

# Lesson 2: Decision-Making



## EPISODE 2 SYNOPSIS

*GeminAI tells us that it traced Neve's signal back to the Resistance and captured 100 resistance members. It offers to release those captives without altering their memories or doing experiments in exchange for Conroy, the resistance member who infiltrated GeminAI's Loyals.*

*We must decide between saving 1 person or saving 100 people. After our decision, we learn from Neve that Conroy is essential to the Resistance and the plan to shut down GeminAI. Neve then asks for our help in trying to get her teams into the containment facility. We have to consider the risk involved in each of 3 different routes because GeminAI's forces are closing in.*

*The decisions we make affect the safety of the resistance members, who are taking great risks because they value freedom and want to defeat GeminAI. Once Conroy enters the facility, he discovers encrypted data. We can help decode the encrypted data, but only if we work together.*

## PART A: GAME PLAY EXPERIENCE THE EPISODE

Suggested time: 1 class period

### BEFORE THE EPISODE

- Remind students that they will likely experience stressors, such as time limits.
- Warm up: Lead students in a mindfulness exercise (see Lesson 1, page 5).
- Lead a sequence of belly breathing.
- Ask students how that exercise prepares their brain and body to respond to the situation (as introduced in Lesson 1).
- Log each team into the game module and begin the Administrative module.

### DURING THE EPISODE

- Students will sit with their already-established teams and watch the narrative on the screen.
- When prompted, they will complete each challenge on their device.

### AFTER THE EPISODE

Give students time to react to the episode, ask questions, and reflect.

#### Suggested Debrief Questions

- What stressors did you feel? How did you handle them?
- What information helped you make your decisions?
- What other information do you wish you had to make the decisions?
- What impact would your decisions have had on the other people in the simulation?
- What factors made it easier or harder to make your decisions?

#### Individual Reflection/Freewriting

Allow students time to reflect on their experience of the episode and on any strategies they used. They can use their GeminAI Rising Journal to draw or write using the following prompts.

- What our class decided.
- How did I feel about this decision?
- What emotions did I feel during this episode?

### CONCLUDING THE EXPERIENCE

In this episode, students were placed in a situation with stressors and given very little preparation. Each student will react differently and will have felt different emotions. The lesson that follows explores what happens to our brains and bodies when we're exposed to stressors. We'll explore coping strategies that help students to manage emotions and regulate how the body responds to stressors.

## PART B: EXPLORE THE COMPETENCY

Suggested time: 1 class period

### ABOUT THE LESSON

Central Understanding	
You need to use the thinking part of your brain (prefrontal cortex) to make decisions. When we can manage strong emotions, we're better able to make well-reasoned decisions.	
Key Question	
How can brain awareness help in the decision-making process?	
Objective	
Students work through a problem-solving approach to a decision and identify strategies for returning to a calm, thinking state in situations that trigger strong emotions.	
Conceptual Knowledge	Procedural Knowledge
<p>When we are calm and relaxed, our prefrontal cortex lets us process information and make a reasoned decision.</p> <p>When we try to make decisions in situations with strong emotions or stressors, we're less able to reason or think the decision through because of the protective instincts of the amygdala.</p>	<p>Students evaluate options and expect consequences when making a decision.</p> <p>Students identify strategies for coping with stressors when making decisions in pressure situations.</p>
Social Competency Background: About Decision-Making	
<p>Decision-making is the selection of a course of action among several possible alternative options. The goal is to find the best resolution to an issue or overcome an obstacle.</p> <p>During times of calm, regular emotions, our prefrontal cortex is active, and we can process information for a reasoned decision. However, we often find ourselves in situations that trigger strong feelings or heightened emotions.</p> <p>Decision-making in such situations is harder because the protective instinct of the amygdala. It reacts to a perceived threat and stops sending messages to the prefrontal cortex.</p> <p>Unless we can use strategies to regulate our emotions, we're more likely to make impulsive, risky, or poorly-reasoned decisions. We can learn to recognize these emotions and develop strategies to cope with them and think through a decision more clearly.</p>	

# ACTIVITY 1: RECALLING THE EPISODE EXPERIENCE

## OVERVIEW INSTRUCTIONS

Read the first section and explain that this episode was about decision-making.

