

RESILIENT KIDS

NEWSLETTER by Michael Grose - Australia's leading parenting educator

Helping children make smart decisions



Decision-making like anything requires practice.

Some children want to have a say about everything that involves them. They have no problem letting parents know what they want and how life should be. Other children will avoid making decisions and will happily sit back and follow the lead of others in anything from fashion to food eaten at dinner.

Most parents these days are keen to involve children in family decision-making processes. It is smart management to get children's input as they are more likely to stick to decisions when they have had a say.

It is challenging for parents to know when to make decisions for children and when to stand back and allow them to decide.

Decision-making is broken into three areas:

- 1. Parents Rule:** these are decisions where there is no negotiation. E.g. going to school, bedtime.
- 2. Work things out together:** these are areas where you and your child negotiate outcomes. E.g. when to come home from an outing, TV programs.
- 3. Kids Decide:** give your children full authority in some areas. E.g. choose the sport they play, school activities.

Each of these areas will vary according to parental values, the age of children and even individual temperament.

Regular family meetings provide terrific forums for parents and children to work things out together.

Outcomes are best negotiated in formal settings that ensure sufficient consideration is given.

As children grow and show the ability to make sensible decisions allow them more authority over their lives. Increasing independence involves greater freedom to choose, which demonstrates trust and faith in their ability to make good decisions.

But greater freedom to choose needs to be accompanied by an increase in responsibility and also a willingness for them to experience the consequences of their decisions.

All decisions that children make have a consequence – whether positive or negative. A child can use the following three questions to help him assess consequences of a decision he may make:

- **Is this behaviour safe for me?**
- **Is this behaviour fair to others?**
- **Is this behaviour smart and in my long-term best interests?**

Children often can't see the long-term consequences of their decisions so it is useful to give them information to help them make smart choices.

Also some children leap before they look. They need to be reminded to slow down and consider some of the possible consequences of their actions.

Decision-making is hard work for parents who are always treading a fine line between being too protective and promoting independence. If children are to learn how to make smart choices adults need to equip them with knowledge and skills as well as opportunities to make decisions.

TRY THIS...

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

To help children make smart decisions:

- 1. Involve** them in choosing food, family entertainment and fun. Give them a choice between two, not a smorgasbord, to choose from.
- 2.** Develop the habit of **inviting** their input into a whole range of small issues to help you make decisions. E.G. meals, room arrangements, scheduling activities
- 3. Toss a coin.** If children can't decide between two choices tell them to toss a coin and then go with their gut instinct. It may not be the best decision but at least they will make a decision.
- 4. Conduct** regular family meetings and place family issues on the agenda.

ACTION PLAN

First Step . . .

Next Step . . .

For more ideas about promoting resilience in children visit www.parentingideas.com.au

QUOTE

"Nothing is more difficult, and therefore more precious, than to be able to decide."

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE

WHAT'S YOUR CHILD LIKE?

DOES YOUR CHILD MAKE SMART DECISIONS?

DOES HE

1. Consider the consequences rather than make a complete leap of faith about most things? **Yes [2] No [0]**
2. Avoid making decisions for fear of making poor ones? **Yes [0] No [2]**
3. Generally take advice when given? **Yes [2] No [0]**
4. Enjoy taking part in family discussions & decision-making processes? **Yes [2] No [0]**

5. Follow what his peers say rather than make independent decisions? **Yes [0] No [2]**

SCORE:

- 10:** A careful decision-maker. Not rash by any means.
- 6-8:** Considers options and then maybe acts a little rashly.
- 0-4:** Either makes poor decisions or none at all. Need to work hard to slow down or take risks and make some choices.