

TEEN Turning Points



Which Way to Go?

Good or bad? Right or wrong? Left or right? Up or down? These are a few choices people have to make on a daily basis. When you're new at making decisions, however, it can be difficult. This is particularly true of teenagers. Decision-making is a process that must be learned. It takes time to reach the point when you can make good decisions.

Adolescence is a stage people go through as they are growing up. This can be a tough time in your life, but it can also be one of the most fun and exciting times. With adolescence comes the opportunity to make some of the major decisions that will affect your life.

Making your own decisions

As a youngster, your parents made most, if not all, of your decisions for you. Now that you are older, you will be faced with some difficult decisions that only you alone can make. These can include decisions about college or career, relationships, drugs or alcohol use and good health choices.

Teenagers are faced with many choices. Peer pressure is when others try to influence your decisions. Wanting to be liked by your friends – or just wanting to be with them – may influence you to make negative decisions. People who are really your friends will not want you to do something that is wrong or dangerous. You will have to live with the decisions you make. You are your own person with your own mind. You have separate ideas, feelings and hopes from anyone else.

Think before you act

If you hesitate when trying to decide whether to go with your friends in a certain circumstance, then take that as a cue that maybe you shouldn't. Hesitation is a sign that something may not be the best thing for you. If you ignore that hesitation and just go with the flow, you have neglected to "decide". But actually, by not making a decision, you have already decided.

When you are faced with a tough decision, keep in mind that most often the decisions you make affect others. If a person decides to drive after drinking, they are putting their life in danger as well as other drivers on the road. Think about this before you have to make the actual decision. And when decision time comes, ask yourself honestly, "How might this affect others?"

Remember, in any given situation, there are several options. Some will be good, some bad and others unclear. Weigh each option carefully. Choose one that is best for you.

Stand up for what you believe. Your choices may not always be popular with your friends. However, if your decision is based on the morals and values you were brought up with – and it is a healthy choice that you strongly believe in – then go for it. It's possible that you have developed values that are different from those of your parents. As you mature, decision-making becomes a well-known process. You automatically weigh consequences and think about the effect your decision will have on others. It becomes easier with time and practice.

If you need help

If you are unsure of what decision or choice to make, talk to your parents or a trusted friend. Teachers, counselors and members of the clergy also are good people to talk to. If you need more advice, call Crisis Services at (810) 257-3740, where a counselor is always available to help you through tough times. TTY users call (810) 232-6310. ©