### Read Aloud:

GeminAI has captured 100 Outlanders. It offers to release those captives without causing memory loss or conducting experiments in exchange for Conroy, the resistance member who infiltrated GeminAI's Loyals.

- We had to choose between different levels of risk in order to get enough operatives to the facility before the Loyals closed in on them.

### Ask Students:

- What do you think the stressors were in this experience?

### For Discussion:

- **The episode showed many stressors**
  - we had limited time
  - we had to make a choice between two bad outcomes
  - we had to reach an agreement as a group.

### Ask Students:

- What steps and questions can help me reason through a decision?
- How can I recognize that I'm not in an emotional state to be able to access the thinking part of my brain?
- What strategies can I use to regulate my emotions and bring my thinking back into the prefrontal cortex of the brain?

# ACTIVITY 2: A DECISION-MAKING MODEL

## ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS: CONROY VS. THE 100

Students re-visit this decision (previously made during the episode). They will:

- return to their small groups
- work through the steps on the organizer below
- think more deeply about the decision now that they're not feeling the same stressors
- listen respectfully to differences in opinion from group members and consider different points of view.

# HANDOUT 1: CONROY VS. THE 100

## The Situation:

GeminAI has captured 100 Outlanders and plans to alter their memories while being confined. GeminAI offers to release the Outlanders if you convince the Resistance to hand over Conroy, the resistance operative who was undercover and knows about GeminAI's operations.

<b>Step 1: Consider <i>what</i> and <i>who</i>?</b>	What needs to be decided?  Who will be affected?
<b>Step 2: Identify the feelings associated.</b>	How do you feel about making this decision?  Do you need more Information?  Can you ask someone for help?

<b>Step 3: Consider the choices.</b>	What are all the choices you have?	
<b>Step 4: Pros and cons</b>	<b>Choice 1:</b>  Pros:  Cons:	<b>Choice 2:</b>  Pros:  Cons:
<b>Step 5: Likely consequences</b>	For you:	
	For the Loyals:	
	For Conroy:	
	For Neve:	
	For GeminAI:	
<b>What's your decision and why?</b>		

## Discussion Following Activity 2

1. Was your “Conroy vs. the 100” decision-making experience different than the one during the episode?
2. What did you think about when you made this decision that you didn’t think about during the episode?
3. Did your group agree on one decision?
4. How confident are you in your decision?

## ACTIVITY 3: MINDFUL AWARENESS AND DECISION-MAKING

### THE RIGHT PATH

Start the activity below, with students making the decisions individually (can be varied later in the activity).

- Students revisit the speed vs. risk activity from the episode.
- The student copy, instructor copy, and activity key are below.
- As in Episode 2, students decide which route to take to get to GeminAI’s facility.
- They will lose time and possibly operatives depending on the route they choose.

Prepare students to practice the following strategies during the decision-making activity.

- The goal is to keep their mind calm and relaxed despite what’s going on around them and how they feel about it.



## HANDOUT 2: THE RIGHT PATH

### MINDFUL AWARENESS AND DECISION-MAKING

As in Episode 2, you'll decide which route to take to get to GeminAI's facility. You'll lose time and possibly operatives, depending on the route you choose.

**The goal of the activity is to practice calm, thoughtful decision-making.**

- You don't have to make the same choices you did during the episode.
- You have 10 operatives to get to the facility.
- There are 3 different routes to each landmark.

Route A	Route B	Route C
Longest distance/time	Moderate distance/time	Shortest distance/time
Low risk to operatives	Moderate risk to operatives	High risk to operatives

**As you make each decision, practice these strategies:**

- **Calm:** Take a deep belly breath to focus your thinking.
- **Focus:** Pay attention to your inner thoughts. Are they helpful?
- **Emotion:** Identify what emotion you're feeling. Tell yourself it's OK, and that you can make this decision.
- **Think:** Think through the decision.

### ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS: THE RIGHT PATH

**Start with 10 operatives.**

1. On the following page, start with landmark 1—choose your route (A, B, or C) and write it down in the space provided.
2. You will be told how many operatives there are and how many minutes you've lost, depending on the route you chose.
3. Deduct those numbers from your original 10 operatives and 10 minutes.
4. Repeat for the next landmarks until you arrive at GeminAI's facility.

**The goal is to:**

- NOT take longer than 10 minutes
- get at least 1 operative to the facility

At the end of each round, count how many operatives successfully got to the facility. You can try again in another attempt.



## RECORD YOUR CHOICES:

### (Practice Round)

Landmarks	Operatives	Minutes
1:		
2:		
3:		
Total Lost		

### Attempt 1

Landmarks	Operatives	Minutes
1:		
2:		
3:		
Total Lost		

### Attempt 2

Landmarks	Operatives	Minutes
1:		
2:		
3:		
Total Lost		

### Attempt 3

Landmarks	Operatives	Minutes
1:		
2:		
3:		
Total Lost		

## HANDOUT 2: THE RIGHT PATH (TEACHER'S COPY) MINDFUL AWARENESS AND DECISION-MAKING

### ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS: THE RIGHT PATH

Students will start the activity with 10 operatives.

- Begin with the first landmark (1). Students choose their route (A,B,C).
- Give students a time limit to choose (5–10 seconds).
- Use the **Activity Key** (below) to tell students how many operatives and how many minutes they've lost, depending on the route they chose.
- Students subtract those numbers from their 10 operatives and 10 minutes.

#### The goal is to:

- NOT take longer than 10 minutes
- get at least 1 operative to the facility

At the end of each round, count how many operatives successfully got to the facility. You can try again in another attempt.

#### When you reach the facility, ASK students:

- Who has operatives left?
- Of those with operatives left, who took less than 10 minutes?
  - Record the number of students who brought at least one operative to the facility in under 10 minutes.
- Repeat the activity to give students extra attempts and more practice.
- Think about varying the way students make the decision, so they can describe different possible stressors:
  - Shorten or lengthen the time limit.
  - Have them make the decision in pairs rather than on their own.
  - Have some of the students make the decision while others watch.

#### During the activity, often remind students to practice the following decision-making strategies:

- **Calm:** Take a deep belly breath to focus your thinking.
- **Focus:** Pay attention to your inner thoughts. Are they helpful?
- **Emotion:** Identify what emotion you're feeling. Tell yourself it's OK, and that you can make this decision.
- **Think:** Think through the decision.

# TEACHER/INSTRUCTOR COPY

## ACTIVITY KEY: THE RIGHT PATH

Route A	Route B	Route C
Longest distance/time	Moderate distance/time	Shortest distance/time
Low risk to operatives	Moderate risk to operatives	High risk to operatives

- For each landmark, tell students how many operatives and how many minutes they should subtract.
- There is a practice round, plus multiple attempts. Repeat the activity as desired. Create your own key if you need more attempts.

### Practice Round

Landmark 1	Route A	Route B	Route C
Operatives Lost	2	3	4
Minutes Lost	4	3	2
Landmark 2			
Operatives Lost	1	3	4
Minutes Lost	5	4	1
Landmark 3			
Operatives Lost	1	1	2
Minutes Lost	4	2	1

