



OBSTACLES FOR DECISION MAKING

1. LEARNING FROM REGRETS

Objective: Students will be able to notice the learning that lies behind every regret a person may have after making a bad decision.

WARM UP

Write on the board the phrase *I regret...* and then ask some volunteers to finish it. Then ask your students to think how they feel when they have a regret and make a brainstorm session on the emotions associated with it. After that, tell them to think if there is something good coming out of feeling regret. Write their conclusions on the board.

STEP BY STEP

- 1 Make sure every student has a copy of the printed handout to work with. Give students some minutes to read the introductory text. Then ask them what they think about regrets.
- 2 Ask students to get into pairs. Invite them to read Sue's situation in the handout. Have pairs discuss and exchange ideas about the possible decisions Sue might make. Encourage them to take into consideration Sue's regrets and think how her previous experiences might affect her decision.
- 3 Give students some time to think of a situation in which they have felt regret. Encourage them to reflect, not only on the feelings they experienced, but also on how that experience (regret, bad feelings, and a bad decision) served as a lesson. Ask them to fill in the table. Then get students into small groups and encourage them to share their situations and discuss them. Walk around the classroom listening to students and providing help if necessary. Encourage them to identify similarities between their regrets and what they learned with other classmates' situations. Remind them to be respectful with everyone.

WRAP IT UP

- 4 *What do you think is the importance of recognizing regrets when making a decision? Do you think regrets help to make decisions or do they make decisions harder? What positive aspects do regrets have?*

Tell students to read the questions and then ask volunteers to share their answers. Have a class discussion on the importance of making bad decisions and feeling regret. Guide them to notice that regret lets us know when something bad happened and that that feeling is sort of an alarm not to repeat mistakes. Bad decisions without feeling regret or recognizing the wrong in them are bound to happen again. The feeling of regret, although it is not pleasant, is an important feeling that allows people to recognize mistakes and avoid them. Tell your students that regrets help us learn from past decisions.

TEACHING TIP

Thinking of strong feelings that come out of bad decisions such as regret, frustration, or sadness, might be uncomfortable and can create a heavy atmosphere in the classroom. After such a hard session it might be a good idea to take five minutes to make breathing exercises and let students clear their minds. Change the class's mood by giving students time to relax and let go of heavy feelings so they can move on to their other classes.



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2. FEASIBILITY OF CHOICES

Objective: Students will be able to analyze three main aspects of an alternative, when making a decision, so they can choose the best one.

WARM UP

Ask your students to think about something they would like to buy, like a videogame, a console, a new phone, etc. Then write on the board some alternatives for them to get what they want, some alternatives that are possible and some that are not. For example: *You could get a part-time job and save money. You could talk to your parents and convince them to buy it for you. You could win the lottery. You could go to the store and tell them to give it to you for free.* Ask them to choose the options that could actually help them achieve what they want.

STEP BY STEP

- 1 Make sure every student has a copy of the printed handout to work with. Invite students to read the introduction to the topic. Have them notice that an important element to consider whenever we make decisions is our goal.
- 2 Get students into pairs and ask them to read the elements listed in the handout. Explain that there are three main characteristics an alternative must have in order to determine if it is feasible. Invite them to discuss why these characteristics are important. Explain that resources can also be people or time. Tell them they have to consider whether they will be able to deal with a decision and its effects for as long as it is necessary, and that they must be able to adapt to things that are out of their control.
- 3 Have them read the situation in the handout and ask them to complete the graphic organizer. If necessary, tell them to come up with more alternatives and add them to the graphic organizer. Give students enough time

to discuss and exchange ideas to choose the best, taking into consideration the three characteristics a feasible alternative must have.

- 4 Get students into small groups and ask them to share a personal experience where the three characteristics of a possible alternative were present and taken into account. Invite volunteers to share their experiences with the class.

WRAP IT UP

- 5 *Was it easy to think of the alternatives? Were your options creative? Do you think it is a good idea to ask an experienced person to help you identify alternatives? Which person would you consult?*

Get students into small groups. Have them read the questions to discuss and exchange ideas. After some minutes, invite volunteers from different groups to share their opinions with the rest of the class. Point out the importance of recognizing feasible alternatives. Tell students that these characteristics will help them identify what they need in order to achieve their goals as well as the consequences of their decisions.

TEACHING TIP

Remind students that they should analyze and consider all possible alternatives. It is important that they know they can always ask for the opinion or help of a person (a classmate, a teacher, a relative) who may guide them if they feel unsure about what path to take. Explain that talking to someone may help them see things from a different perspective and come up with different alternatives they might consider for any decision they need to make.



