



Decisiveness

Vs. Procrastination

I WILL:

- Not look back
- Do what I say
- Make the right decision and stick to it
- Look at things from more than one point of view before making up my mind
- Not give in to peer pressure

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Processing information and finalizing difficult decisions

You've heard the idioms: "clear cut", "cut and dried", and "to cut a deal". These are all decisive statements and should not be confused with rash decisions or snap reactions. Decisiveness is knowing what facts are important to consider in making a decision, knowing the right decision to make and taking responsibility to see that decision through to completion.

A decision without action is not really a decision. Decisiveness sometimes requires Courage to follow-through when the right decision is not the popular decision. Decisiveness means making the right choice and acting quickly and confidently.

Having good character is a sure foundation for being able to process information into sound decisions. Most of the time, we really do know what the right decision is. Decisiveness drives us to make that decision quickly.

This month exercise your decisiveness and make solid, clear-cut decisions.



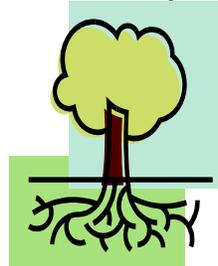
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No Matter How You Say It

↻ ↻ Go to the Root ↻ ↻

Decisiveness comes from the Latin root *caedere* which means “to cut; to strike”. Adding the prefix *de-* (“off”) gives the meaning to cut off. Can you see how decisiveness *cuts* to the heart of a matter?



Zdecydowanie - Polish

Cinntitheach - Irish

Decisivo - Spanish

Détermination - French

Sign Language

Check out the following website for the American Sign Language interpretation of

Decide <https://www.handspeak.com/word/search/index.php?id=546>

Procrastinate <https://www.handspeak.com/word/search/index.php?id=1688>

Can you see how decide involves the mind and is set and how Procrastinate is willy-nilly.

From Miriam Webster (www.merriam-webster.com)

Synonyms

bent (on *or* upon), bound, determined, do-or-die, firm, hell-bent (on *or* upon), intent, out, purposeful, resolute, resolved, set, single-minded

Antonyms

faltering, hesitant, indecisive, irresolute, undetermined, unresolved, vacillating, wavering, weak-kneed

Related Words

vehement; certain, cocksure, confident, positive, sure; earnest, serious; steady, unfaltering, unhesitating, unswerving, unwavering; adamant, dogged, hard, hardened, hardheaded, headstrong, immovable, implacable, inflexible, mulish, obdurate, persistent, pertinacious, pigheaded, rigid, tenacious, unbending, uncompromising, unrelenting, unyielding, willful

“People will accept your idea much more readily if you tell them Benjamin Franklin said it first.” -David H. Comins

Character Quotables

“A bird hanging between two branches will get bitten on both wings.”

~Ethiopian Proverb

“When written in Chinese, the word crisis is composed of two characters. One represents danger, and the other represents opportunity.”

~John F. Kennedy

“A wise man makes his own decisions, an ignorant man follows the public opinion.”

~Chinese Proverb

“How people treat you is their karma; how you react is yours.”

~Wayne Dyer

“The day you decide to do it is your lucky day.”

~Japanese Proverb

“Using the power of decision gives you the capacity to get past any excuse to change any and every part of your life in an instant.”

~Anthony Robbins

“Deliberate often -- decide once.”

~Latin Proverb

“You have to start with the truth. The truth is the only way that we can get anywhere. Because any decision-making that is based upon lies or ignorance can't lead to a good conclusion.”

~Julian Assange

“Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do.”

~John Wooden

“Character is one factor that will guide all our actions and decisions. We invested in uncompromising integrity that helped us take difficult stands in some of the most difficult business situations.”

~Azim Premji

“Ideas won't keep; something must be done about them.”

~Alfred North Whitehead

“We are the creative force of our life, and through our own decisions rather than our conditions, if we carefully learn to do certain things, we can accomplish those goals.”

~Stephen Covey

“Remember, a real decision is measured by the fact that you've taken new action. If there's no action, you haven't truly decided.”

~Anthony Robbins

Curriculum Connection Social Studies

Decisiveness can be studied by looking at the Justice System. In the courts, Judges are asked to make decisions using the law and presented facts. Jurors make decisions based on the same thing. By studying Supreme Court decisions, you can look at the papers written by the Justices especially the dissenting opinions of those that didn't agree.