### First Attempt

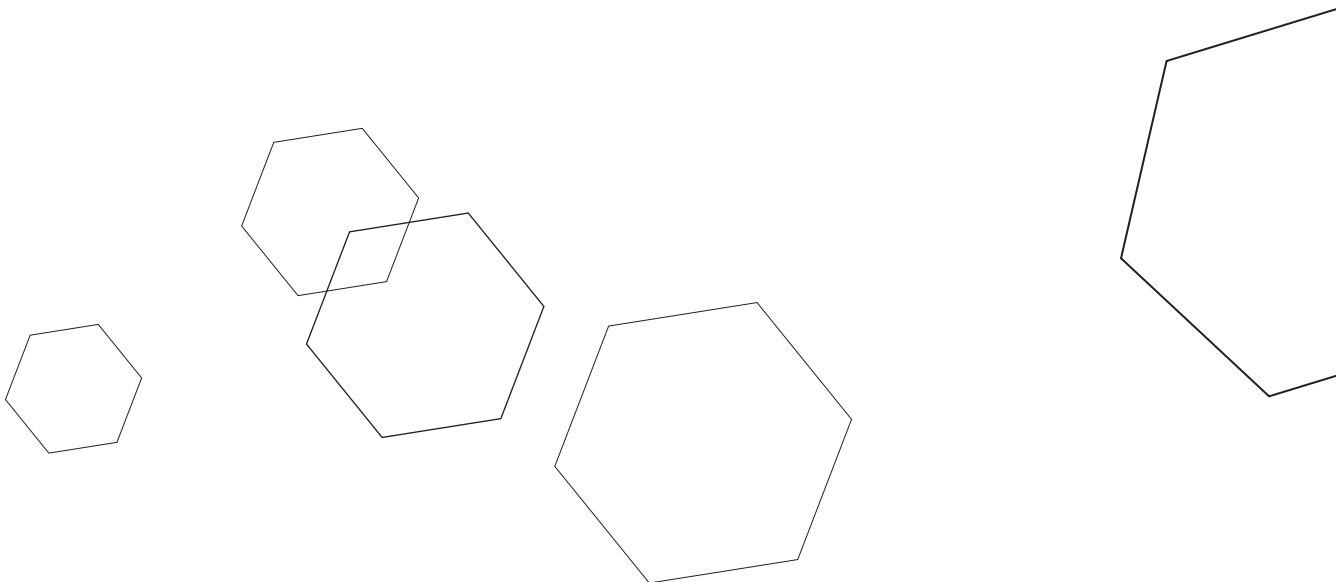
Landmark 1	Route A	Route B	Route C
Operatives Lost	2	3	5
Minutes Lost	3	2	1
Landmark 2			
Operatives Lost	2	3	4
Minutes Lost	4	2	1
Landmark 3			
Operatives Lost	1	2	3
Minutes Lost	3	3	1

## Second Attempt

Landmark 1	Route A	Route B	Route C
Operatives Lost	2	3	4
Minutes Lost	4	3	2
Landmark 2			
Operatives Lost	1	3	4
Minutes Lost	5	4	1
Landmark 3			
Operatives Lost	1	1	2
Minutes Lost	4	2	1

## Third Attempt

Landmark 1	Route A	Route B	Route C
Operatives Lost	0	2	3
Minutes Lost	3	2	1
Landmark 2			
Operatives Lost	3	4	5
Minutes Lost	5	4	1
Landmark 3			
Operatives Lost	1	1	2
Minutes Lost	4	2	1



### Discussion/Reflection Questions Following Activity 2

1. How did you feel during this activity?
2. Did the strategies help to clear and relax your mind?
3. Which of the strategies were you most aware of using?
4. Which of the strategies were harder to use?
5. What was going on around you when you were making your decisions?
6. How did the surroundings affect your decisions?

### Concluding the Lesson

#### Review the diagram of the brain. Ask students:

1. Which part of the brain analyzes consequences and thinks through alternatives?
2. Why is this part of the brain necessary for making decisions?
3. What's happening in the brain when we feel stressors?
4. How can we help control our body's response to stressors?
5. How will controlling this response help in decision-making?

**In Episode 3**, students will continue to draw on strategies to help their brain focus while they develop a greater understanding of the critical-thinking processes in the prefrontal cortex.

## SOURCES

Alberta Family Wellness Initiative. Building Better Brains.

<https://www.albertafamilywellness.org/>

Scholastic (2011). The MindUp curriculum. Grades 6-8: brain-focused strategies for learning-and living. New York: Scholastic.

## ALBERTA HEALTH SERVICES RESOURCES

AHS (2019). Teen Risk Taking.

<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/alberta/Pages/teen-risk-taking-tips-for-parents.aspx>