Dale's drinking is not just typical teenage behavior; she thinks Dale should begin seeing a therapist or that the family can seek some help together. Dale just wants his freedom back; he feels suffocated by his parents' intense intervention.

- Who are the stakeholders in this situation?
- Define the problem using each of their frames (from each of their perspectives).
- Identify five key issues for Dale and his family. How could Dale and his family begin to tackle these issues?



## 6. Head and Heart

As with adults, good decision making for young people involves a process of reasoning and caring where good decisions make sense and feel right. Psychology and organizational research show that people tend to lead with either the head or the heart when making decisions. DEF advocates balancing these components when making a decision. It might be tempting to alter the idea of decisions making sense and feeling right to the idea of decisions making sense and feeling good. The distinction between “right” and “good” is critical. Often decisions don’t feel good, but one knows that one has made the right decision by considering emotions, intuition, and other “heart” related factors. For example, a young person might stand up for him/herself and break up with an abusive significant other. This decision might not feel good in the moment, because the youth could still have feelings for their boy/girlfriend and is disappointing the other person by letting them go. Simultaneously, however, the decision maker feels in his/her heart that he/she has done the right thing for both parties involved.

Some key points to remember when considering head and heart:

- Many people have dominance towards the head or the heart and make decisions that way. Effective decision making demands a balance between the two.
- Decisions need to feel “right” not “good” in order to be quality decisions.



## Head and Heart Role Play: Kristen

Kristen is thinking about having sex with her new boyfriend Nathan but is not sure if she is ready yet. Also, Kristen is just not comfortable talking about sex with Nathan. Kristen can talk candidly with her friends, but she has never been comfortable speaking with her boyfriends about it. Kristen knows that Nathan wants to have sex because of his behavior and a few jokes he made during their last date. Kristen and Nathan are meeting after school later today to hang out at Nathan's house. Kristen knows that no one will be home, and there is a strong chance that she and Nathan will have sex, unless she does something about it. To adopt a male perspective, the instructor may present the decision maker as a: 1) boy who is faced with the same decision; 2) boy who has just found out that his girlfriend might be pregnant; or 3) boy who has just found out that his girlfriend is in fact pregnant.

- Preparation: In small groups identify at least three ways that Kristen can handle the situation. Focus on ways Kristen can balance her reasoning (head) with her emotions (heart).
- Action: Choose two of these ways to act out. Each person in the group should play a role. Make sure to show the potential consequences of Kristen's actions.
- Reflection: In a journal or through group discussion reflect on Kristen's situation and how balancing the head and heart is important to her and can influence your own decision making. Do you have an upcoming decision that will require you to balance your head and heart?



## 7. Decision Fitness

Decision Fitness is a practical mode for in the moment decisions when time is short. Some of these decisions might be small, while others are significant and can have life changing implications. Small, everyday decisions may also have large cumulative effects. Decision fitness is an important concept for young people because it is often difficult for them to discern when they are fit and unfit. Being decision fit means that one is able to stop and think or quickly draw upon a policy to make a decision when there is not much time to deliberate or ask others for help. For example, a young person would be decision fit if he/she responds to an offer of marijuana at a party with a predetermined statement. A youth can quickly and effectively respond with something like “Nope, I’m not into that stuff” or “No thanks. If I wanted some I would have asked.” It is important that young people develop policies or statements that feel authentic to them, and are ready to use them when necessary. Other strategies that move decision fitness forward include role playing and simulating situations. Some things that get in the way of decision fitness include being overly emotional (too happy, sad, angry, etc.) or being under the influence of foreign substances.

Some key points to remember when thinking about decision fitness:

- It’s important to be decision fit because many in the moment decisions can have important consequences
- Some ways to support decision fitness include having a clear sense of what one wants
- Policies, habits, role playing, and simulations are tools that can help support decision fitness
- Debilitating emotions and substance use can substantially hinder one’s ability to be decision fit



## Decision Fitness Discussion/Fishbowl Prompts

- When was a time you lost control of your emotions? Did you miss an opportunity to make a decision?
- When are you most/least decision fit? When do you feel at your best? How can you maximize making decisions when you feel fit?
- What do you do when you're angry or frustrated? What do you do when you are happy or overjoyed?
- How do you respond when someone asks you to do something you are not comfortable with?
- How do you make decisions when you feel pressured by peers? How can you develop rules or habits to make decision making easier when faced with peer pressure?
- Is it important for you to agree with your friends, even if your true feelings are different? How can you respect your friendships and yourself?
- Have you ever helped a friend do something you did not feel comfortable with?
- What are deal breakers for you in your relationships? How do you arrive at these decisions?