<http://cepp.com/?s=EBDM+Framework>

<http://keenetrial.com/blog/2010/07/26/deliberations-jurors-think-and-feel-as-they-make-decisions/>

ER Doctors, Model of Decisiveness

Anyone who has been to a hospital in an emergency situation has seen decisiveness in action. Beginning with the Triage Nurse, the medical staff are trained in decisiveness. Time is of the essence so decisions need to be made quickly.

They know what questions to ask and what to look for in order to know what to do first. They have studied many years and trained under experienced doctors so that they can recognize key factors in a situation and react appropriately.

Training and experience are key to making good

decisions in the ER. Sometimes what they see doesn't make sense but a conversation with a family member can clarify a situation.

Many times they need to "treat" more than just the patient. Helping a loved one understand the situation can in turn help the patient relax or agree to treatment.

Not only do ER staff have to understand the medical implications of a situation, they must also understand cultural or religious policies that affect a

treatment choice.

Every day, the ER shows the benefit of acting decisively.



Team-Building Activity

Building a culture of good character requires building the class into a community. Here is this month's teambuilding activity:

You Choose



For this activity, you will need old magazines or newspapers that can be cut up. You will also need to provide a container in which they will place their cut-outs. The container is the "Magic Hat/Bucket/Bag/Whatever. It does not need to be anything particularly fancy - imagination works fine! Explain that anything placed in the Magic Bag will come true. The task you will give them is to tell their idea of how they would change the world. Provide the students time to look through the magazines/newspapers for a picture or a phrase that identifies how they want to change the world. They must pretend that the picture they choose will come true if they place it in the Magic Bag. Once everyone has chosen their picture, allow each student to share their wish as they place it in the Magic Bag. (Make sure they know ahead of time they will be sharing their wish.) If time does not allow for the picture search, you can allow them time to sketch a picture or write a few words before sharing and placing it in the Magic Bag. When all have shared, sum up what the world would look like if their wishes all came true. Point out any common values that are prominent in the wishes as well as the diversity of the responses.



Group Think

This exercise will demonstrate how much you give up by blindly following trends, fashion or peers. Come up with 10 age appropriate questions for the group such as What is your favorite color?, what is your favorite subject? (recess doesn't count), etc. Have each student number their paper from 1 to 10 and write their personal responses next to the number. Be sure to pick questions that will get a variety of answers and ones that they won't mind sharing. Now divide into groups of 10. If you do smaller groups, then make the number of questions match the number per group. If a group is short a member, then the last person(s) can go twice. Have each group arrange themselves in an order using just the day of the month of their birthday, the order of their house number, last 4 digits of their phone number, whatever you choose. Now, the first person in whatever order is chosen will share their answer for the first question and everyone will write that answer next to their answer on their paper. The second person will share their answer to the second question and everyone will write it next to their answer for the second question. Continue with this until there is a second answer recorded for each answer. Consider the second set of answers, the "group" answer. Have each student compare how many times their answer didn't match the "group" answer. If you follow group think, you have to give up your personal decisions to follow the fashionable or trendy decision. What do you think the world would look like if we all blindly followed fashion trends?



