

STaR

In years 1-4 encourage your children to take time when making a decision.

Stop, Think and Remember before deciding what to do. What have I been told, what happened last time I was faced with this situation? Who can I ask for help? It's OK to pause and take time to think.

SKILL

By Year 5 children should be able to begin a more formal structure of decision making using a wider range of their knowledge and experiences.

Say It – describe the situation – who's involved, what's happening, where and when is it taking place?

Know your options – what could you do? What are your choices and what are the consequences of each choice? What are the risks and are they worth taking?

In response – make a decision and agree on a course of action.

Look back and Learn – How did the decision work out? We all make mistakes but the key is remembering them, learning from them and not repeating them.

Dealing with Stress

Keeping calm and happy is key to making good decisions. Promote positive ways of dealing with stress, anger or anxiety – talk to someone about it, breathing exercises, read, exercise, walk the dog, sleep and rest.

Discourage negative ways – shouting, hitting things, spending long periods online. As children get older talk about how drugs and alcohol are not the best way to deal with stress.

Communication Skills

Sometimes making the right decision requires the need to communicate effectively. Letting others know how you feel and what you think. Preparing what to say, maintaining good posture and eye contact, speaking at a good volume (not too loud, not too quiet), being firm but polite.

Listening, not interrupting and encouraging the other person is also important along with positive body language. Lots to remember here but this can be practised, encouraged and modelled when your children speak to you and you speak to them.

Resistance Strategies – Saying NO

As children get older, they need to develop a range of strategies enabling them to say no, get out of tricky situations or just avoid them. Here are a few to talk about:

Hang around with your **mates** in small groups rather than individually – less likely to be targeted this way and friends can help and encourage if needed.

Avoid unsafe places and people who look dubious, have been in trouble before or just make you feel uncomfortable. Talk about your gut feeling and how it is often right.

Talk – Change the subject when asked to do something that makes you feel uncomfortable or you don't want to do. Ignore the question and talk about something else e.g., the latest film, last night's football match, the latest equipment in the park etc.

Effective refusal – Tell the person exactly why you won't be doing what they ask. Tell them the risks and consequences that you are considering. What are the health effects and what does the law say? What might the impact be on your friendships and long-term prospects? The more you include, the more convincing you become.

Encourage children to be selective with this strategy. It may not be appropriate when faced with someone bigger or older than you as using it may create another problem rather than resolving one. Older children don't often like to be told by younger children so another strategy may be more appropriate.

Step away – Walk/run away when you realise you don't want to be there. Children often worry they'll be followed – chances are they won't be but go somewhere where there are a lot of people and CCTV – garages / supermarkets.

Make up an excuse and leave – You're late home for tea. Pretend to take a phone call, walk off and keep walking.