

# Decision Making: WHOA!

## SUMMARY

**Objective:** To encourage students to slow down moments in order to make good decisions. The WHOA! (*Wait, Have a Brain, Options and Action*) model of decision making is used.

**Process:** Students practice the WHOA! model of decision making via scenarios and examining the decision.

This lesson is one in a series of Grade 7 lessons. If you aren't able to teach all the lessons, try pairing this lesson with the "Understanding Influences," "Protecting Ourselves from Risk," or "Challenge the Influences" lessons.

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

- Increase awareness of peers, family and media as influences on personal decision making.
- Identify personal goals
- Identify personal values and how substance use or gambling fits with personal values.
- Identify positive friendships, role models and personal support systems

## CONTENT AND TIME (45-MINUTE LESSON)

- 2.1 Decisions Can Be Tricky (10 minutes)
- 2.2 WHOA! (15 minutes)
- 2.3 WHOA! in Real Life (15 minutes)
- 2.4 Closure: Key Messages (5 minutes)

## REQUIRED MATERIALS

Scenarios handout

Teaching about substance use and gambling can and should cross all subjects. Here are a few suggestions for use in subjects other than health.

### LINKS TO OTHER SUBJECTS

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- **Drama:** Act out the scenarios as skits
- **Language Arts:** Write a short story in response to one of the attached scenarios, and apply WHOA! to the decisions

## 2.1 Decisions Can Be Tricky

(10 minutes)

Read your students the following scenario:

You are hanging out with your older brother and his friends after school. He and his friends are smoking cigarettes. They ask you if you want to try: "it is just one," they say. You decide to try smoking.

Discuss with your students the pressures and conflicting emotions at work. Their answers may include:

- Self-respect
- Independence
- Wanting to feel like an adult
- Sense of belonging
- Fear of not fitting in
- Pride
- Guilt
- Curiosity

Ask your students how these pressures directly conflict with one another. An example of this could be, the fear of not fitting in with a group of friends who smoke, directly conflicting with a sense of independence, e.g., not wanting others to tell you what to do.

Use this scenario as a platform to discuss that decisions are often tricky. There will be pros and cons to either choice. Often we will regret our choice when we have to make a rushed decision. It is important to slow down the decision making process. We need to think critically, to examine our options and the attached emotions to those choices.

## 2.2 WHOA!

(15 minutes)

WHOA! is a model of decision-making. Present it to your students as follows:

### **Wait**

No matter how urgent it seems, put on the brakes! Stop and think about what is happening before you decide what to do, not after.

### **Have a Brain**

Identify the pressures and emotions at work when you're put on the spot to make a choice about using substances or gambling. Understanding those forces can help you see beyond the rush of the moment. So think about the conflict or problem, and define it in a sentence.

### **Options**

Consider your options for solving the problem and think about what may happen in each case.

### **Action**

Now pick the option that fits best with your own goals, and take the action that will get you there. Your answer will affect not only how you see yourself (e.g., as someone who can make up their own mind), but how others see you and respect you.

When you look back at your decision. Ask three questions:

1. What happened?
2. Would you make the same decision again?
3. Why or why not?

## 2.3 WHOA! In Real Life

(15 minutes)

Have students either in small groups, individually, or as a class look at the scenarios on the attached worksheet and discuss them in terms of WHOA! Alternatively, you could ask students to come up with their own scenarios.

## 2.4 Closure: Key Messages

(5 minutes)

Influence and pressure to use substances and gamble are around us and often come from our friends or people we know.

It is important to challenge pressures, make healthy choices, and resist the influence to use drugs or gamble.

Resisting and refusing pressure takes skills and the self-confidence to use those skills.

- People often don't make rational choices regarding substances and gambling due to conflicting pressures and emotions.
- It's helpful to plan in advance on how to handle risky situations.
- Remembering and practising the steps in the decision making model will build confidence towards handling new situations.
- Consider a personal commitment to abstention.

# WHOA! Scenarios

## Scenarios

1. You and your best friend have been invited to a party. You are aware that there will likely be alcohol at this party and the parents of the host will not be home. Word is spreading in the school that this will be the best party ever and people would be stupid not to go. What are you going to do?
2. You are an athlete and enjoy playing a variety of sports, including being on the school basketball team for grade 7. It is important for you to keep in shape and be at the top of your game. One of your friends offers you some spit tobacco, encouraging you to use it by saying that they had heard it can actually help you perform better at sports. Look at all the baseball and hockey players that chew tobacco. What are you going to do?
3. You are sleeping over at a friend's house and as you are watching a movie, your friend pulls out a bottle of beer and offers it to you. Your friend says they got it from their older brother who had a party last night. What are you going to do?
4. A group of your friends are playing cards, but the game soon turns into something a little more risky. Your friends want to start betting on the games; a small amount of money, a cd, or tickets to the hockey game are all at stake. What are you going to do?
5. A friend of yours on your soccer team mentions that he tried using cannabis (also called marijuana) last weekend. He offers to get you some so you can try it if you want. What are you going to do?