The Angel and the Devil

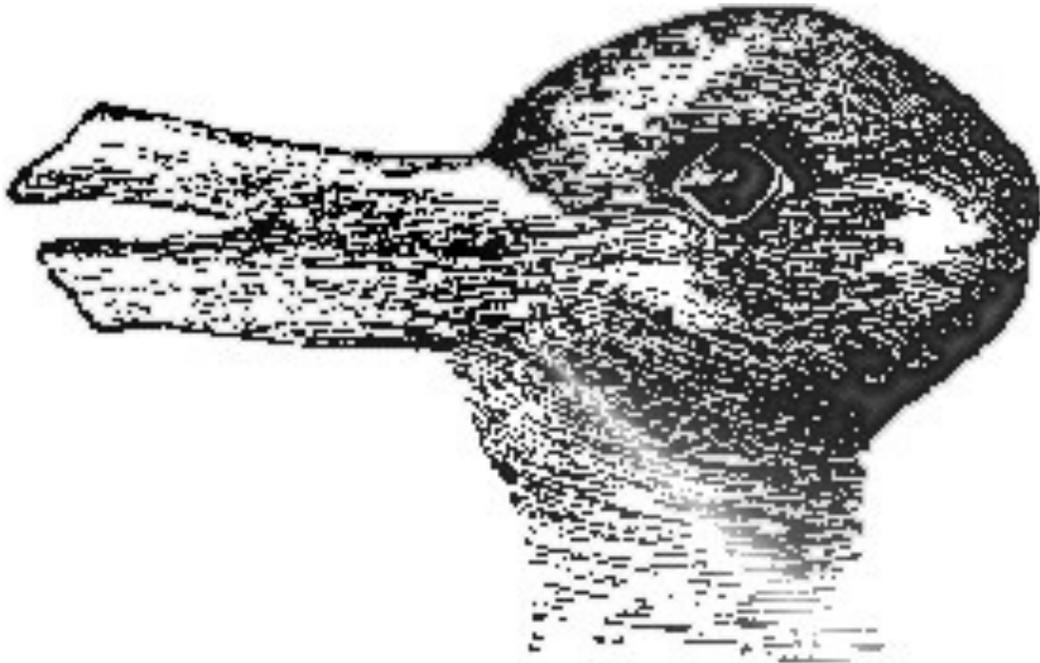
This exercise will look like cartoon decision making with an angel on one shoulder and the devil on the other giving you conflicting advice. You will need 4 playing cards (no face cards) and a blindfold for this exercise.



(My blindfold of choice is to wind toilet paper around their head just covering their eyes.) Choose one student to be blindfolded, one student to be an angel and one to be the devil. Do not choose students who would easily be identified in either role. Assign the roles of angel and devil so that the blindfolded student does not know which one is which. Now place the 4 playing cards face up in any order. The object of the game is for the angel to give instructions to the blindfolded student of how to put the cards in numerical order. The job of the devil is to give false instructions. The blindfolded student must decide who to listen to when ordering the cards. When the cards are ordered or the blindfolded student believes to be done, allow the blindfold to be removed. Ask the student how difficult it was to tell if they were getting good advice or bad advice. Ask if they used the reaction of the class to the instructions as any indication if it was good or bad. Did the devil make any slip ups and at one time say a card was higher then say that it was lower? Liars have to have great memories to avoid contradicting previous lies. Relate the exercise to peer pressure. When a classmate tells you or challenges you to do something, you must listen to that inner voice that tells you it is a bad decision.

Now You See It

Reproduce the picture below for the students to view. Pass it around the classroom. Have each student silently write down what they see. Some will see the rabbit. (He is looking to the right and his ears are pointing left.) Some will see the duck. (He is facing left and his beak is facing left.) After all students have recorded their answer, poll the class to see how many saw the duck and how many saw the rabbit. Pass the picture around again and see if the students can see both animals. Use this example of how you can look at a situation and not see the danger in it. Sometimes parents or teachers can look at a situation and see the harm it can do. Advice that comes from trusted adults should be followed because they could be seeing a situation differently. Making good decisions requires collecting data from trusted sources and processing that data into a decision. Discussing why a parent or teacher feels a certain way can lead to discovering information that helps one to make better decisions.



Count Off

You will need 15 small items, pennies, buttons, paperclips, etc. Place the items on the desk so that none are overlapping. Challenge a student to not be the one to take the last item by each of you taking turns taking 1, 2 or 3 of the items at a time. It doesn't matter who goes first but whoever picks up item #10 will be the winner. Aiming to pick up second and sixth will help to get you to item 10. For example, you go first so you take 2 so you get the second. (2 gone) Your challenger takes 2. (4 gone) You want to pick up 6 so you take 2 more. (6 gone) Your challenger takes 1. (7 gone) You take 3 to get you to the tenth. (10 gone) Now for the ending. If they take 1. (11 gone). You take 3 (14 gone) They have to take the last one and you win! Replaying from the 10th this time they take 2 (12 gone). You take 2. (14 gone) They have to take the last and you win! Replaying from the 10th, this time they take 3 (13 gone) so you take 1 (14 gone) they have to take the last one. You win! Sometimes it won't work out that you get the 10th one so the Challenger can win. If you do it multiple times, odds are in your favor that you will win most of the time unless they figure out the pattern. Ask your challengers how it felt to be making decisions when you repeatedly were wrong and if you were right you didn't really know why. Once they know the trick, encourage them to play against someone who doesn't know the trick. How different does it feel to be making a decision when you have more information about what you are deciding? Getting all of the information before you make a decision is critical to good decision making.