## Decision Fitness Case Study: Mohammed

Mohammed is not prepared for school. He has an important math test today and a quiz in history. Mohammed also has an English paper due. The math test is daunting, and Mohammed previously got an extension on the paper, though it is still not completed. He thought he was going to have more time to study and complete his paper, but somehow he just didn't get everything done. Now he feels overwhelmed, and he doesn't know what to do. His friend Terry has math earlier in the day, and Mohammed is certain the teacher will use the same test later for Mohammed's section. Mohammed and Terry can meet for lunch and discuss the math test. Since his English paper is about *Macbeth*, Mohammed thinks he can download an essay online. He's never done that before, but he knows a lot of students do it without getting caught.

- Discuss Mohammed's decision fitness and how it relates to the alternatives he has generated.
- Is Mohammed facing a decision?
- What are his values?
- How might his decisions be different if he had more time?
- What kinds of policies can Mohammed generate to help him when he is faced with a situation like this one?



## Decision Fitness Case Study: Jill

Jill and Carla used to belong to a tight knit group of girls until a disagreement forced Carla out of the group. Since Carla was no longer friends with the other girls, she became the subject of some very unkind teasing, mostly online using Facebook. Jill remained silent much of the time when the girls made fun of Carla. She knew their behavior was wrong, but she didn't feel comfortable confronting her friends. Jill also felt guilty that she wasn't being true to herself. No matter what happened Carla didn't deserve this treatment. As a result, Jill decided that she needed to be prepared the next time the group began bullying. If she had a response ready she thought she would be able to stand up for her former friend and for herself. One afternoon the girls were hanging out and decided to post some nasty comments about Carla on Facebook. When asked to type something, Jill used the comeback she had rehearsed.

- Jill was not able to stand up to her friends the first time, or even the second, but eventually she was true to herself. Have you experienced a situation where it's taken time for you to oppose the group?
- How would Jill have felt had she not prepared a comeback? Are there situations that you regularly face where preparing a comeback could be helpful?
- Can you generate five different comebacks that Jill could have used or that you can use the next time you are in a situation where someone is being bullied?



## Decision Fitness Engaging Exercise

Have students individually brainstorm a list of responses to what they could say if or when someone offers them drugs or alcohol. In small groups have the students discuss their lists and then report back to the group with insights. As a large group some questions and prompts to consider might be:

- How might your response change if the person offering the drugs or alcohol was your friend? A stranger? An adult you know?
- Which of the responses would work if you were offered drugs or alcohol? Which ones wouldn't be effective?

At this point it might be very useful to have some students practice role playing with the responses and have the observers give feedback.



## 8. Decision Ethics

Many schools and organizations explicitly declare ethical development among young people as one of their key goals. Youth face ethical dilemmas as frequently, if not more often, than adults. It can be difficult for them to become skillful ethical decision makers, due to both the actual and perceived lack of control they sometimes have over their lives. To gain a better sense of making good ethical decisions, young people must first be precise in making ethical distinctions. Young people might often hear others speak about facing ethical dilemmas, but how often do they find themselves in a position where their ethics are compromised?

An ethical dilemma is a situation that involves an apparent conflict between moral imperatives, in which to obey one would result in transgressing another. For example, a young person would encounter an ethical dilemma if he/she had a good friend who confided an important and dangerous secret. Keeping the secret from adults might result in harm to the friend, but revealing it would certainly entail a punishment. In such a situation, one option entails telling the truth to one's parents and betraying a friend's trust while possibly helping him/her. The second alternative would result in keeping a friend's trust while lying to one's parents (see *What Exceptions Will You Accept in Your Ethical Code?* on page 122).

Some common ethical decision traps include: 1) choosing not to think (not declaring); 2) thinking poorly or irrationally (not being decision fit); and 3) not having enough time to think. To avoid these traps and to become generally more aware of ethical decisions, one can develop ethical awareness and predetermined practices.

When thinking about ethics, it is important to remember:

- Understanding ethical distinctions is key. By using precise definitions and language, one can see a situation for what it truly is – a situation where an ethical dilemma is present versus a case where one's desires are in conflict.
- Ethical decision traps overlap with other general decision traps and include not declaring, not being decision fit, and not having time to stop and think.
- One can develop pre formed practices or policies to help navigate ethical decisions when they arise.



## Decision Ethics Discussion/Fishbowl Prompts

- Have you ever experienced an ethical dilemma (for example, plagiarism, cheating on a boyfriend/girlfriend, lying on a job application)? If so, how did you perceive and understand the situation? How did you feel? What did you decide to do?
- How do you determine what you need versus what you want?
- How do you ensure that you get what you need in a situation even when obstacles are in the way? Do you ever resort to lying, cheating, stealing or inflicting harm to get what you need?
- How is your personal ethical code different from your best friend's/friends'? What are some ways that you might differ in your comfort with deceiving others? Harming others? Stealing or cheating from others?
- Is it right to deceive some people and not others?
- Do you ever lie to protect your self image?
- Think of something you did in your past that still nags or haunts you. What did you do and how could you make up for it?
- How does anyone become a more ethical person? What decisions can people make to become more ethical people (for example, Mario Ramos or other characters that the students have become familiar with through these activities)?
- How can you close the gap between who you are ethically now and who you would like to be in a year? What decisions can you make to improve your ethics?



