

Level: Secondary 3

Learning Period: 1 Hour

Learning Goals: Students will be able to

- Review their own process of dealing with problematic situations
- Critically analyse cases that require good judgment
- Be equipped with the right tools (mental toolkit) that will help them approach difficult and confusing issues in daily life

Big Idea: Authentic Decisions require deeper study & analysis

Core Values: Integrity and Responsibility

CCE Learning Outcome: Apply moral reasoning, display responsibility in decision making and demonstrate integrity to stand by moral principles and shared values.

SEL Competencies: Self-awareness and Responsible Decision Making

Materials/ Media: Activity sheets

CONTEXT:

Whether an adolescent is trying to decide on what perfume to wear or which Poly or JC to go to, every choice requires a decision to be made. Some decisions are simple, while others are more complex. Some require deeper examination of structures and circumstances. Regardless of the complexity of the decision, it is clear that adolescents make an increasing number of decisions.

Most often, students struggle not only with the fact that they ought to, but also with how they are to decide on; whether it would generate 'good results' or 'bad results'; whether it is something that they advocate or support and whether it is really what 'I want for myself.'

At this level and age, their ability to think critically increases considerably and their sense of fairness becomes more evident. At this stage we can challenge them to consider carefully the reasons behind their actions. How they decide what is and isn't a "good reason" is important for the next step which is to decide what is morally right and what is not.

We need to remember that how we decide is just as important as what we decide.

As an adult and teacher, how do you decide on the right course of action to take? How do you approach difficult situations that require your response?

The students' actual and specific situations vary from class to class. The context, therefore, changes and can be made more focused with a particular group of students.

LEARNING EXPERIENCE:

I. Tuning-in:

Option 1: Today's Choices
Instruction: In their journal notebook, ask the students to list down the simple (or complicated) decisions that they had to make in the last 3 or 5 days.

Examples:
Should I ask for a new iPad?
Should I cover up for my friends actions?
Should I take part in beating/bullying someone?
Should I try drinking alcohol or taking drugs?

After writing, have them share their answers with a seatmate OR invite a few students to share their answers with the whole class.

Students make an increasing number of decisions every day – some simple while some others are complicated. It is important to ask the essential questions – how do you make your choices?; how do you know that you made the right choice?

Option 2: Share your thoughts
Instruction: Briefly study the situation given; ask the questions and invite the students to briefly share their answers.

Situation:

After class you were standing at the bus stop trying to decide whether you will go straight home or you will go to the shopping mall.
How would you make a choice in this given situation?

In deciding what the best thing to do is, we usually ask for the reasons behind the choice of action or the options; we seek answers to our questions in order to understand the situation better. How do you decide what is and isn't a "good reason?"

II. Learning Activity:

Option 1: Case study: On School (*Activity sheet 1*)
Instruction: Break the class into smaller groups and ask them to study the given case carefully. Ask them to choose a member to facilitate, a scribe to take down notes and reporter to present the result of the group work to the class.

Case 1

“Some cold, dark, miserable mornings I wake up and wonder whether or not I should go to school that day. Unless I am ill I always go. Why?”

Discuss: What reasons do I give myself for getting up and going to school?

Option 2: Case study: On Friends (*Activity sheet 2*)

Instruction: Break the class into smaller groups and ask them to study the given case carefully. Ask them to choose a member to facilitate, a scribe to take down notes and reporter to present the result of the group work to the class.

Case 2

“There is this problem of being able just to be yourself. Everybody is part of some group and it seems you have to go along with what’s happening in the group. So if there’s drinking or smoking happening, then you have to join in. There’s this expectation to be like the others, even though everybody has a notion that they’re individual. Most people start drinking because of peer pressure.

With girls then, there’s this whole backstabbing thing. It’s rampant and you can never feel really safe. Everyone is jealous or threatened by anybody who looks good or is doing well. There’s this secret desire to pull everyone down to your level. If a girl looks real good it becomes, “She thinks she is it!” If she is popular with boys, it’s just because “she’s easy.”

Discuss: Would you resist such peer pressure – why? Why not?

After working in small groups, have the 1 reporter from each group share the result of the discussion.

Link the students’ sharing with their daily life experiences of dealing with challenging situations.

Many students do things without careful planning or consideration of the bigger picture involved; many others are not aware or confused of their own reasons for doing the things that they do. Some students make choices while many others simply drift from one side to the other day after day.

We want to emphasize the necessity of examining the ways in which we do things in daily life; of looking closely the different situations that we encounter and examine our process of response.

