

# Counseling Corner

## Whiteford Elementary School

### Teaching Responsible Decision-Making

Research indicates that adults typically make around 33,000-35,000 decisions daily, whereas children make only about 3,000 decisions. Some choices are routine, like turning off alarms or lights, snuggling our pets, or brushing our teeth, while others, such as what to wear or major life decisions, require deeper consideration. These choices can significantly impact our day and even our future. Responsible decision-making is defined by CASEL as “the ability to make personal choices for things like behavior and social interactions across a variety of settings.” Teaching children responsible decision-making is critical, but putting it into action is equally important to nurture their engagement, thoughtfulness, and productivity. Developing decision-making skills empowers children to be independent, responsible, and self-assured, giving them a sense of autonomy and fostering resilience. It also encourages self-discovery and helps them define their values. As adults, we play a key role in guiding children through the thousands of choices they face, supporting them as they learn to navigate decision-making. It's essential to allow room for them to make mistakes, as this is how they learn and grow, gaining the experience and confidence needed to make better decisions in the future. Continue reading to learn how we can help our children develop decision-making skills!

#### 1 Practice and Model Decision-Making

It is important for children to develop skills in responsible decision-making. One effective way to nurture this ability is by modeling and guiding children through the following steps:

1. Identify and clearly state the problem at hand.
2. Brainstorm potential solutions.
3. Consider possible consequences.
4. Select a solution to implement.
5. Test the chosen solution.
6. Reflect on the outcome and make adjustments as needed.

In order to exhibit responsible decision-making skills, children must acquire additional skills in critical thinking, problem-solving, sound judgment, reasoning, and solution identification. Finally, making helpful and healthy choices involves understanding the impact of their choices on both themselves and those around them. For a more in depth explanation of these steps, please visit the “Counseling Corner Newsletters and Resources” section in my “Resources” tab in my Schoology group!



#### 2 Avoid Rescuing (when appropriate)

Making decisions is a crucial skill for everyone, and our decision-making abilities improve each time we encounter and resolve challenging situations. With the exceptions of considerations like safety and risk, if we intervene and attempt to solve all problems that children have, their skill development will be hindered. By letting children make mistakes, they can enhance their problem-solving and conflict resolution skills. This hands-on experience helps them become more confident and capable of making decisions as they grow. Sometimes, children will make mistakes, face the consequences, and learn from those choices when faced with similar situations in the future. Allowing children to learn from their mistakes is a valuable approach to instilling lasting decision-making skills in them.

#### 3 Teach T.H.I.N.K. Before You Speak

This acronym serves as a reminder for children to pause and think before speaking, ensuring that their words are: **T**True, **H**elpful, **I**important, **N**ecessary, and **K**ind. If any aspect of the acronym is not met, they should consider keeping their thoughts to themselves. By encouraging children to pause and think before they make a choice, they are also building their self-control abilities, another essential aspect of responsible decision-making.