

MAKING EFFECTIVE DECISIONS

GOALS:

- To look at how we make decisions.
- To examine different styles of decision-making.

RATIONALE:

We are all faced with having to make decisions whether they are large or small. Having an understanding of how we make decisions and the effects of different styles we adopt can help us make more effective decisions.



MATERIALS NEEDED:

Flipchart, pencils, a copy of *Decision-Making Styles* cut into strips, copies of *Past Decisions I Have Made* and *Action Planner* for each participant.

METHOD:

Warm Up : This Represents Me

Ask participants to find an item in their pockets or purses or on their person that represents who they are. For example: a photo could represent a parent, sibling, friend; a credit card receipt could represent a consumer, a person who keeps records, being organized.

Collect the items and invite participants to guess which item belongs to whom.

Exercise 1: Agree - Disagree

Ask participants to form a line and indicate they will have to make some quick decisions to some statements. Tell them to step forward if they agree and to step back if they disagree. If they can't decide, then instruct them to remain in the line. At the end of each statement, tell them to return to the line.

Statements:

1. Broccoli is good for your diet.
2. People who live in glass houses should not throw stones.
3. Everyone should have a job.
4. Time is money.
5. What goes up, must come down.

6. Decision-making requires making snap decisions
7. Tossing a coin in the air is the best decision-making process.

Lead a discussion in the large group using the following questions:

- How did it feel to make quick decisions?
- How does this fit in with how you normally make decisions?
- What factors are important in decision-making?

Exercise 2: Barriers

Hand out small pieces of paper to each person and ask participants to come up with one barrier they encounter when making decisions. Poll the group and post the barriers on the flipchart.

Divide the group into several small groups and assign some of the barriers to each group. Ask small groups to look at how they might overcome barriers. Have them share their results in the large group.

Exercise 3: Past Decisions

Hand out ***Past Decisions I Have Made*** worksheet to each person. Ask them to fill it out privately first. Then in pairs, encourage them to share their responses.

Questions to consider:

- Did you notice any pattern in the way you made decisions?
- What insights did you gain from doing this exercise?
- Is there anything you can identify that you might like to change in terms of responses?

THEORY: See Theory Box

Exercise 3: Making Decisions

Divide the group into pairs and designate one to be **A** and one **B**. Ask the A's to sit in a circle facing one another. Ask their partners (B's) to position themselves outside the circle and facing their partner.

Hand out individual **Decision-Making Roles** to the A's. Ask them to use these behaviours in the following role-play.

Place a jar of jelly beans in the center of the circle and tell A's that they must make a decision about how many jelly beans are in the jar. Tell them there is a prize involved if they make the correct decision.

Advise the B's to see if they can figure out what type of decision-making style the A's are exhibiting.

Allow the role-play to continue for 5 minutes and then debrief by asking B's to identify the style of their partner.

Explore the pro and cons of each style.

Questions to consider:

- When is each style useful?
- When does each style act as a barrier to making decisions?
- What style am I most comfortable with?
- What changes do I need to make to decide more effectively?

Exercise 4: Action Plan

Using the Action Planner, think of a decision that you are needing to make. Make a list of alternative possibilities. Choose one and decide how you will implement it, including when and where this will happen.

In pairs, share your **Action Plan**, and ask for feedback from your partner. Make any changes if necessary.

EVALUATION:

THEORY BOX

KEYS TO MAKING EFFECTIVE DECISIONS

- Set realistic deadlines for making decisions.
- Keep as focused as possible on the issue. Don't create confusion by bringing in other problems.
- Avoid the tendency to procrastinate. Take a time out but do come back to the issue in a timely manner.
- Avoid premature judgments. Try to get as many of the facts as possible.
- Remain as objective as possible.
- Involve others in generating possible solutions in order to give you a broad perspective.
- Share your decisions with others, especially those affected by the decision.

STEPS TO MAKING EFFECTIVE DECISIONS

- Define the decision to be made.
- Write down the existing alternatives that you know about.
- List the sources that can help in looking at new alternatives.
- Choose the best alternative.
- Implement the decision.
- Follow up on the decision.
- Evaluate and revise if necessary.

PAST DECISIONS I HAVE MADE

Three important decisions I have made in my life are:

1.

2.

3.

Three decisions I have made in the last year are:

1.

2.

3.

For each decision listed above, select one or more of the following phrases that describes the process you used in arriving at these decisions. Write the corresponding letter(s) on the line to the left of your decision statement.

A - It felt right.

B - I left the decision to someone else.

C - I decided to postpone my decision.

D - I did the first thing that came to mind.

E - I took the safest choice.

F - I waited until the situation became so intolerable that I was forced to take action.

G - I left the decision up to fate.

H - I decided what was most important to me and acted on it.

I - I did what I wanted without thinking about the consequences.

DECISION-MAKING STYLES

IMPULSIVE:

You give little thought or examination to the issues or possibilities. You tend to take the first alternative.

Motto: *Don't look, just leap!*

FATALISTIC:

You let the environment decide. Leave it up to fate.

Motto: *It's out of my hands! or It's all in the cards!*

COMPLIANT:

You allow someone else to decide. You follow someone else's plans. You offer no opinions.

Motto: *What ever you say, (sigh...) or It doesn't matter to me.*

DELAYING:

You tend to postpone thoughts and actions. You like to drag things out.

Motto: *I need more time/information/input, etc or What's the rush?*

AGONIZING:

You get lost in all data and overwhelmed with analyzing alternatives.

Motto: *I don't know what to do or I am so confused!*

PLANNING:

You use a procedure so that the chances of reaching a satisfying end result (decision) are increased.

Motto: *Let's examine the facts/possibilities/consequences. or Let's take a look at the big picture.*

INTUITIVE:

You tend to go with your gut feelings. Decisions are based on intuition and feelings rather than facts.

Motto: *It just feels like the right thing to do, don't ask me why.*

PARALYSIS:

You decide to accept responsibility but are unable to do anything about it.

Motto: *I can't face up to it. or I am throwing in the towel in this matter!*

ACTION PLANNER

A decision that I need to make is ...

Alternative solutions include ...

How I will implement my decision:

- Time frame
- When
- Where
- How
- Resources needed
- Anything else??

Evaluation and revisions