Help the students review their own process of dealing with difficult and confusing situations especially in their relationships with family and friends.

*What value do you see in analysing your own life situations?
How and where do you think you could use it in your own life?*

III. Inspiration/Deepening: Link the student's learning experience with the following points:
(PowerPoint Presentation)

YOU are the carpenter of your life. Each day you hammer a nail, place a board or erect a wall.

YOUR attitudes and the choices you make today build your "house" for tomorrow.

BUILD WISELY!

*Help the students understand that:
HOW we decide is just as important as what we decide.
An ANALYSIS of the situation is crucial in decision making.
In every situation, the human person realizes an inner capacity to know right from wrong.*

REFLECTION:

Instruction: Lead the students to a deeper reflection of their personal experiences. Invite them to answer these questions:

Do I take responsibility for making good decisions in daily living?

How did I feel about the reasons I give myself for my actions and behaviour?

ACTION:

(Activity sheet 3)

Instruction: Improving one's decision making capacities is always possible. Invite the students to look at one way of strengthening this process. Below is a process with some guide questions that you may use to make more well considered decisions. Use this tool and apply it to either of the above cases or to a new situation in which you find yourself. Not all questions apply to all situations.

Guiding process:

- I. Describe the problem
 - What is happening here?
 - What is the problem about?
- II. Analyze the problem:
 - Who is involved in the problem?
 - Why is this happening?

- What do others say about this?
- What is involved in this issue?
- How does this affect your values?
- What are the values that I hold in relation to the problem?
- What do my beliefs teach me about this situation?
- What do I consider as the objective truth?
- What is my stance on this issue?

III. Response/Action:

- What response best reflects my values?
- What action speaks of my viewpoints with regards to this problem?
- What is my decision? Will this choice strengthen my moral character?

Invite the students to read the “students’ reading pages” as well as using the guide process above.

EVALUATION:

Instruction: Give some time for students to use the above tool if they did not try it out during the class time or afterwards. It is important that they try using this process. They can also work in groups with a common problem faced with in school or in the neighbourhood.

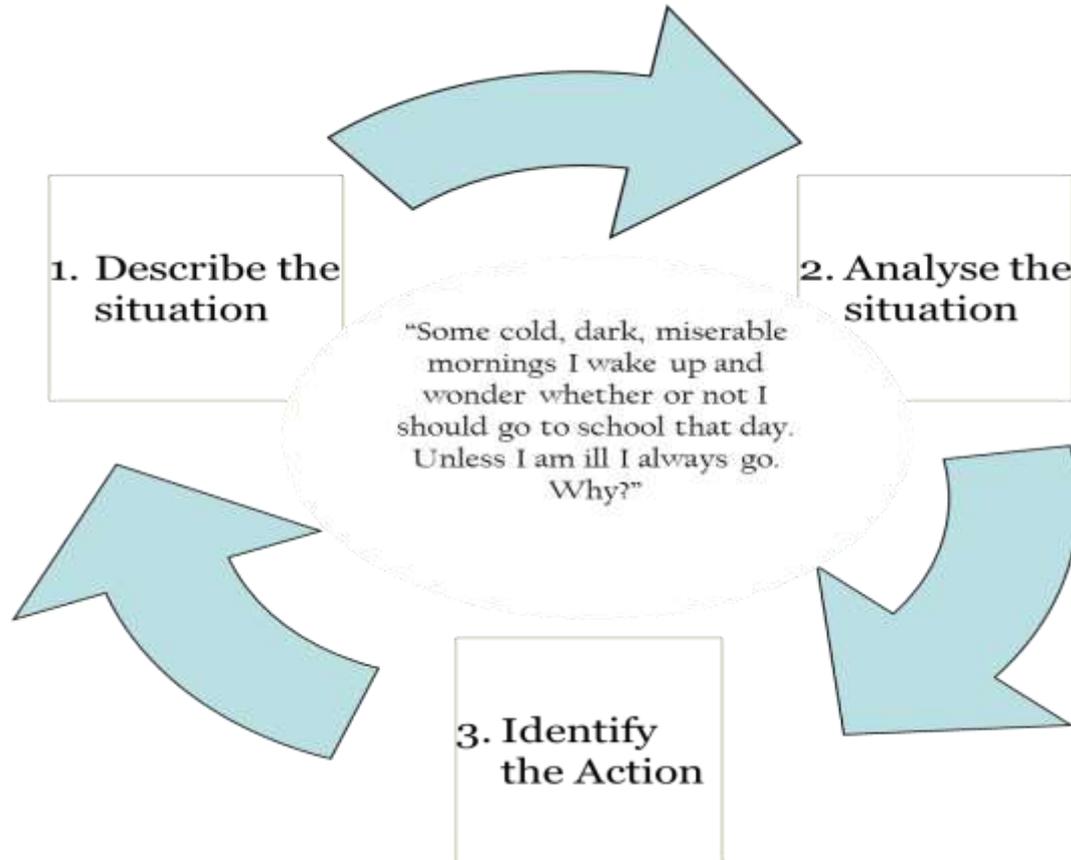
For those who have used it, let them share their work with the class.

