

# SEL Theme 5: Responsible Decision Making

## The 5 Competencies of Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

This blog series will look at each of the 5 core competencies of Social Emotional Learning as outlined on the CASEL model below and explore ideas on how to promote and teach these skills at home.



## **What is Responsible decision-making?**

The ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others. It includes:

- Identifying problems
- Analysing situations
- Solving problems
- Evaluating
- Reflecting
- Ethical responsibility

This article has been developed to support schools in their implementation of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) through the use of *The PATHS® Programme for Schools (UK Version)*; and to extend SEL beyond the classroom - reaching out to their whole school, homes and community. In this article we want to explore how you could celebrate Responsible Decision Making through cross curricular activities using SEL.

Responsible decision-making means having a strong self-discipline. From making decisions about simple things - like what to wear; which food to eat; who to play with or how to behave. It's important that children learn how to make those decisions responsibly, even though sometimes they will make mistakes.



## **Family Routines**

One way to support this is by establishing good family routines. Getting up at a reasonable time, putting on clothes and eating meals at set times, give structures that are easy for children to get on board with. Help your child to create a list of things they can take responsibility for each day. They can check these off as they go. Another family routine might be having a set bedtime during the week. This will allow time for winding down, setting a schedule and having better quality sleep.

# Calming Down & Thinking of Solutions

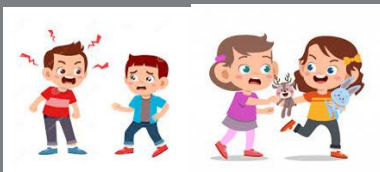
## Rules

In school your child will be used to rules. Rules keep us safe and help us to learn. Sometimes children struggle with rules. It can be helpful to explain why a rule is in place. E.g. instead of saying "Tidy your room now!" perhaps say "If you tidy your room now, you can have longer to play after dinner." Giving a simple choice like this helps them to understand the purpose of the house rules. (see *Activities Booklet for a simple family charter*)



## Making Simple Decisions

Children need decision making skills for a variety of reasons, whether it's how to work out a puzzle or when to take that 'all important' shot at goal! These decisions will help children to manage their friendships and family relationships too. Yet these are not skills we are all born with.



## Knowing How to Behave

There are times when being with other people and having intense emotions can cause problems and situations arise where children need to make decisions about behaviour.

Often children can be spontaneous and react to situations when they get upset, without stopping and engaging in critical thinking. They are unable to regulate through intense emotions and so it is a good idea to help them with calming down

## You may wish to:

1. *Guide them through the Turtle Technique (aged 4-7)*
2. *Three Steps for Calming Down (8-12)*
3. *Counting to ten*
4. *Take Deep Breaths*

## Calming Down

Calming down is needed when it comes to solving problems. For very young children an adult can support this, while older children may begin to do so independently. Decision making however, takes time and is something which a child needs to be calm before they can do.

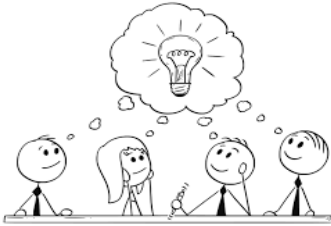


## Setting Goals

When calm, children are able to use critical thinking skills for making important decisions and setting goals. As a parent it can be tempting to rush to correct, but sometimes an early mistake can help children to understand the need for better decisions, E.g. a child running around outside with no jacket might be feeling cold during play time. The poor decision about not taking a jacket may be rectified next time.

*(see Activities Booklet to go with this blog for ideas of how to help with Goal-Setting)*

# Choosing the Best Solution – Planning



It's important for children to learn that decisions have consequences. Consequences teach children what will happen so it's important to show how, when real life situations present themselves. Children will need time and support to find a range of solutions and choose the best of them for making a 'plan of action'.

## Consider trying one of these when situations arise:

1. Brainstorm on a large sheet of paper
2. Make a list of ideas
3. Talk it through with someone else
4. Complete a thought bubble for each solution thought of  
(see Activities Booklet to go with this blog)



It's best if children have about five or six solutions for reaching goals. This means they have a good range from which to make a choice. There will still be some less than sensible ideas and it's okay to let them be listed too. It will help your child/children to make their selection when it comes to choosing the best one.

## Thinking Time

It's important to allow time for thinking. Each solution will have pros and cons. These can be listed as consequences. This helps children to rate and choose one for making a good plan. This will be good practice for their own planning.



## Making a Plan

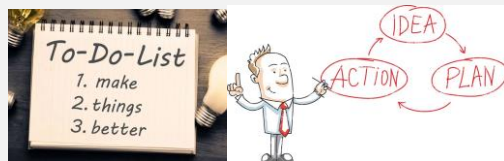
As they make plans, it is important that children remember to check in on emotions of everybody involved in the situation. This is because we can't solve a problem without knowing how we feel about it (see Activities Booklet to go with this blog). Therefore, some questions are important for children to consider:

1. What is making me uncomfortable?
2. How does the other person feel?
3. What solution have I chosen?
4. How will this impact me and them?
5. Is it likely to be successful?
6. Is this the best idea on my list?



# Carrying Out My Plan & Making decisions

Next children will need to create their plan, using a set of steps which will achieve the goal they have set. It can be helpful to list the steps of a plan to stay on track.



A good way to become responsible decision makers is to practice solving small problems and taking simple decisions daily. Parents can help with providing opportunities for this in the home daily.

## Opportunities might include:

1. Clothes to wear each day
2. What to eat for breakfast/lunch
3. When to study
4. Which game to play
5. How to spend pocket money
6. Which friend to phone

One really important aspect of the whole process is reflection. Help children to evaluate their plans and decisions. They need to consider if they were useful, effective or responsible.

Parents can guide and support children through this effectively every day. When reading a book with your children you might help them to predict the consequences of a character's actions or choices. Talk to your children about ways to be responsible members of the community by thinking and planning. Discuss what steps go well and what could be better next time. This will enhance their relationships with friends and family too.



*We certainly hope that these ideas will be both inspiring and helpful in exploring **Responsible Decision-Making***

*Please do get in touch with us via our Social Media if you have used any of these and remember to follow us on our Facebook and Twitter accounts for many more ideas from participating schools.*



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