

# Making Decisions



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*Content on this side is intended for the educator's reference. The information on the back can be photocopied and shared with clients.*

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**Objective:** Clients will be able to use a basic problem-solving approach that involves weighing the pros and cons when making decisions in their relationship.

**Audience:** This tool can be used with an individual or with a couple who struggles with making good decisions and coming up with solutions to tough issues they face in their relationship.

**Estimated Time:** 20-30 minutes

**Educator Instructions:** Review the instructions on the tool and talk through each item. Alternatively, leave the tool for the client to complete and review it during your next visit. Reinforce that every relationship is faced with hard choices that have to be made. Challenge clients to make positive and healthy choices by (1) brainstorming possible options, (2) weighing the pros versus cons of those choices, and (3) reaching agreement on how to proceed. Explain that sometimes the choices we make don't work out as we expect. Encourage your clients to not give up, but instead revisit the options considered or explore new options. Be prepared to offer referrals to additional resources that can help your client with their decision, if needed.

**Discussion Starter:** What is an example of a "major" decision you have made in your life, your relationship, and/or your family? Before you made that decision, what steps did you take to make sure it was the "right" choice? Did you make that decision alone or did you involve others?

In your relationship, does one partner typically decide or do you both talk it out? How does this strategy work for you both? There are times when it makes sense for one partner to "be in charge" of certain decisions. For example, one might be better at managing money, feel more confident in talking with the children about certain topics (e.g., school, friends, sex), or have more knowledge about maintaining the house or taking care of the car. These arrangements can work as long as partners agree and feel like it makes sense for them. Even when one partner is "in charge" of certain decisions, it is still wise to talk with your partner before making those "major" decisions. You want to be in agreement on things like that.

**Follow-up:** If you have another conversation, ask how things are going with the decisions they are making together for their relationship. Are the steps discussed working? Have they talked about other strategies they might consider?





# Making Decisions



We all make decisions every day – we decide what to wear, what to eat, and what time to go to bed and get up in the morning. Most of the time we do not need to ask others to help us make choices. But sometimes we are faced with big decisions, like those related to money, work, children and family. For those hard choices, it helps to involve those you care about. When you are in a relationship, it is important to talk about those decisions together. Think about how your decision affects other people in your life, especially your children. Use this worksheet to help you in making those big decisions.

**Step 1:** Define the problem or concern.

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**Step 2:** Who will your decision affect? How?

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**Step 3:** Brainstorm solutions and consider both the positives and negative of each option.

Option 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Pros: \_\_\_\_\_

Cons: \_\_\_\_\_

Option 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Pros: \_\_\_\_\_

Cons: \_\_\_\_\_

Option 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Pros: \_\_\_\_\_

Cons: \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 4:** Agree on an option and try it out.

**Step 5:** Give yourself some time to try out the option you selected. Is the option you chose working well? If not, why not? Use these steps to think about other options.

When decisions are made together, partners feel pride. They take comfort in knowing that they will be there for each other, even when their plans do not work out.

If you have children, think about how the choices you make will affect them. Ask them for input on simple decisions from time to time. When making bigger decisions, ask about their thoughts and concerns and take these into account when making the final choice. When children are included in family decision-making, it gives them a feeling of importance. They also can learn important lessons about everyday decision-making.

*Healthy relationships involve working together to make decisions.*