

SPILT MILK

THE IMPROV TOOL FOR HANDLING BIG FEELINGS!



Lesson Five: Decision-Making

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What is Decision-Making?

Decision-making is what happens when we have to choose whether or not we want to do something, say something, share something, watch something... we decision-make every time we have the choice to say “yes” or “no!”

Have you ever been asked to do something and you weren't sure if you wanted to or not? Or if it would be a good idea for you? Or you answered so quickly that you didn't have time to really think about it first?

We've all done this!

And when it's a small decision, we don't really need to take the time to think first.

Chocolate or vanilla? Whatever! Even the “wrong” choice is a tasty one!

Agreed to go to the opera with your caregiver? You may be bored or you may love it, but it's only a little bit of time, after all.

But, sometimes decisions require more thought!

We have to ask ourselves:

Is this a good thing to experience?

How will it affect me if I say “yes” or “no?”

Could it affect me for a long time?

Will I regret doing it or not doing it?

All of these questions are important, especially when we are thinking of doing something new, adventurous, scary, or dangerous!

Part of being a good citizen (someone who lives among other people) and being good to ourselves is asking ourselves the important questions before we decide to do anything. Let's practice while doing some improv!

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What happens if I don't think before making decisions?

Sometimes, nothing will happen! You'll make the decision, participate in the experience, and have a great memory!

But, sometimes you can wind up hurting yourself or others, breaking rules you didn't realize you'd be breaking, or affect your future in a way you hadn't thought of.

Taking just 3-5 minutes can mean the difference between making a good decision and making a decision you wish you could take back.

So, how do I go about deciding?

We're glad you asked!

There are three important factors to consider before making a decision:

Values

Boundaries

Consequences

We are going to review what each of these words mean and how best to consider them... and then we'll get to the decision-making part! But, first, check out our decision-making video game (available 11/24) called Ponder[®], found at TheArcSVPP.org or scan this code:



So, let's learn how to wrangle our feelings with Spilt Milk.

In this lesson, we'll learn about feelings and how to portray them in improv!

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VALUES

Values are things that matter to us, things we care about.

If we spend a lot of time baking, thinking about baking, and reading about baking, then baking might be one of our values!

If we run every day, lift weights, and eat nutritious foods, then health might be a value!

And if we would cancel any plans to make sure that our family is ok, then family is probably a value!

- Pay attention to the things you *choose* to do every day - what values do they represent?
- Now, think of all of those values. If you had to choose one, which is most important to you?

BOUNDARIES

Boundaries help separate things from other things, like we learned in Lesson One!

Think of a fence - it separates one person's lawn from another's.

Think of a bubble - it keeps the air inside of it separated from the air outside of it!

Think of parts of you that you don't want touched - you are keeping it separate from the parts that can be touched!

Our boundaries help us keep ourselves protected from behaviors that make us feel unsafe or uncomfortable.

- Do you have any boundaries around what you will and won't do? (Like, fishing?)
- How does it feel inside you when someone crosses your boundary?

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CONSEQUENCES

Consequences are things that happen because something else happened first.

Also known as “cause and effect.”

What happens if you throw a ball at a window?

The window breaks! That is a consequence.

What happens if you leave a cake in the oven for too long?

The cake burns!

What happens if you perform in a dance recital or baseball game?

People cheer for you!

As you can tell, consequences can be good or bad. Sunlight and water help plants grow (a good consequence) but can ruin a picture you are painting (a bad consequence). It all depends on what the consequence is and how you view it (did you want the plants not to grow? Then growing is a bad consequence! ...Wanted to create the worst painting ever? Then the ruining of the picture is a good consequence!)

These are some of the most important things to consider when making a decision, because consequences can sometimes affect things for a long time.

If you choose to quit your job, you will have less money coming in and you may not find another job for a while. If you marry someone, you get a life-partner!

- What actions have you participated in that had good consequences?
- What actions had bad consequences? How did you feel when that happened?

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Using Values, Boundaries, and Consequences (VBC) to make decisions

Now that we know what VBC is, let's talk about how to use it in decision-making!

Let's say a good friend asks you to jump in a lake with her. She's your favorite person to hang out with and you never want to disappoint her. Then again, you don't like swimming, you hate getting your hair wet, and dirty lake water makes you want to gag! What should you do?

First, examine your VALUES.

- Does jumping in the lake with my friend go with or against any of my values? Is staying dry and comfortable a value? Is having fun with my friend a value? Is taking risks a value?

