



Decision Making

How to Take the High Road

Pre-Teaching/ Guiding Language:

Our friends mean the world to us! As we get older, we spend more and more time with our friends and peers at school, during sports events, and in after-school activities. Then when we go to college and spend ALL our time with our friends it can be hard to separate our own values and beliefs from those of the crowd. So, when our friends or peers are doing things we don't like, or make us uncomfortable, how do we take the high road without feeling like we are letting our friends down? Remember that when you stick to your values you feel a better sense of pride at not stooping to the level of others, you find a better sense of self and avoid guilt associated with engaging in activities you don't agree with.

If you are having trouble with trying to figure out what choice to make, use these steps to help guide you in the right direction:

1. Identify your goal. What outcome are you working towards and will the choice you make help to get you there?
2. Gather all the information available to you and explore all your options. By asking the right questions and learning all the facts, this will help you make the decision that is best for you.
3. Consider the consequences. Evaluate the pros and cons of the decision you want to make. It is important to feel comfortable with all the possible outcomes before you make a tough decision.

Key Takeaways:

- Students will recognize situations in which they are required to make a tough choice.
- Students will comprehend steps to take to make a safe and appropriate choice when in a difficult situation.
- Students will recognize values which are important to them.

Duration + Materials:

- 10 Minutes

Key Vocabulary:

- **Values**- The regard that something is held to deserve. The importance, worth, or usefulness of something.
- **Guilt**- The feeling of having done wrong or faulted in an obligation.
- **Consequences**- A result or effect of an action or condition.
- **Evaluate**- Form an idea of the amount, number, or value of.



Activity:

1. Teachers will use pre-teaching materials to explain the importance of knowing our values and understanding how to make difficult decisions.
2. Teachers will break students up into small groups, not exceeding 5 students.
3. Teachers will provide groups of students with scenarios, listed below, and prompt students to come to an agreement on what choices they would make when faced with each problem.
 - a. You are at a party with your friends. Your friend Jamie is supposed to give you a ride home, but you notice that she has been drinking. She promises that she is “totally fine” and can still take you home. You don’t want to hurt her feelings or get anyone else in trouble by calling your parents, but you also know you don’t want to get in the car with someone who has had a drink. What would you do?
 - b. You completely forgot about a homework assignment that you needed to hand in to be graded and its due next period. One of your classmates offers to copy theirs. You know that would be cheating, but you also don’t want to lose points for handing it in late. What do you do?
 - c. Your parents are away for the weekend, and they said you could have your two close friends over to watch movies and sleep over. Your friends get there but they also bring a bunch of people who you don’t know. You know your parents would be upset if they knew you had anyone else over, but you don’t want to look uncool in front of your friends. What do you do?
 - d. You are cat sitting for your neighbor’s cats. She is paying you to go three times per day, once in the morning to feed them, once when you get home from school to play with them and then again at night before bed to feed them again. You have been going for a few days now and everything has been going well. Your friend invites you to go to the mall with them after school. You know you are supposed to go and check on the cats but, what’s the worst that could happen if you skip it one time? Would you go to the mall or go home and check on the cats?
 - e. Your friends ask you to go with them to the movies. You ask your parents, and they say that its fine. However, when you get to the movies the plan changes and your friends want to go to a party instead. You know it’s wrong to lie about where you are, but everyone says that it’s fine and that you will be back to the movies in time to be picked up. What would you do?
4. Give students 15 minutes to work through these questions in the groups and then use the discussion questions below for a guided conversation.

Discussion Questions:

1. What did you find most difficult about the decisions you had to make?
2. Was it hard for your entire group to agree on one decision?
3. Was it helpful to talk through each scenario with a group?

Reinforcement Activities:

1. Encourage students to evaluate all the pros and cons of classroom decisions and discuss them opening with your class. For example, what are the pros and cons of having a class pet? Does having a class pet help us work towards a specific skill or towards knowledge we wish to acquire? Have open dialogues with your students so that they can work towards feeling comfortable with decisions they have to make.