



Adolescents and Day-to-Day Decision-Making

Valuing and Applying Rationality



Grade Level

6th-8th

Suggested Timing

45-60 minutes

Focus Standard

VAR.5 – Practice and demonstrate self-awareness of thought processes and behavior

Supporting Standard

VAR.3 – Recognize, practice, and demonstrate active open-mindedness

Resources

Article: [Teen Brain: Behavior, Problem Solving, and Decision Making](#)

Subject

Cross-curricular

Impact

Students face many decisions throughout a typical day. This lesson introduces students to adolescent brain development, and asks them to reflect on the decisions they make, how those decisions are connected, and how they are coordinating their thought and action.

Objectives

- Students will learn about adolescent brain development and how it impacts their behavior.
- Students will demonstrate self-awareness of their day-to-day decisions through illustration, writing, and discussion.

Optional Teaching Strategies

- Creating a giant web diagram together as a class could help your students build self-awareness as they discuss their decisions throughout the day.

Differentiation

- Give students colors to add to the web to show different types of decisions they face throughout the day.
- Provide a printed web template for students who might struggle with organizing their thoughts.

What To Look and Listen For

- Can students identify at least one opportunity hidden inside a past decision or problem?
- Are students using positive, proactive language regarding decision-making in their writing?

Engage (15–20 minutes)

Ask your students to create a giant web diagram that identifies and connects their day-to-day decisions.

Suggested Prompt:

Think about a typical day, and all the decisions you make. You choose what clothes to wear, what food to eat, who to hang out with, and so many other things. Create a web, starting with “Decisions I Make” in the center, and begin adding on the decisions you make in a day.

After about 10 minutes, partner or group your students to share their webs. Let them know they can continue adding to their own as they discover new ideas.

Suggested Questions:

- What decisions do you make each day?
- How do these decisions impact your life in big or small ways?
- How are your decisions connected? How does one decision affect another?

Apply (20–25 minutes)

Continuing with their partners or groups, have your students read and discuss the article: [Teen Brain: Behavior, Problem Solving, and Decision Making](#).

Suggested Questions:

- Why are adolescents more likely to engage in risky behavior?
- Look at your web. When do you stop to think about the consequences of your decisions? When don't you? and Why?
- The article talks about changes in the brain during adolescence. It says, “All these changes are essential for the development of coordinated thought, action, and behavior.” What does it mean to coordinate your thoughts, actions, and behaviors? Are your thoughts, actions, and behavior coordinated as you make decisions throughout the day? Are there ways you could coordinate them better?

Reflect (10–15 minutes)

Give students an opportunity to continue working on their webs, adding to the decisions they make each day, and annotating their webs to specific thoughts, actions, and behaviors associated with those decisions. As students work, highlight creative or impactful ways students are reflecting on their decisions and ask them to share with the class.