Activity sheet 1:

Moral Decisions

Case Study: On School (Group work)

Instruction: Below is a case that involves a daily decision.
Read the case carefully and do an analysis of the situation.



Inference: Look at the 'picture' above that you have completed.

Formulate at least 3 reasons you believe are true for yourself.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Activity sheet 2

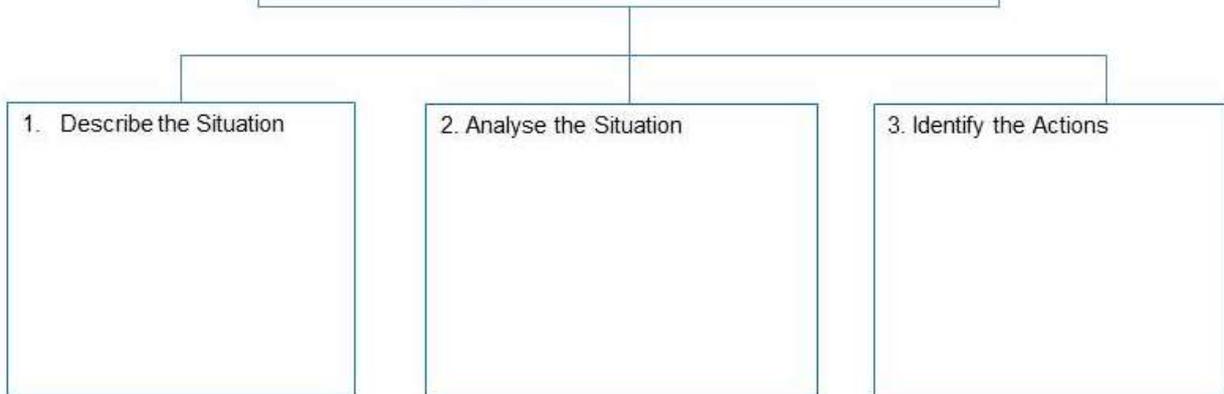
Moral Decisions

Case Study: On Friends (Group work)

Instruction: Below is a case that involves a tough decision.
Read the case carefully and do an analysis of the situation.

“There is this problem of being able just to be yourself. Everybody is part of some group and you kinda have to go along with what’s happening in the group. So if there’s drinking or smoking happening, then you have to do it. There’s this expectation to be like the others, even though everybody has a notion that they’re individual. Most people start drinking because of peer pressure.

With girls then, there’s this whole backstabbing thing. It’s rampant and you can never feel really safe. Everyone is jealous or threatened by anybody who looks good or is doing well. There’s this secret desire to pull everyone down to your level. If a girl looks real good it becomes, “She thinks she is it!” if she is popular with boys, it’s just because “she’s easy.”



Inference: Look at the ‘picture’ above that you have completed.

Formulate at least 3 beliefs on which you based your decisions.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

Activity sheet 3

Questions for personal reflection

Instruction: Improving one's decision making capacities is always possible. Let us look at one way of strengthening this process.

Below is a process with some guide questions that you may use to make more well considered decisions. Use this tool and apply it to either of the above cases or to a new situation in which you find yourself. Not all questions apply to all situations.

Guiding process:

- I. Describe the problem:
 - What is happening here?
 - What is the problem about?

 - II. Analyze the problem:
 - Who is involved in the problem?
 - Why is this happening?
 - What do others say about this?
 - What is involved in this issue?
 - How does this affect your values?
 - What are the values that I hold in relation to the problem?
 - What do my beliefs teach me about this situation?
 - What do I consider as the objective truth?
 - What is my stance on this issue?