## Decision Ethics Case Study: Darryl

Darryl used to be a troublemaker. Last year he started drinking and getting into fights at school. With much effort and a lot of guidance Darryl has changed his ways. He and his parents are very proud of the young man he's become. He's more confident now, takes responsibility for his actions, and is maturing in significant ways. Now that he's sixteen Darryl even wants to get a part time job at a local bicycle shop. He recently picked up a job application from the shop and spoke at length with the manager. The manager was impressed with Darryl and told him that he thought Darryl would be a great fit; he would just need to complete an application and return in a few days for an interview. Darryl thinks he would really enjoy the atmosphere at the bicycle shop and he's excited to prove to himself and his parents just how much he's turned his life around. When filling out the job application, though, Darryl became worried that if he were completely truthful about his past and answered all the questions honestly, he wouldn't get the job. He's not sure what he should do. It seems easy to lie on the application, but Darryl doesn't know if he should.

- Is Darryl facing an ethical dilemma?
- What can Darryl do? What alternatives are available to him?
- If you were Darryl, what would you do? If Darryl were your friend, what would you advise him to do?



## Decision Ethics

### Role Play: Michelle

Michelle and Dris worked together on a history project for several weeks. They were good team members, shared their responsibilities equally, and were proud of their final product. One day at school before the projects were returned, Michelle led her history teacher to believe that she did more work on the project than Dris. She didn't lie outright, but led her teacher to think that she had shouldered the bulk of the project's responsibility. At the time Michelle wasn't sure if her actions were wrong, but she thought anything that might help give her an edge was fair game. Besides, she thought Dris probably would have exaggerated his contribution if given the opportunity. Now she feels guilty.

- Preparation: In small groups identify at least three ways Michelle could have handled the situation.
- Action: Choose two of these ways to act out. Each person in the group should play a role. Make sure to show the potential consequences of Michelle's actions.
- Reflection: In a journal or through group discussion reflect on Michelle's situation. Michelle is not faced with an ethical dilemma in this case, but she has compromised her ethical code. Have you compromised your ethical code to gain more attention or to receive a better grade?



## 9. Behavioral Issues and Biases

Many behavioral issues and biases impact decision making, especially for young people. It can be useful to group these mechanisms into five categories (see Glossary starting on page 131 for definitions):

- 1) Perceptions (selective memory, risk perception)
- 2) Reasoning (primacy, recency, confirming evidence)
- 3) Personality traits (comfort zones, preferences)
- 4) Group dynamics (conformity, obedience)
- 5) Motivations (illusion of control, overconfidence)

Behavioral issues and biases encompass a wide range of material, and DEF can provide additional and specific support around any of the five mechanisms. Young people can frequently experience decision-making difficulties around behavioral issues. A classic example is the susceptibility of young people to peer pressure. Other issues like sunk cost fallacy (a motivational bias), might lead a young person to perpetuate a negative status quo and for example, stay in a bad relationship. One might say, "I have invested so much into this relationship." Rather than focusing on whether the relationship is a good one, the decision maker might fixate on the time, effort and resources that have gone into developing the relationship. Young people might also feel the illusion of control (another motivational bias), when under the influence of foreign substances. Two other examples of behavioral biases are seeing absolutes and rushing to judgment (reasoning errors).

Behavioral mechanisms play a large role in decision making, and several key messages are important to remember:

- Our perceptions play systematic tricks on us (selective memory, framing effects, selective attention, anchoring effects)
- Our casual reasoning generates many logical errors (nonregressive predictions, primacy and recency, inability to reason probabilistically, attribution errors, confirming evidence, status quo effect)
- Our personality traits are a source of strengths and weaknesses for decision making (decision styles, comfort zones, habitual frames, content selectivity, preferences)



- Group dynamics can lead to a variety of difficulties and distinctions that impact the quality of decisions. One such ambiguous result is groupthink, which can be positive or negative depending on the circumstances (anonymity, attention to shared evidence, psychological safety, suggestibility, compliance, conformity, obedience, premature harmony)
- Our conscious and subconscious motivations lead to distortions (affective forecasting, overconfidence, hindsight, illusion of control, escalation of commitment, sunk cost fallacy, discounting opportunity costs, wishful thinking, positive illusions)



