



ADVANCING FUTURES

Education for Sustainable Development and Citizenship

Skills for Problem Solving

Upper Intermediate – Consider the Consequences of Your Actions

A. You've got a lot of homework this weekend and important exams coming up at school. You know you should spend Saturday and Sunday studying, but you've been having a hard time focusing on your work. It's Saturday and you spent most of the morning thinking and worrying about the amount of work you've got rather than doing any of it! It's now 3pm on Saturday afternoon, and you've just managed to sit down and finally do a good hour's work. You are taking a break to make some coffee when you see a text from a friend telling you there's a party tonight that everyone is going to and asking you if you want to come.

What would you do?

B. You are saving up to go to a music festival this summer. You found a part-time job, and you have some money saved-up, but it's taking a long time to save enough to pay for the ticket, transport to the festival and spending money while you're there. Now, you're out shopping with some friends in town. You don't want to buy anything, but while you're waiting for your friends in a shop, you see an amazing pair of trainers on sale. You love them, and they have one pair left in your size. The problem is they're expensive, even with the sale discount, and will take almost half the money you've saved for the festival.

What would you do?

C. You are at one of your friends' homes with a group of people. It's getting late and your parents asked you to be home by 10.30pm, but you're having fun and you want to stay out and come home at midnight. Your parents have gone to the cinema. You try both of their mobile phones, but no one answers. You feel annoyed that you can't get hold of your parents. Your parents probably won't be home till late anyway, so they might not find out you weren't at home on time.

What would you do?

Reflection Point

The decisions we make and the actions we take affect what happens in the future. We often make decisions or do things without considering all the consequences, especially when they have positive short-term consequences. We can't predict all eventualities, but it's important to think about long-term consequences before we act.



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Aim: To encourage students to think about how decisions they make can have negative long-term consequences, even if they have positive short-term ones.

Lead-in: Discuss with the class what kinds of choices and decisions they have to make every day about the following things:

- *money*
- *going out*
- *school work*
- *telling friends something*
- *telling parents or teachers something*

Ask which decisions they find easy and which more difficult. What factors make the difficult decisions problematic? Ask students to work in pairs and tell their partner about a recent decision they made which had negative consequences and a decision that resulted in a more positive outcome.

Write the following questions on the board, and ask students to answer them for each decision:

- *How did you feel at the time?*
- *What external forces influenced your decision?*
- *What happened in the end?*
- *What would you do differently?*

Choose A Scenario: Ask students to work in pairs and choose one of the three scenarios (A–C).

Explain to students that they should think of all the possible courses of action they could take in the scenario and the consequences each decision will have. Ask them to think of at least three. Write on the board:

- *Who will be affected by the decision?*
- *What are the positive consequences? Are they long or short term?*
- *What are the negative consequences? Are they long or short term?*

Ask students to consider the questions above in relation to each possible decision they thought of for their scenario. Ask students to say what they would probably do in the scenario and what they should do. Are they the same? Encourage students to look at the Reflection Point while they are working.

Reflection Point: Explain to students that it's often hard to think of what the long-term consequences of our decisions will be when we are thinking of short-term rewards.

Although it's hard, it's sometimes advisable to exercise some self-control when making decisions, so we are not impulsive and do something we may regret later or which may hurt another person.

Class discussion: Ask each pair to work with another pair who chose the same scenario. Ask students to compare the possible decisions they thought of for the scenario, and what the possible short and long-term consequences might be. Did they have the same ideas? Which decisions were best? Ask students to discuss what external factors and emotions might have been important when making a decision in the scenario (e.g., peer pressure, fear of looking silly, etc.).

Discuss with students whether any of the scenarios portrayed situations similar to those students have been in themselves. Ask the following questions:

- *Have you been in a similar situation?, What did you do then?*
- *Do you think you made the right decision at the time?*
- *What were the consequences?*

Encourage students to think of other situations in which they might face difficult decisions which have long-term consequences.

Work alone: Ask students to work alone and choose a second scenario from A–C and follow the same steps as in section 2. Focus students on two simple questions to ask when making a decision for their scenario:

- *How will this decision help you now?*
- *How will it affect you in the future?*

Ask them to choose one decision that has a positive outcome and one that has a negative outcome, and to think of all the possible consequences and their subsequent consequences and so on, as far as they can go. Once they have finished, invite volunteers to present their possible decisions and consequences to the class.



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Extension: _ Write the following questions on the board:

- *How many decisions that we make in our daily lives is it possible to plan?*
- *What kinds of decisions can have serious consequences for our health or for our future lives as adults?*
- *What kinds of decisions can affect our relationships with friends, parents, or teachers in a negative way?*

Allow groups time to discuss the questions before holding a whole-class discussion. Ask, how can we make sure our decisions have the best possible outcomes for ourselves and for other people? Ask students to come up with a five-step plan of things to consider when making important decisions