

Lesson 5: Power to Think

PURPOSE

To acquire good decision-making skills with respect for human dignity and personal mission.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson students will be able to:

1. Understand the importance of making excellent decisions in everyday life.
2. Understand and apply the principles of excellent decision-making.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- The Solution Seeker game
- Seven Steps of Excellent Decision-making
- Decision-making Worksheet

VOCABULARY

- Power to think: the human ability to understand and connect ideas

PROCEDURE

Step 1: Review the previous lesson. Recall the subject-object distinction and the proper ways to treat both subjects and objects. Emphasize that persons should always be treated as subjects, never merely as objects. Recall some situations in which persons are treated as objects and how one can deal with such situations.

Step 2: Recall that the power to think is a specifically human power which distinguishes humans from all other beings. This power is very important for different domains of human functioning: e.g. in education and career, in making decisions, choosing friends, choosing how to spend one's free time, finding solutions to problems, etc.

Write the definition on the board:

Power to think: the human ability to know and connect ideas

To introduce the power to think and to motivate students to use their critical thinking skills, ask the class to play [The Solution Seeker](#) game. Divide the students into groups of six and ask them to form a circle. Each person in a group should write down a question on a blank sheet of paper. Possible questions may be:

- “How can I get my parents to change my curfew?”
- “What should you do to try and fit in?”
- “What would you say to someone who is showing off to try and be more popular?”

Each person then passes their paper to the right. Everyone takes one minute to read the question and write the first solution that comes to mind. After one minute, pass the paper to the right again. Repeat this process until everyone receives their original paper again. Since there are six students in each group, there will be six one-minute rounds.

After the game finishes, ask the volunteers to share the solutions they received and ask them if the solutions were helpful and applicable to their case. Then, lead the class discussion by asking the following questions:

- Was it hard to think about a solution in just one minute?
- Would you be able to find the solution without using the power to think?
- Why is the power to think important for making decisions?
- Does it matter which solution we choose?

Highlight that one of the hardest things about this game was that there was only one minute available to solve a difficult problem that would usually take much more time to solve. That is why it is important that everyone reserves enough time to come up with thoughtful solutions for problems and decisions in everyday life.

For this reason, it is very important to use one’s power to think in an excellent way when making decisions. Our everyday choices matter because they have consequences for our lives and those of others. This is especially so when making choices about which school to go to, which career path to choose, with whom one should be friends with, how to spend one’s free time, etc. Using the power to think in an excellent way is essential for making excellent decisions.

Step 3: Explain that one of the most important areas in which we use the power to think is the area of making decisions. It is important to use the power to choose in a way that is excellent for ourselves and others. From simple decisions (whether to study or play video games, exercise or chill with our phone) to more complex decisions, using the power to think in an excellent way is essential for making excellent decisions.

Explain that to make excellent decisions, there are seven key steps or questions one should think about:

Dilemma – what is the question/problem I need to resolve? Define: when, what, who.

Values – does it promote values you want to promote? Does it promote the value of human dignity?

Goals – is it in line with your long-term mission or goals?

Others – how does it affect others and the whole group?

Consequences – what it will likely lead to? Is this desirable?

Alternatives – are there other choices? In which way are they better?

Information – what is the information on which we are basing our solutions? Are they based on facts, evidence, and sound reasoning?

Guide the students through each step and help them to understand the questions. Explain that it is of crucial importance to correctly define, in the first step, the question/problem you want to resolve. Only if you are clear about the dilemma/challenge can you find the most excellent solution.

It is also important to consider whether the possible solutions are in line with values, such as human dignity. While some decisions might seem attractive, they can go against our human dignity or the dignity of others. Moreover, one should consider if a decision is in line with one's long-term mission or goals. For example, if you want to be an excellent musician, the decision to skip practice in order to play video games is definitely not the most excellent one.

Also, it's important to remember that every action that a person chooses has a ripple effect on the lives of others, whether they realize it or not. For example, a decision to leave trash on the floor might make our lives easier in the short-term, but it will have a negative effect on others who are left to clean it up. Every decision leads to consequences that should be considered. For each possible decision, it is helpful to consider whether there are alternatives. Often problems can be resolved in several different ways. These different ways should be evaluated before choosing the best option.

Finally, it is of crucial importance to think about whether the possible solution is based on facts, evidence, and sound reasoning, not mere opinions, rumors, hearsay, gossip, fear, etc.

Step 4: Divide students into small groups and provide each group with the [Decision-making Worksheet](#). Each group should choose one example of decision making from the list and go through all seven steps. After all groups finish working, ask a few volunteers to share their decisions and the discussion process from their group. Ask them if they are satisfied with their decision and provide any additional feedback to improve on the decision-making process if needed.

Give each student the [Seven Steps of Excellent Decision-making sheet](#). Have each student take a few minutes to reflect individually on a decision they would like to make, or choose a question listed on the previous worksheet. Have each student follow the seven steps to work on mapping out that decision. Explain that while it is not required, students may volunteer to share their individual decisions and solutions with the class.

Step 5: Summarize. Recall the importance of using the power to think in an excellent way when making decisions. Highlight once more the seven steps of excellent decision making and motivate the students to apply those principles of decision-making in their daily lives.

DECISION-MAKING WORKSHEET

NO.	STEP	QUESTION	
1.	Dilemma	What is the question or a problem you want to resolve?	
2.	Values	Does it promote values you want to promote? Does it respect human dignity? Does it violate any values?	
3.	Goals	Is it in line with your long-term mission or goals?	
4.	Others	How does it affect others and the whole group?	
5.	Consequences	What will it likely lead to? Is this a desirable outcome?	
6.	Alternatives	Are there other choices? Are there better or worse choices than this one? In what way?	
7.	Information	What information are you are basing your decision on? Is it based on facts, evidence, and sound reasoning?	

Possible questions to choose from:

- What high school should I choose?
- What career should I choose?
- Should I be friends with person X?
- Should I start / stop practicing piano / sports / club program, etc.?
- Should I talk to person X to discuss something that is on my mind for some time now (e.g. something that is bothering me, etc.)?
- Should I change some habits or develop a new one? Which one?
- Should I change my behavior to my parents / siblings / friends / teachers, etc.?
- Should I buy something with the money I have?

SEVEN STEPS OF EXCELLENT DECISION-MAKING

NO.	STEP	QUESTION
1.	Dilemma	» What is the question or a problem you want to resolve? » Define: When, what, who?
2.	Values	» Does it promote values you want to promote? » Does it respect human dignity? Does it violate any values?
3.	Goals	» Is it in line with long-term mission or goals?
4.	Others	» How does it affect others and the whole group? » Does it respect human dignity?
5.	Consequences	» What will it likely lead to? » Is this a desirable outcome?
6.	Alternatives	» Are there other choices? » Are there better or worse than this one? In which way?
7.	Information	» What information are you are basing your decision on? » Is it based on facts, evidence, and sound reasoning?

Dilemma, values, goals, others, consequences, alternatives, information.