Woulda-Coulda-Shoulda By Shel Silverstein

**All the woulda-coulda-shouldas
Layin' in the sun,
Talkin' 'bout the things
They woulda-coulda-shouldas done ...
But those woulda-coulda-shouldas
All ran away and hid
From one little did.**

Use this poem to prompt the students to identify the woulda-coulda-shouldas in their life and then make one resolution to take some action that will turn one of them into a Did. For younger students, have them reflect on the past week to look for something they can decide to do differently.

For the Family

We are studying the character quality of **Decisiveness**: Processing information and finalizing difficult decisions.

To practice Decisiveness I will:

- Not look back
- Do what I say
- Make the right decision and stick to it
- Look at things from more than one point of view before making up my mind
- Not give in to peer pressure



Family Activity:

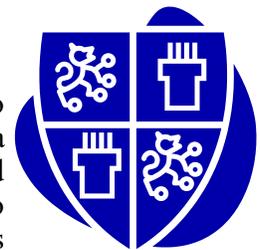
Design a Coat of Arms

Designing a coat of arms for your family requires many decisions to be made. You will need to demonstrate balance between taking forever to decide on themes and colors and choosing too quickly. Be sure that the children know how a Coat of Arms was first used and how families, business and communities still use them today. Some websites that have instructions on the making a Family Coat of Arms can be found at:

<http://www.makeyourcoatofarms.com/>

<http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Family-Crest>

When the design is complete, review the decisions that needed to be made to produce the design. How did you get everyone to agree when there was a conflict? Were artistic members of the family relied upon more heavily or did everyone have an equal say? How much research into family history went into creating the design? Does this design represent the historical family or just this particular family? Another option is to have each individual in the family create their own Coat of Arms. If you do that you can look for common themes among the family members. After you see what each has created, do you have ideas you want to add to your own now? Can you come up with a single Coat of Arms that covers the family as a unit or as a group of individuals?



Other ways to teach character in the home:

- Display the character quality and definition in a prominent place such as on the refrigerator or let each child decorate it for their bedroom door.
- At the dinner table ask if anyone noticed anyone (not just family members) demonstrating the character quality (or not demonstrating it).
- Point out news stories where character was or was not involved.
- Review the “I wills” and see if there are specific actions you can add to this list.
- During car trips, challenge the kids by describing scenarios and having them identify if it describes being the quality or being the opposite.
- Praise with character by recognizing the character quality involved rather than the achievement.
- For more ideas visit www.charactercincinnati.org/education.php

I was at a family dinner held in a restaurant recently. My nephew declared that he wanted to wait until everyone else had ordered because he did not want to order an entree that someone else had already chosen. He said that defeated the purpose of going out to eat. It got me to thinking about peer pressure and some research I had seen.

Dan Ariely, a behavioral economist, along with Jonathan Levav, did an interesting piece of research on the influence of peer pressure on how patrons order in a bar or restaurant. <http://danariely.com/the-research/> To test for the influence of peer pressure, “group context,” on individual decisions in a natural setting, they collected lunch order slips from a popular Chinese restaurant in Durham, North Carolina. Lunch orders were of uniform size and price, and, unlike the usual custom in Chinese restaurants, were served as individual portions and not shared. They found that when the diners were asked to order “privately” (on paper), they selected different food items than when they ordered in front of other diners, their peers. The group context had a strong and significant influence on individual decision making and how varied their choices were. And peers influenced their satisfaction with their choice. This also showed up in studies they did with beer and wine. (What do you mean, “Where do I sign up?”) Of course, what was being chosen was impacted by the food item, taste, diner's previous experience, and other factors. But the take away from it, for Ariely and his colleagues, is that we are influenced in our choices by the peer group we belong to. This is probably not news, but it is reassuring to have some proof.

I think about peer pressure with movies. When I was young, I went to the movies almost weekly. Of course, this is before DVD's or Movies on Demand, or Hulu. But, then as now, I was exposed to many more films through film reviews than I actually watched. Most of the films I saw were in a theater with others watching. Their laughter, or groans, or getting up and walking out influenced me, no doubt. But today, while I still read about a lot of movie reviews, I mostly watch them at home, on TV. The peer influence, except from reviews, is drastically reduced. This may not be true for you, but, in general, more people view movies outside of a theater than inside it. How, I wonder, has viewing movies alone changed our opinions of movies generally?