## Behavioral Issues and Biases Discussion/Fishbowl Prompts

- What do you know about your personality, strengths, and weaknesses?
- How does your personality impact your decision making? For everyday and in the moment decisions? For significant and life changing decisions?
- Do you have difficulty making decisions or moving away from something/someone because of the time/effort/resources you have invested in a situation?
- Do recent events or evidence sway your decisions? If so, how?
- Do you only remember or pay attention to evidence that supports your position?
- Describe a time you followed the decisions of a group? What was beneficial or disadvantageous about your decision?
- Do you make different choices when you are alone and when you are in a group?
- Are your perceptions of risk usually accurate?
- Are your estimates about a situation usually correct or incorrect?
- Do you ever feel that you think in absolutes (yes/no, always/never, love/hate)? How could you expand your thinking?
- Describe a time when you made an impulsive decision. What happened and how did you feel afterwards?



## Behavioral Issues and Biases Engaging Exercise

For an exercise on obedience, ask students to research the My Lai Massacre or give them the facts about the historical event. Individually, in journals or through some reflective writing, they should consider what they would have done had they been U.S. soldiers in Charlie Company.

- Would they have obeyed orders to destroy the village and harm its residents?
- How could they have acted independently, even if they had wanted to?

In their research, students may have encountered stories of soldiers who obeyed and tortured others and also stories of soldiers who refused to behave violently. Ask your students what might have accounted for the differences among the soldiers who obeyed and those who did not.

My Lai provides an extreme example of obedience, within the realm of groupthink, but there are more common situations where young people obey to detrimental personal effects. Ask students to reflect on a time when they obeyed directions from an untrustworthy authority and went against their own ethics or wishes.

- What factors were at play to influence their decisions?
- What could they have done to act more independently in that situation and what takeaways do they carry into the future?



## Behavioral Issues and Biases Engaging Exercise

For students unfamiliar with the Solomon Asch (<http://www.experiment-resources.com/asch-experiment.html>) and Stanley Milgram ([www.milgramreenactment.org](http://www.milgramreenactment.org), [www.experiment-resources.com/stanley-milgram-experiment.html](http://www.experiment-resources.com/stanley-milgram-experiment.html)) experiments on conformity and obedience, recreate these experiments or similar versions in your advisory or classroom. Asch's line experiment is a particularly simple exercise to recreate that emphasizes the influence of group dynamics on personal decisions. After the exercise, the key concepts to focus on for discussion include:

- When do you consciously or subconsciously conform to the standards or wishes of others?
- What makes it easy or difficult to conform or obey in a group?
- How are your decisions different when you make them in isolation as opposed to when you make them in a group?



## Behavioral Issues and Biases Engaging Exercise

Ask students to consider the following questions individually, then have the whole group brainstorm answers to each question.

- Can you think of ways that social norms can be used to modify behavior in beneficial ways? Are you aware when social norms are used on you to adjust your behavior?
- What are some ways that social norms can be used to influence your own personal behavior in negative ways?

After the brainstorming, ask students to consider how they might analyze and/or critique unhealthy social norms and be responsive to healthy ones.



## 10. Framing

When a young person frames a problem, he/she determines how to address the issue or the opportunity where one needs to make a decision. A helpful decision frame clarifies the following: 1) What will and what will not be decided; 2) When the decision should be made; and 3) Who should be involved. Three elements define the frame: purpose, scope, and perspective. Purpose refers to why one is considering the problem or decision opportunity. Scope considers the scale of the problem – what is included in the decision context. Perspective recognizes the different vantage points from which one considers the decision. Together, purpose, scope, and perspective characterize the dimensions for framing a decision. Understanding framing is critical. To properly frame a decision is to accurately understand the boundaries of the decision at hand, so that one selects the right reasons, scale, and point of view with which to begin considering the decision. Many decisions reflect poor quality because of improper framing. More than the other links of the Decision Chain, framing can prove difficult because one might be likely to accept a decision frame subconsciously rather than clearly defining the right problem to solve.

Framing is a critical early step in tackling a decision and requires thoughtful work. To properly frame a decision, one must:

- Be clear about what should be decided
- Know when the decision should be made
- Understand who should be involved
- Understand the relationships among purpose, scope, and perspective
- Be conscious of defining one's decision frame



## Framing Case Study: Jamie

Jamie received a lower grade in World History than he anticipated last semester. He did most of the course reading, participated often, and worked well in small group activities. It is a yearlong course, so Jamie has a chance to improve his overall performance. This is important since he and his family want him to attend a competitive college. They are aware that all grades count, and the family is very conscious of shifts in Jamie's grades. Jamie's father thinks the poor grade is the teacher's fault; he believes that Ms. Ames graded Jamie's semester project too harshly, because she may have disagreed with Jamie's opinions throughout the course. Jamie's father even told Jamie, "Don't give up your power to a teacher. Teachers are just out to tell you how to think." Jamie's father insists that Jamie speak with Ms. Ames and demand an explanation for the grade. Jamie will see his teacher tomorrow. He doesn't know what to do.

