Think-It-Through Graphic Organizer

“I am convinced that every effort must be made in childhood to teach the young to use their own minds. For one thing is sure: If they don’t make up their minds, someone will do it for them.”

–Eleanor Roosevelt

The most powerful tool for making healthy, effective decisions is understanding and believing that we can be in control of our own decisions. We can anticipate, reflect, pause, and evaluate options. We can build the internal capacity to think through what is truly best for us, what we care about most, and then use our will power to follow through with decisions that will carry us forward on the path to being our best self. We can reflect on our decisions, learn from our experiences, and make thoughtful choices about what to do next.

Teacher notes

Consider introducing this graphic organizer to the whole class or in small groups, so that participants can benefit from a wide array of thinking as they begin to embrace their own power in effective decision-making. Hearing other students generate thoughtful and creative responses can serve as a helpful model for individuals who are novices at intentional decision-making.

Duration: 30 minutes

Goals: Teacher/Facilitator and Student/Participant Goals

Materials

• Interactive Board copy of Introductory and Example graphic organizers
• Optional: Individual paper copies of the Think-It-Through graphic organizer

Main point: Introduce purposeful decision-making (4 minutes)

Introduce the concept of healthy decision-making as a skill everyone can develop and practice.

Guiding language

Everybody gets lots of opportunities to make decisions every single day. When you got up this morning, you decided whether to wear your green shirt or your yellow one. Each of us decided whether to be quiet, to greet others in a cheerful way, or to be grumpy as we started our day.

Some decisions are about small things; it doesn’t usually matter too much if we wear one outfit or another, even though we might like one more. We might be disappointed that our favorite shirt is in the wash, but we get over it. Other decisions may have more lasting effects. Deciding to say something mean to someone could affect their whole day. Deciding to play around instead of working may mean you won’t learn or that
you’re keeping other kids from learning. Deciding to do something risky or unhealthy can make a big difference in how our life goes, at least for a while.

It can really help to have a way to think about our decisions ahead of time, so we can feel sure that we’re doing the right thing when a tough situation comes up. We’re going to try a process today that has been helpful for some other students your age—and I think it will be useful for our group, too!

Main points: Give the Think-It-Through system a try (20 minutes)

- Optional: Share the Example Graphic Organizer to help students understand this strategy and/or
- Present the Think-It-Through graphic organizer and model the steps with an example situation, authentic to your group.
- Remind students that it’s fine if they can’t immediately identify what they are thinking or feeling in trying situations—and that this is one of the reasons we practice ahead of time, imagining and remembering other similar situations.
- Optional: Use the Interactive Graphic Organizer with an authentic, but not personalized, individual situation suggested by students.
- Identify a time very soon when each student will be able to work through the decision making steps with an adult, with a personally authentic situation.

Guiding language

Use the Example Think-It-Through Graphic Organizer to guide your facilitation of the steps, related to a group situation your class is currently experiencing.

Main point: Reflection (4 minutes)

Guide participants in thinking about the benefits of proactively practicing effective decision-making skills with this graphic organizer and/or other problem solving tools:

- Internalizing ownership of decision making
- Making portable (able to use in various situations)
- Breaking into manageable steps
- Interrupting negative mental perseveration (See guiding language.)

Guiding language

As we get ready to close, I’d like you to think about some of the ways practicing “Think It Through” ahead of time can help us be ready when problems arise, as they eventually do for all people, so we act in strong ways that are good for us and others. You’re
welcome to close your eyes or rest them on a spot on the floor or wall near you while you listen to me, if you like.

Preparing to handle challenging situations ahead of time pays off!

1. **By thinking ahead about different ways to solve a problem when I’m calm and collected, I am teaching my brain to be ready to make good decisions later, even when I’m upset or super excited.**

2. **Picturing in my mind how well I can handle a tough situation ahead of time gets me ready like a competitive athlete, who pictures him or herself doing just the right thing, over and over, to set themselves up for success.**

3. **Noticing and naming my feelings is a helpful first step in problem solving. When I remember other times when I felt this same way, times that eventually turned out okay, it helps me settle and be ready to carefully think things through.**

4. **When I think with others about good steps for problem solving and take them one at a time, I feel like I can handle decisions well.**

5. **Remembering other times when I’ve made a good decision that was right for me and for others will help me do that same smart thing again.**

6. **Thinking about strong, positive choices I can make helps me calm down and think clearly, even when my self-talk is sounding upset. Instead, I can talk to myself in ways that calm me and help me feel ready to treat myself and others with respect and goodwill.**

**Main point: Closure (2 minutes)**

Encourage students to acknowledge one valuable idea they learned or practiced during today’s lesson.