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3. ALTERNATIVES AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

Objective: Students will be able to analyze possible and creative alternatives to choose from in several situations related to their everyday life, considering the characteristics of their consequences.

WARM UP

Present students with a hypothetical situation at school; for example, they see some classmates bullying another one. Encourage them to think about what they would do and elicit as many different answers as possible. Write them on the board. Then ask students if they considered how they and the people involved in the situation would feel about the alternative they chose.

STEP BY STEP

- 1 Make sure every student has a copy of the printed handout to work with. Have students read the introductory text and make sure they understand the importance of thinking before acting.
- 2 Ask students to get into pairs and read the situation presented in the handout. Give pairs enough time to exchange ideas and discuss what they would do in a similar situation. Monitor the activity and help as needed.
- 3 Once they have discussed the alternatives in the table, ask them to think of other alternatives and their consequences. Encourage them to be creative and think of possible options. After they have considered all the alternatives for Emily's situation, ask them to choose the one they consider the best. Explain that in order to choose the best option, they need to take into account the consequences for everyone involved in the situation, what is best for everyone, and how their decision will affect each person.

- 4 Tell students to get together with another pair. Ask them to share and discuss their decisions. Allow enough time so they can exchange opinions and ideas. Invite some students from different groups to share the alternative they chose with the rest of the class.

WRAP IT UP

- 5 *Why do you think the option you chose is the best alternative? Does pausing before deciding help you make better choices? Why?*

Have students read the questions and invite them to give their opinions and points of view. Remind them that pausing before acting is very important, because sometimes we do not think about the consequences. For example, if our actions would be convenient not only in the short but also in the long term, and how would they affect others. Explain that, many times, decisions have a greater impact than we think and that it is important to always have the possible consequences in mind.

TEACHING TIP

Remind students of the importance of considering not only their own feelings and emotions, but those of the people around them. Whenever we make decisions, we should pause and think of their consequences before acting. It is important students ask themselves: *Is this the right thing to do? Is this option the most beneficial for all the people involved? Even though my friend feels hurt now, is this the best choice in the long term?*



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4. OTHER PEOPLE'S INFLUENCE

Objective: Students will be able to compare and determine if the opinions and previous experiences provided by others are helpful or not for their decision making process.

WARM UP

Ask students to think of things they do on a daily basis influenced by someone else. For example, a friend who made them listen to a band and they like it now, or a TV series they watch because their whole family watches it. Ask volunteers to give some examples. Then ask the class if they would listen to that band, or watch that TV show, etc., if the people around them were different. Point out that people influence us in many ways, and that our environment has an important role when making decisions.

STEP BY STEP

- 1 Make sure every student has a copy of the printed handout to work with. Have students read the introductory text and make them aware of all the external things that influence them. Explain that this influence can be positive or negative.
- 2 Have students work in groups. Ask them to read and discuss the situations in the handout. Give them enough time to discuss both decisions. Then guide students to compare how the environment can influence someone's decision in a good or a bad way, and how important it is to determine when is a good idea to listen to other's opinions and when you have to disagree with someone.
- 3 Give students time to answer the questions. Tell them to compare both situations and how each person handled it. Point out that in both cases the environment and the people around Leo and Carolina were important factors. Ask them to decide in which case was important to listen to others and in which one was important to disagree. Invite some volunteers to share their answers with the class and support their choices.

- 4 Ask students to think about a decision they have recently made and how much of it was influenced by their environment. Then tell them to reflect on their environment and if it was helpful or not for their decision making process. Ask students to share their experiences with a classmate.

WRAP IT UP

- 5 *Why is it important to take into consideration what other people think about a situation? What are the risks of ignoring when someone else's opinion and experience can be useful? What can you do to distinguish a valuable piece of knowledge for your decision making process?*

Have students read the questions and ask small groups to discuss them. Explain that people and experiences in our lives always teach us something. That kind of knowledge is very valuable when making decisions, even when someone or something guides them not to choose the best alternative. Previous experiences will always act as a reference for future situations, and that will help students identify valuable advices and opinions from those that might not help them.

TEACHING TIP

Remember that you are working with teenagers, and even if sometimes their peers and friends don't help them make the best decisions, that doesn't mean trusting friends is something bad. Explain that making mistakes is common when we make decisions or give a piece of advice. Remind your students that the most important part of making decisions is to learn from every single one and identify why that decision was good or bad.