You might be saying, “These are trivial areas of peer influence compared to the big crises of life.” You are correct. What effect do peer pressure and social context have on promoting or decreasing bullying in schools? How do our siblings' opinions affect how we treat an ailing parent? What is our level of interaction with a colleague who has gotten into some public mess? How do we interact with defiant children, especially when others are around? We do very little – we make very few decisions – in private. Most of what we decide to do is in the public eye, at least partially.

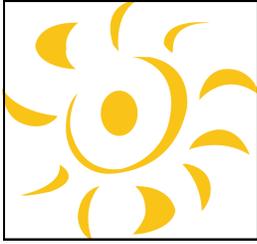
There is a great “laboratory” for observing peer pressure these days. It combines the triviality of television with the momentous issues of our lives. It is called Reality TV. My family members have found their individual favorites among the many offerings. If you are a seasoned educator like I am, you may remember the 1970's when Public Broadcasting placed cameras in the Loud Family's house and showed America the edited results. The family ended up dealing with divorce, drug abuse, death. There was a public hue and cry about how the process of observing (cameras rolling) influenced the outcomes. Of course, we've seen how this phenomenon has exploded. One can watch the daily family interactions of little people, pawn shop owners, motorcycle builders, celebrities, and people who become celebrities through having their daily family interactions being shown to the nation. How does one “get over” knowing that they are having an intimate discussion that will not remain private? Or take the *Bachelor* or *Bachelorette*. Dating and “courtship” are complicated enough. But how could I not be influenced in what I said and did with my partner, knowing my manhood, my manners, my level of commitment were all being judged by millions of people – some of whom would be glad to approach me in a public place and throw my choices in my face!?

Can we avoid being influenced by peers? I am pretty sure we are not even fully aware when we are, so I doubt we could eliminate this, even if we wanted to. But, maybe we CAN increase our awareness. This month we are focusing on the Character Quality Decisiveness, defined as "Processing information and finalizing difficult decisions." The I wills remind us to reflect on the influence of peer pressure when we make important decisions. But we are also reminded to look at things from more than one point of view before making up our minds. So, fight peer pressure but consider the opinions of others, right?

You have probably heard this definition of Character: It's what you do when no one is looking. From that, one would think that the presence of peers encourages us to show more good Character. But maybe the opposite is also true: sometimes human beings drop to the lowest level of behavior, mob rule even, when in the presence of others. We may therefore think that we cannot show good Character once our peers step in. I wonder if they ever step out. Trying to live a life of Character requires us to regularly ask ourselves what the Right thing to do is. Of course, that forces us to reflect on the choices. I maintain that, most often, deep down, we already know what the right thing to do is. But, we hesitate due to pressures. Maybe a wise course would be to use the opinions of others to play down our egocentrism, to free us from being a prisoner of our own point of view. But after visiting with others' views, we probably ought to come back home to our consciences, and armed with the needs of others and ourselves, choose what we know is right.

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Character...It Starts With Me!

Character in the Classroom *Continuously*

There are many ways that you can teach the Character Quality of Month. Here are just a few suggestions:

- Ask students to make posters to hang in the classroom or around the school.
- Challenge students to find quotes, news stories, current (or classic) songs or movies that portray the character quality of the month. Be sure to share these with the class and “archive” these to use in future years.
- Add the character trait of the month to the spelling word list. (Even if it is posted in the classroom to copy!)
- Offer for students to make a video or write a rap that demonstrates the Character Quality of the Month.
- If you teach younger students, see if you can “borrow” some older students to lead your students in an activity or switch the roles and have the younger students “teach” a rhyme to the older students.
- If you teach older students, you can be the initiator in the previous activities.
- Invite local business leaders or small business owners to talk about the importance of a character trait. If you teach older students, aim to get a representative from a business that typically hires teens so that they can relate the importance of good character when applying for and *keeping* a job.
- Men and women in uniform usually make impressive guest speakers. Police departments, fire departments and military recruiting offices are usually willing to come into a classroom. Do not be afraid to give them specific requests or guidelines for speaking so that it is pertinent to the lessons of the month.
- Always have a generic character activity planned and ready to go that you can use as filler when you have time to kill or that a substitute teacher can use in your absence.