**Guiding language**

Use the [One-Minute Accolade Strategy](#) with the question: *What is one helpful idea for you from today’s lesson?*

**Extensions**

- Revisit the group situation you originally thought through with your group and reflect on the progress to date:
  1) **As we worked to carry out our plan, what settled us and helped us be successful?**
  2) **What distracted us from doing our plan like we wanted to?**
3) What would we do the same, and what would we do differently another time?

- Use the Think-It-Through Graphic Organizer multiple times in small groups with varying participants, so students have many chances to think through possible scenarios and solutions in a calm, proactive way.

- Provide paper copies (or electronic copies on an accessible computer) and when students are confident using this process, encourage them to use this tool to work through their current, individual difficult situations, with appropriate adult support.

- Consider adding reflection questions that you can engage with individual students around, at the beginning and end of the week, such as:
  1) As I worked to carry out my plan, what settled me and helped me be successful?
  2) What distracted me from doing my plan like I wanted to?
  3) What would I do the same, and what would I do differently another time?
Teacher/Facilitator: Decision-Making goals

**Decision-Making**: A child’s approach to problem solving that involves learning from others and from their own previous experiences, using their values to guide their action, and accepting responsibility for their decisions.

My students/participants are able to:
- Understand their personal power in becoming intentional, effective decision-makers
- Name aspects of our classroom environment that best support their learning

I am aware of my individual students’/participants’ abilities to:
- Contribute ideas
- Acknowledge, support, and/or compliment others who share

The environment I create supports my students’/participants’ growth related to:
- Making thoughtful, intentional decisions that benefit themselves and others
- Using “Pause Power” to build a personal and collective habit of pausing and reflecting before acting

Student/Participant: Decision-Making goals

Students/participants will:
- Practice pausing and reflecting to consider the decisions they are making about learning
- Make thoughtful, intentional decisions based on their own named values about learning
- Support one another in collaboratively building a mutually beneficial learning environment

**DESSA Decision-Making indicators**
(Highlighted indicators are directly addressed in this lesson.)

I can:
- Follow the example of a positive role model
- Accept responsibility for what I did
- Show good judgment
- Seek advice
- Learn from experience
- Follow the advice of a trusted adult
- Show the ability to decide between right and wrong
- Use available resources (people or objects) to solve a problem
“Think-It-Through” Group
Decision Making Graphic Organizer

What is happening?

What am I thinking?

How am I feeling?

What do we really want?

What can I do something about?

What can I do something about?

What will we do to get that?

I'm going to say...

I'm going to do...

When are we going to do that?

What will I do now?

What will I do later?

Who could help us?

How did that work for us?

What will I do now?

What will I do later?

Who could help us?

How did that work for us?
Think-It-Through Graphic Organizer

Name the situation – Calm myself so I can think clearly
– Think about what I want – Consider several things I can do – Make a plan
– Consider getting help or advice – Try it! – How did it go?
Think-It-Through
Decision-Making Graphic Organizer

What is happening?

What do I really want?

What will I do to get that?

When am I going to do that?

Who could help me?

How did that work for me?

How am I feeling?

What am I thinking?

What can I do something about?

What can I try to get others to do?

I'm going to say...

I'm going to do...

What will I do now?

What will I do later?

What will I do now?
Decision-Making: One-Minute Accolade

Teacher note
Set the timer for 1 to 3 minutes, depending upon the size of the group, their age level, and their familiarity with this strategy.

Main point
This simple structure allows you to bring closure to an activity in a specified amount of time. By giving participants a brief amount of private thinking time, and then encouraging the group to see how many people can be heard from during the time you’ve designated, you set the tone for quick and inclusive sharing.

Guiding language

I’m going to set the timer for one minute. During that time, we’re going to see how many people we can hear from. Before we begin, think for a moment about…

Choose one reflection question, such as:

• Something you appreciated about today
• Something you learned
• Something you want to thank someone for
• Something that went very well

Pause.

Raise your hand when you have an idea of what you’d like to add to our closing.

Pause. When several hands are raised…

When I start the timer, (name of someone who raised their hand) will start us off. Then anyone can share, whenever you’re ready. Remember to listen attentively to each speaker. When one person finishes, someone else begins. There will likely be some quiet time in between people sharing. That’s natural.

Repeat the reflection question and nod to the person you designated as the first speaker. Start the timer.

When the timer goes off, allow the person speaking to finish. Then thank the group and move on. It’s okay if not everyone who wanted to share got a turn this time. With repeated opportunities, the group will grow more fluent and also more comfortable with silence.