



Module 9:

Responsible Decision-Making in the Realm of Social Emotional Learning

Goal

Making decisions is something everyone must do every day, and yet many young people lack the skills needed to make sure every decision is a good one. Human brains are wired to **react** long before they have the skill sets to **respond** to all that is happening. Helping students develop the ability to make good decisions is imperative. More than ever, young people need to be able to think creatively, work collaboratively, and be innovative in a world that is increasingly unpredictable. Equipping students with responsible decision-making skill sets may assist them in navigating the world in which they live. These skills can be taught through Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). SEL is designed to help people thrive personally and academically, develop and maintain positive relationships, become lifelong learners, and contribute to a more caring, just world.

The "CASEL Wheel" is used by educators, families, students, community organizations, and researchers around the world to describe what SEL looks like in practice. The five broad, interrelated areas of competence are: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. This module focuses on responsible decision-making. There is no hierarchy to the competencies, but they are very interconnected. CASEL (the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) defines SEL as the process through which people acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.

Though educators instinctively know that social and emotional learning is an important foundation of student success, schools have historically focused on teaching academic content. If the COVID-19 pandemic and political tensions of today's world have taught anything, it should be seeing the value and increasing need to effectively manage emotions, cope with stress, and empathize with others.

Objectives

- Understand the five CASEL Social Emotional Learning Competencies.
- Identify skill sets that can help young people effectively navigate their world.
- Help students develop responsible decision-making skills and processes that will allow them to analyze options and make good decisions for themselves and others.
- Learn how you as an educator can encourage and support young people in making responsible decisions.



What to Know Before Presenting the Responsible Decision-Making PowerPoint

1. Be aware of the current situations in which students are living and working and their involvement in community. This may provide key information about the types of decisions they must make on a daily basis.
2. Ensure that the skill sets being taught can help students develop skills and resilience within the context of their lives, i.e. family/relationship issues, frequent moves, alcohol accessibility or use, poverty, future goals, racial equity, etc.
3. Connect with each student to the greatest possible extent. That connection not only meets a basic human need, but also helps students develop and define their own values by modeling and coaching them through decisions they need to make. Your guidance, understanding, and support for students can be key in helping to shape their own personal interests, goals, and outlook on life.
4. Identify and stress the value of personal strengths when working with young people. Personal strengths often serve as protective factors for individuals related to connection, belonging, resilience, and a growth mindset.
5. Do not shy away from discussions about personal values, family values, and decisions that may correlate to and support family values, or rather contradict them. These discussions are key to identifying both pros and cons of options throughout the decision-making process and can often serve as guidance for future decisions.
6. Evaluating and analyzing both good and not-so-good decisions is vital. We learn about ourselves with each decision we make, and often learn more about ourselves from the poor choices we make. Processing outcomes can help us identify our sometimes-faulty assumptions, but more importantly help build skills and confidence in our abilities to grow and meet future goals.



- **The messages in the Responsible Decision-Making PowerPoint emphasize:**
 - Building skills in each of CASEL's five Social Emotional Learning Competencies:
 - Self-Awareness
 - Self-Management
 - Social Awareness
 - Relationship Skills
 - Responsible Decision-Making
 - Building a climate of resilience for students through:
 - Connection
 - Security
 - Achievement
 - Autonomy
 - Fulfillment
 - Providing tools that will help students make good decisions based on both positive and negative benefits, rationale, or consequences. Be sure to address peer pressure for young students.
 - Leaving space to adequately address cultural and social norms for each student.