- Who are the stakeholders in this decision context?
- Generate a list of frames through which one can analyze Jamie's situation. Is there a single decision or are there multiple decisions to make? If so, what are the frames associated with those decisions? What are the different purposes, perspectives, and scopes associated with each frame?



## Framing Role Play: Susanna

It's Susanna's first year at her new high school. She's made several new friends who she really likes. One day, she finds her new friends smoking near campus during lunch. One of the school rules is no smoking and Susanna knows that if she smokes, even off-campus, and gets caught, she'll be reprimanded. She doesn't want to get in trouble at her new school, so she tries to sneak away before her friends notice her. Before she can, one of her friends sees her and tells her to join them.

- **Preparation:** In small groups identify at least three frames through which Susana can approach her situation.
- **Action:** Choose two of these ways to enact. Each person in the group should play a role. Make sure to show the potential consequences of Susanna's actions.
- **Reflection:** In a journal or through group discussion reflect on Susanna's situation. How does changing the frame through which she encounters the decision shift Susanna's thinking? Susanna may need to honor multiple frames at once. Will she be able to do this? Have you ever been in a situation where you made use and/or sense of multiple, conflicting frames?



## 11. Values

Values are what one cares about in a particular situation, based on wants, needs, dislikes, etc. An individual's values characterize his/her preferences in a decision context. Usually one has many different, and sometimes conflicting, values given a decision setting. For example, when deciding which sport to play, a student might have values around time commitment, flexibility, and enjoyment.

Values in decision contexts, however, are not personal beliefs. This point should be stressed with young people, so that they do not confuse value discussions with moral codes. Decision science by nature is amoral, so value considerations are merely about what one wants to achieve in a situation. Other important distinctions are that values can be direct or indirect, personal or cultural, and constant or situational. Additionally, when thinking of one's values, one might need to make tradeoffs. To return to the sports example, one might select an athletic activity that offers minimal time commitment but lacks flexibility for one's schedule.

The basis of a decision is represented by values, information, and alternatives. Assessing one's values may require balancing one's wants and dislikes to arrive at clarity (see Values Capture Worksheet on page 119).

Some key messages when thinking about values:

- Values represent what one cares about, in the context of decision making
- Values are not one's moral beliefs. Morals will inform the values one places on potential decision outcomes
- Values are direct or indirect, personal or cultural, and constant or situational
- When values are competing, one must sometimes make tradeoffs and balance likes with dislikes



## Values Discussion/Fishbowl Prompts

- Describe a time when you had to make a decision and you held conflicting values? What did you do?
- How do you make tradeoffs when thinking about values in a situation?
- How do you separate your values in a decision context from your personal beliefs?
- Are your values consistent with your conscience?
- Describe a time when your values in a situation conflicted with someone else's values. How did you make a decision that you both felt comfortable with?
- Think of a decision you have faced or made many times. Have your values shifted from one decision context to the next. How and why?
- How can you clarify your values when making a decision? Are there certain people you can go to for guidance? Do you seek out special resources?



## Values

### Case Study: Sarvesh

Sarvesh is considering getting a part time job, so that he has more independence and doesn't have to rely on his parents for money. He just turned sixteen and there are many options for part time work now that he's a little older. Sarvesh also wants to continue acting in school plays. Last year he played Duncan in *Macbeth* and that experience was a highlight for him. He has the potential to become one of the school's best actors, but Sarvesh thinks that working part time and acting will be tough. His schedule last year during rehearsals was often unpredictable, and in general, the time commitment was huge. On top of that Sarvesh's parents have told him that his grades must come first. He doesn't know what to do: he'd like to have his own money, continue acting in school productions, and maintain good grades, but doing all those things successfully at once seems unlikely.

- Where could Sarvesh go for help with identifying his values?
- What are relevant values?
- What are the tradeoffs?
- Does Sarvesh have enough information about the possible consequences or outcomes to think about his values clearly and to weigh them appropriately?
- How might he make tradeoffs that he would feel good about?
- What are the decisions to be made and who "owns" them?



## Values

### Case Study: Sarah

Sarah is a senior in high school and thinks she might be a lesbian. Sarah has not had much experience with other girls or boys and she is confused. Because of her age she feels pressure to identify herself and thinks she's being dishonest by not declaring a sexual identity. There are many students at her school who are out and there is even a gay-straight alliance that meets weekly. Sarah has attended the club meetings before, but everyone thinks she's straight. Sarah doesn't know where to go for help. She is afraid that if she speaks with her friends they will begin to treat her differently. She is also concerned that if she says she is a lesbian now that she won't be able to change her mind later, or that people will treat her as if she's a flake.