Next, examine your BOUNDARIES:

- Does jumping in the lake with my friend ok or does it violate my boundaries? Do I have a boundary around going swimming? Do I have a boundary around being asked to do things my friends know I won't like? Do I have a boundary around spending a lot of time with another person?

Finally, examine the possible CONSEQUENCES:

One thing to note - not all consequences actually happen; some only *could* happen.

If you try a backflip, a consequence may be falling on your face.

But if you try a backflip, the consequence may be successfully backflipping!

- What consequences will jumping in the lake with my friend potentially bring? Will I get dirty? Will I get hurt? Will my friend get angry and stop hanging out with me? Will I develop a new hobby? Will my hair get ruined?

Consider each of these and decide what is most important to you, and why!

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Discussion questions and exercises:

1. Think about the things you love most, things that would make you give up something else in order to have/do/take care of.

- a. What are these things?
- b. How do they affect what you do every day?

get up
ON YOUR FEET

Choose two volunteers and imagine a scenario to decide upon. It should have some positives and some negatives in each VBC. Have one volunteer help the other review their values, boundaries, and potential consequences to figure out if they should participate.

BONUS: Have the second volunteer try to convince the first to do the activity! The first will think it through and decide yes or no, then explain!

2. Sometimes our boundaries and consequences are not black-and-white.

- a. Do you have “soft” boundaries that you may be willing to let go of?
- b. Are some consequences worse than others? How bad would a consequence have to be to make you not do something you really want to do? How good would a consequence have to be to make you do something you think you don’t want to do? Discuss!

get up
ON YOUR FEET

Invite two volunteers to stand in front of the class. Give them a scenario, like the one above. Volunteer 1 will want to do it. Volunteer 2 will not. Have them go through VBC out loud together to decide if they both should do it or both shouldn’t. Volunteer 1 will point out all the positives in the situation and Volunteer 2 will point out all the negatives. Discuss how they decide whether or not to do the scenario!

What was more important: their values, boundaries, or consequences? Were the positives or the negatives more influential to them?

BONUS: See if they can find a compromise (a way to both give up a little something in order to make it happen). What will each give up? What won’t they?

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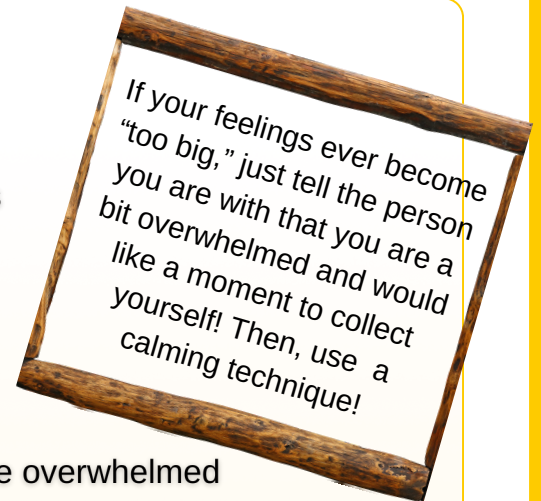
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Calming technique spotlight: **5-4-3-2-1**

What do these numbers mean?

It is a stress management exercise that can help you focus on the present moment and reduce anxiety. When we begin to feel overwhelmed or like you might meltdown, we sometimes forget where we are because we can only concentrate on our feelings. 5-4-3-2-1 helps us find calm.



★ Just make sure to let the other person know that you are overwhelmed and need to take a minute before you do it! Otherwise, they may think you are ignoring them, and might not like that

How do we do it? It's all about the five senses!

Concentrating on the things before us help take us out of our upset and bring us back to the present moment.

1. Take a deep breath then release it.
2. Notice 5 things you can see. Is it the street? Is it a bird? Is it your sneakers?
3. Notice 4 things you can touch. Can you feel the bricks wall? Are your jeans soft?
4. Notice 3 things you can hear. Is someone talking nearby? Can you hear the wind?
5. Notice 2 things you can smell. Does your hair smell like shampoo? Is someone cooking nearby?
6. Notice 1 thing you can taste. What does the inside of your mouth taste like?

You can also choose one sense and experience an extreme version of it for a minute or so. Chew a very sour piece of gum or hold an ice cube in your hand. This will be enough to snap you out of your panic.

Now, give yourselves a big round of applause and go do some improv!

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