

8 Simple Steps to Good Decision-Making for Teens

By: Toronto Life Coach, Ivana Pejakovic, B.Sc., MA

Retrieved July 31, 2019:

<http://www.lifecoachintoronto.com/8-simple-steps-to-good-decision-making-for-teens/>

No one is born with awesome decision-making skills. It is a skill that needs to be learned and strengthened (but may not ever be perfected). This means the more often you make decisions the better you'll get at it. It's a difficult skill to perfect however, since the better you get at decision making the more challenging problems you'll face.

Some people get nervous when it comes to making decisions because they're afraid they'll make wrong choices. This is the basics of decision-making. Whenever you have more than one option, there's always a chance you'll make a 'better' or a 'worse' decision. Although you can imagine where each decision will take you, you often won't know how good your decision is until a period of time passes by.

While easier decisions (e.g., which shoes to wear with which top) don't require a detailed planning process (or maybe it does?), decisions such as picking a university or college, moving out on your own, getting a job or just focusing on school, figuring out if your friends are true friends, or whether or not to report bullying or a crime you witnessed usually require more contemplation.

Keep in mind there is no right or wrong answer to many of the dilemma's you'll face. As a result, you'll have to make a choice depending on what you know about yourself, your situation in life, your needs and wants, and what you think will work best for you. To help you with difficult decisions, here are 8 steps you can follow.

8 important steps...

1. What is the problem you are facing? What is the problem to be solved (e.g., to have a part-time job or to focus on school)? Write it down so you are clear on what you are trying to resolve. Write down why you should solve this issue (e.g., what are your priorities). This step gives you an idea of how important this decision is.
2. Gather information. Ask for advice. Write down what you need to learn. Interview people (e.g., other students who worked and didn't work while in school). What do others who have already been through this say? Gather information from valid sources (e.g., speak to your school counsellor about how many hours per week does school require and how many hours per week does a part-time job require). What are the facts? What is holding you back (e.g., fear you can't handle both, bad habits, fear of responsibility, etc.). This step gives you objective (non-biased) and subjective (biased) information.
3. What is important to you? List your values (e.g., honesty, good grades, money, independence, etc.). What conditions do you want your choice to reflect (e.g., your family's opinion)?

4. Brainstorm and write down your possible options. Come up with ideas and choices you can choose from (e.g., work 5 or 10 or 20 hours per week, do not work, work in summer time only, etc.).
5. What are the consequences (good and bad) of each choice? Use steps 2 and 3 to determine the pros and cons of each possible choice listed in step 4. Write these down in a table so you have all the data right in front of you.
6. Decide on the best choice for you. This is much easier after you go through the above steps. Rate your options if you have to. Rank order based on your research. Take a few days to think about it if you need to and then come back to your dilemma.
7. Create a plan and carry it out. When you have made your choice, create a plan of specific steps you will take. Carry out your plan.
8. Measure the results. This can only be done once you made your decision, carried out your plan, and received feedback (e.g., your report card, regular pay). How would you rate your decision? What about the steps you took? Are you still meeting the things important to you? What lessons did you learn? This is an important step for strengthening your decision-making skills. If you find your decision didn't work out well the first time around, use what you learned when you go back to the drawing board and re-evaluate your choice. If the first choice didn't turn out right, it doesn't mean game over. Retrace your steps and start from the best place possible.