- Create a list of Sarah's values.
- Are any of these values competing or in conflict? If so, how might Sarah balance or make tradeoffs?
- If you were Sarah's friend how would you help her identify and consider her values?



## Values

### Role Play: Anne

Anne's boyfriend violently grabbed her by the arm last week during a heated argument. Anne and her boyfriend have argued before, but the tensions never escalated like they did when he grabbed her. Anne was afraid and embarrassed about what happened, and her boyfriend quickly apologized and said he would never be physically aggressive again. Anne loves her boyfriend and thinks he's a good person. He is not the kind of person she would describe as having a bad temper. She knows that if she tells a friend or adult what happened, they will encourage her to break up with her boyfriend. If her parents knew, they would prohibit Anne from seeing him at all. Anne is confused and doesn't know what to do or how she feels about her boyfriend anymore.

- Preparation: In small groups identify at least three ways Anne can handle the situation. Focus on ways Anne can be clear about her values.
- Action: Choose two of these ways to enact. Each person in the group should play a role. Make sure to show the potential consequences of Anne's actions.
- Reflection: In a journal or through group discussion reflect on Anne's situation. Anne's values are likely to compete with each other. Have you been in a situation where your values were in conflict? How can you make a good decision under these circumstances?



## 12. Information

Information consists of everything someone needs to know, would like to know, or should know that might influence that person's decision. Individuals gather, store, and process information from outside sources. Information, therefore, is external and includes past facts and judgments about current or future situations that help a person anticipate the consequences of acting on the alternatives. Furthermore, searching for additional information always implies a sunk cost, whether of time, resources, or both. Often, useful information includes probabilities that express one's uncertainty about the future. Although information comes to individuals from external outlets over which they do not exercise much agency, the weight or validity that one places on that information is under the individual's control.

When thinking about young people and information, it is important to remember that they have access to much different sources than adults. Information that young people receive may also be contradictory. For example, someone could use a friend's past experience of texting and driving and be unaware of a recent report published in *The New York Times* that an adult might have read that offers sobering numbers. The adult might also rely on years of driving experience to know that texting and driving is unnecessarily risky. Young people, in many instances, get information from each other, and sometimes this information is reliable, but often it is not. They turn to each other for advice and this advice often rests on shared information about life choices. While information is necessary when making a quality decision, it is possible to have lots of less relevant information or biased and bad information, as noted above (see Alternatives and Information Worksheet on page 120).

Some key messages to remember when thinking about information include:

- Information includes everything one needs to know, would like to know or should know in a situation
- Although the decision maker cannot control information flow, he/she does control the assessment and validity attributed to that information
- It is extremely important for young people to go to the best sources available to them, which often may not be the easiest or most accessible



## Information Discussion/Fishbowl Prompts

- Where do you usually go for quality information? With whom do you usually speak?
- Who do you trust? Whose advice do you follow?
- Think of a time when you made a decision, feeling that you had all the necessary information to do so. How did this experience differ from one where you neglected, or couldn't, get quality information?
- How does wishful thinking (for example, selective attention, definition bias, etc.) impact your decision making?
- Do you ever ignore information that you don't understand? How has this practice impacted your life?
- What character traits are important for seeking good information?
- Do you ever feel overwhelmed by too much information or by the idea of having to gather information to make a decision?
- How does your frame impact the information you seek? How does your frame impact how you evaluate the information that you have?
- Think of a decision you need to make. How have you gone about getting quality information? What more could you do to improve the quality of the information?



## Information Case Study: Trey

Trey recently joined the football team and he wants to do well. Both his father and older brother were great football players. Part of Trey's conditioning and training requires that Trey work out with the other boys in the weight room and on the track field. He is fine with aerobic exercise – Trey's an experienced runner. In the weight room, though, he feels self-conscious. He can lift appropriate weights for his size and fitness level, but Trey feels pressure to get bigger and stronger more quickly than he could naturally. Trey's older brother used illegal supplements to gain strength and muscle and had no visible side effects. Trey is not sure he feels comfortable taking steroids, but he also doesn't believe steroids are drugs.

- Does Trey have enough information to make a good decision?
- What more could he gather?
- Of the information that he has, is there anything he should discount?



## Information Information Gathering Exercise: Substance Use

Part of good decision making involves knowing the right information and/or understanding how to get it. In this exercise young people will gather important information about the effects of alcohol and marijuana use. Of course, one could easily choose to focus on any illegal, prescription, or general drug abuse (tobacco, ecstasy, meth, etc.).

The parameters for the exercise can also be easily modified. Young people can work individually or in small groups to gather information about the following questions, and then report back to the larger group.