 - III Response/Action
 - What response best reflects my values?
 - What action speaks of my viewpoints with regards to this problem?
 - What is my decision? Will this choice strengthen my moral character?
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1. The Problem:

2. My Analysis:

3. My Response:

Student's Reading:

HOW MORAL DECISIONS ARE MADE

GOOD REASONS

When deciding what is right and wrong, we usually want to think about the reasons behind actions. Most issues of right and wrong aren't straightforward, they are not in 'black and white'. Whether something is right or wrong is usually quite complicated. Take for example, killing. Most people would agree that if you walked up to someone in the street and stuck a knife in their stomach for no apparent reason, then that would be wrong. What if you were at war, however, and you did exactly that to an enemy soldier? Also, imagine chopping off a friend's leg for a laugh. That would be quite different to a surgeon cutting off someone's leg to save their life. In each case, the reason behind the action gives you some idea about whether the action is wrong or not. But is that enough? Someone who kills someone else may think they have a perfectly good reason for their actions – even if we disagree. For example, someone may decide to kill someone to “put them out of their misery” when suffering from some serious illness – is that right? How we decide what is and is not a good reason is difficult, and so makes the whole idea of right and wrong quite slippery.

RULES

Who makes rules in society? What are these rules based on? What should we do when these rules themselves seem to be wrong? Should we follow rules strictly or be flexible about them? How should we respond when the rules are broken? How can we match rule-breaking with an appropriate punishment?

All societies have rules and laws. These are usually agreed by the people who live in a particular place and exist to benefit everyone, even if they sometimes restrict our freedom. We agree to follow the rules individually so that we all get the benefits collectively. Rules and laws can change as times change. The trouble with most rules and laws is that they try to be “tight” so that they cover every possibility. Of course, life is so complex that this isn't always possible, and this is why we have people who interpret the rules for us, like lawyers and judges. They themselves have to take advice when the rule or law covers something they are not specialists in.

TRADITIONS

Many of our ideas about right and wrong come from the traditions that we follow. Where we live, and also when we are living, play their part. In some countries, certain things are acceptable, quite different things in others. Some things were once considered right and now aren't and vice versa. Some people think that traditions are worth holding on to, others that traditions should only be kept up where they actually produce positive results. For example, some people argue that women should have certain roles in society because that is traditional – but are all traditions equally valuable?

CONSCIENCE

What about your conscience? One person's conscience might be quite different from another's. Besides, should we accept that something is right just because it "feels good"? Is your conscience enough of a reason to decide that one thing is right while another is wrong? Where does your conscience come from? Does it depend too heavily on the kind of upbringing you have had? Some people argue that the motivation behind an action is what makes it right or wrong, not what the consequences are. However, if that is so, then there are many examples of people throughout history who did things which were "wrong" for what they probably thought were the "right" reasons.

BORN BAD?

Some people believe that humans are born with instinctive ideas about what's right and wrong. Some believe we are born more likely to do bad things than good things, others believe that it is the other way around.

Most people argue that we gradually learn what is right or wrong as we grow. We learn by our own experience as well as from the examples of others, including significant people like our parents. We also learn that certain actions bring punishment and others reward. The ones that bring reward we come to think of as right and the ones that bring punishment as wrong. We may not actually believe that this is the case, but it's most practical to live as if it is.

Because of this, some people argue that we are born "neutral". Our only aim is to survive until adulthood and so we behave in a way that makes this possible. What is right or wrong depends on what we think might bring us the greatest advantage individually or collectively.

ABSOLUTE MORALITY

Are there some things which are "always wrong?"

Absolute morality is the principle that there are some things which are always wrong. These may be summed up in laws, religious codes, traditions or just by agreement within societies. It can also mean that there are absolute codes of behavior, which make certain things always much more likely to be wrong than right. For example, applying absolute morality to killing could mean either killing is wrong in any situation for any reason or killing is generally wrong, except in very special circumstances.

RELATIVE MORALITY

Relative morality means that what is right and wrong is decided in every situation according to what the situation is. The idea here is that no two situations are the same so it is difficult to have any hard and fast rules – even ones that you can "bend". So, for example, whether killing is wrong or right depends on the circumstances of the events surrounding the killing. This is often known as situation ethics.

ARE 'THINGS GETTING WORSE'?

Are people today less concerned about right and wrong now than they were in the past? Some people argue that today's world is much less concerned with right and wrong than it once was. They might say that people are more selfish than they were and less likely to have any 'solid' ground on which to build up their own ideas of right and wrong. They would probably argue that people don't help each other out so much nowadays and that we're all more likely just to 'look after number one'. Whether or not this is true is a matter for discussion. There is also an argument about whether the possibilities of life today are so complicated that our ideas about what's right and wrong haven't caught up yet. For example, scientific developments give us possibilities unheard of even a few years ago – have we been able to make sure that our moral thinking about some of these issues is keeping us with developments?