To add more depth to the exercise, the adult could have the young people try to give their best estimates of the answers to the following questions first, before conducting any research. The adult would select questions from the list below or generate others, and then have students give their best understanding or estimates. Then after the information gathering, which could happen during an advisory/class session or overnight, the adult can have students compare their answers with their previous understanding or estimates. For even more richness, the adult can calculate or have the young people calculate the percentage of the questions that they answered incorrectly to expose how well they understand the effects of alcohol and marijuana use.

Questions about alcohol use:

- What percentage of 16-20 year olds die in motor vehicle accidents that are related to alcohol use?
- What is the relationship between alcoholism and the age at which one begins drinking?
- What are the laws in your municipality that regulate alcohol use by minors?
- What is the effect of combining alcohol with anti depressants?
- How does alcohol contribute to one's ability to deal with stress?



Questions about marijuana use:

- How quickly does marijuana use impact one's ability to reason?
- What is the risk of depression later in life by young people who use marijuana regularly each week?
- How does the rate of addiction to marijuana among young people compare with that of other illegal drugs?
- How does marijuana use influence the production of dopamine in the brain?



## 13. Alternatives

An alternative is one of the possible courses of action available when one is making a decision. When considering a weekend, for example, one's alternatives could include hanging out with friends, playing video games, blogging, studying for a course, or competing in sports activities. Recognizing and creating alternatives is essential because, without them, one has no decision. A good set of alternatives includes compelling and significantly different choices that one can act upon. Many people generate alternatives that are familiar to them, and this tendency is true of young people as well. When considering weekend activities, for example, one might think of the two or three things that one usually does on a weekend as possible alternatives. Visiting a museum or hiking a trail might never occur to some decision makers because these choices are not routine for them. To successfully make good decisions, one must generate many creative alternatives; these options do not have to be doable at first but could simply allow the decision maker to get what he/she wants. Through the process of brainstorming, one can articulate ideas and then improve upon them to make them feasible. The basis of a decision is represented by alternatives, values, and information. In other words, a decision can only be as good as the best alternative (see Alternatives and Information Worksheet on page 120).

When considering alternatives, one should remember:

- Alternatives represent all the possible courses of action one can take
- Many people fall back on familiar alternatives when considering a decision
- It is important to be creative and generate as many alternatives as appropriate when tackling a decision
- Initially alternatives do not have to be doable



## Alternatives

### Case Study: Oscar

Oscar is 16 and has started hanging out with a new group of friends in high school. While Oscar likes these new friends, his behavior is starting to change in ways that are increasingly troublesome. His grades have started to slip and Oscar's relationship with his parents is strained. Part of the difficulty is that Oscar has started smoking and drinking, and Oscar's smoking and drinking are becoming difficult for him to manage. Oscar has always seen himself as an athlete and his identity as a basketball player is very important to him. Yet his behavior is causing his performance on the court to decrease significantly. His coach asked him to stay late after practice, explaining that Oscar's poor performance was really showing. The coach has told Oscar that if he doesn't improve his performance by the next game, Oscar will be kicked off the team. Oscar feels overwhelmed and that he is letting everyone down, including himself.

- What would Oscar's future look like if he does not make any decisions to change his behavior?
- Where could Oscar go for help to create alternatives?
- Generate at least ten alternatives for Oscar.



## Alternatives: Case Study: Amira

Amira loves her new school; she is doing well academically and has already made many new friends. Amira often feels uncomfortable, however, around her new friends due to her family's financial situation. At 14 she's too young to get a job and her parents provide her with an allowance, but it's never enough money for her to go out with friends on the weekends. Amira never felt "poor" at her former school, but increasingly she sees her friends living a lifestyle that seems unattainable for her. They often get new designer outfits and gadgets. Amira feels it's becoming increasingly difficult for her to spend time with them without feeling awkward and without them noticing her discomfort. She doesn't want to pressure her parents for more money, because she knows they work hard and that the family is on a budget. She's ashamed that she cares about how much her friends have and how much she doesn't, but it still bothers Amira.

- What are some alternatives available to Amira?
- If Amira had several good alternatives to select from, how would she decide what is best for her?



## Alternatives

### Role Play: Tina

Tina, Gabriella, and Jose are science lab partners. They have a big science lab due tomorrow. Though the group members share data, each student must analyze the data and write a separate report. Tina has worked hard on her report and put a lot of time into it, and feels that she will do well on the assignment. Gabriella, who is also Tina's best friend, has not worked as diligently as her on this assignment or in the course in general. Gabriella asks Tina to borrow her report so that she can copy it, while Jose happens to be nearby. Tina doesn't want to give Gabriella the report, especially because she doesn't want to get caught and she cares about Jose's opinion of her. Nonetheless, Gabriella is her best friend, and Tina knows that refusing her request will be a problem.

- Preparation: In small groups identify at least five ways that Tina can handle the situation. Focus on ways Tina can create alternatives that maximize what she wants.
- Action: Choose two of these ways to enact. Each person in the group should play a role. Make sure to show the potential consequences of Tina's actions.
- Reflection: In a journal or through group discussion reflect on Tina's situation. Have you ever been in a similar situation? How did you handle it? How could you handle a situation like this if it happened to you?



## 14. Sound Reasoning

Reasoning is how one combines alternatives, information, and values to arrive at a decision. Reasoning is one's answer to: "I am choosing this alternative because...." One might arrive at a good frame and decision basis (values, information, and alternatives) but not reason properly. Reasoning involves carefully considering the frame and decision basis. There are a number of tools that can help one reason, including decision trees, but one can also approach reasoning less formally. Asking the right questions ("Am I making this decision for the right reasons"? "Is my decision something I can be proud of?"), and being decision fit (not being overwhelmed by emotion and having policies that facilitate decision making), are two of the most important components of sound reasoning.

Sound reasoning reflects:

- One's ability to synthesize the frame and decision basis to arrive at a good decision
- One's ability to ask the right questions and be decision fit
- What one should do in a decision context, which might be different from what one might want to do



## **Sound Reasoning Discussion/Fishbowl Prompts**

- When you make a decision, how do you know your chosen alternative is actually the best one for you in the situation?
- What would it take to switch to another alternative once you have made a decision?
- Are your alternatives usually consistent with your values?
- Do you know which biases or preferences are at play when you make decisions? Are you able to minimize faults in decision making related to biases and preferences?
- Once you have chosen an alternative, should you adjust your alternative for ethical or moral reasons?
- Do the people you trust and respect typically support your choices?
- How do you explain your decisions to others?



## Sound Reasoning Engaging Exercise

Ask students to select a significant decision they made in the past year. Ask them to reflect individually on how they reasoned through that decision. What tools or resources did they use to help reason through the problem (for example, pro/con lists)?

Since it is likely they might not have used many formal tools, ask them as a group if they could have benefited from specific tools like pro/con lists, weight and rate charts, decision trees, or influence diagrams? Would they have arrived at better quality decisions had they used any of these tools? And what differences would they have noticed among these tools, recognizing that different tools might yield different options for the same decision context? Engage in a discussion about the value of sound reasoning and its use as a way to synthesize the decision basis (information, values, and alternatives).

For a longer lesson that might span several meetings or involve homework, the group can experiment analyzing a significant decision using different tools to reveal the value of different approaches. The focus here would be to highlight the following: 1) specific tools exist to help reason through problems; 2) different situations require different tools; and 3) different tools will yield different best alternatives.



## 15. Commitment to Action

Commitment to follow through means that one is ready to act and has the ability to follow through in a purposeful manner. When one shifts from considering a decision to being in the state of commitment, one is clear and can proceed without reservation, aware of the potential consequences. Doing this is like flipping an internal switch. Successful follow through requires resources such as time, effort, money, and/or help from others. It also requires being prepared to overcome obstacles. Some of these obstacles might be external, but many can be internal as well. For example, preferences and personal biases can impact one's ability to follow through on a decision. Balancing the head and heart is important to follow through as well. Poor reasoning or an inability to properly connect with a situation emotionally can prevent one from turning an intention into a decision.

When thinking about committing to a decision, it is important to remember:

- An intention only becomes a decision once one has combined thought with action
- Commitment to a decision may come long after one has analyzed and selected an alternative
- Support from others can be critical when trying to ensure commitment
- Successful commitment requires that one balance head and heart



## Commitment to Action Discussion/Fishbowl Prompts

- How do you typically support the decisions that you make?
- What obstacles have made it difficult for you to commit to a decision in the past?
- What typically blocks your intentions from becoming decisions?
- Do you make an internal shift to think differently about a situation once you have made a decision? What allows for that shift to happen?
- Are you usually prepared for the consequences of your decisions, even unpleasant consequences?
- Do others usually support your decisions? Do you actively seek support from people you respect?
- Do you typically remain motivated to follow through with your decisions?
- Do you usually build time into your schedule to support the decisions that you make?



## Commitment to Action

### Case Study: Jose

Jose has often battled with his weight and he has tried many diets and exercise plans over the years. He usually loses some weight initially, but never seems able to maintain a healthy weight and good eating habits for long. Recently Jose's friend Kyle offered to help Jose get in shape and to eat healthier meals. Jose's parents are on board, too, and Jose feels that for the first time he can actually achieve his goals. This time feels different from all those others and something seems to have clicked for Jose. He's very excited to get into the best shape possible and lead a healthier life.

- What can Jose do to commit to achieving his goals?
- What sources of support can he rely on to achieve his goals?
- What are possible reasons why Jose was unable to commit to losing weight in the past?
- How can Jose build time into his schedule in order to make this time count?

