

SMART CHOICES CHECKLIST

Mandatory Teacher Pre-Lesson

Learning Goals	• Practice using the Smart Choice Checklist tool prior to their YouthLink field trip. • Encourage the students to think about different choices and their consequences when facing different situations. • Help students learn the difference between smart, risky and poor choices.
Materials	• Smart Choices Checklist PowerPoint
Set Up	• Smart Choices Checklist PowerPoint loaded for students to view
Length	• 25-30 minutes

Introduction- 5 minutes

- **Ask students:** Has anyone ever told you to “make good choices”? However, are you usually told exactly **how** to make a good decision? Ask for a few student responses.
 - **Response:** Most of the time, we are simply told to “make good decisions” but not usually the steps involved, and when the time comes to making a decision for ourselves, it is not usually easy to do so.
- **Say: Lets looks at an example of a decision-** Choosing to ride a bike without a helmet.

Ask and discuss:

- Is this a safe thing to do?
- How do you know this is/isn't a smart choice?

- What are the possible consequences?
 - **Say:** Grade 6 is an important year! In junior high, you will most likely be faced with new and big decisions, and new situations. We are headed to YouthLink soon for our field trip, and before we go, the team at YouthLink has shared a decision-making tool for us to learn, that can help us (or you) to make hard decisions.
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Going Through the Checklist- 10 minutes

- The Smart Choices Checklist has three important parts. **Discuss the following with the matching PowerPoint slides:**

Part one is use your brain: What do you think it means to “use your brain” when making a decision? Discuss the following with the matching PowerPoint slides:

- Our brain is where we keep knowledge and information. When we have all the important information, it makes determining potential outcomes of a decisions much easier. Information can come in many forms such as education, memories, experience, advice and even common sense.
- When considering using our brains, it is important to ask oneself these questions: ***What information do I have or need? What are the potential outcomes/consequences of this decision?***
- **Example:** Imagine you wake up on a crisp November morning in Calgary, and you have to get dressed for school. **How do you decide what you should wear for the day?**
 - First, we check the weather to get some important information that will help us decide! Knowing the temperature and the forecast can help us decide how many layers to wear, what footwear will be ideal, and if we need our winter jackets!
 - Next, we consider the consequences. **Ask: What are the consequences of not dressing properly for cold weather?**
 - We could catch a cold, get frostbite, get hypothermia, or just be very uncomfortable!

Listen to your heart is the next part of our checklist. What does “listening to your heart” look like?

- Our hearts also house our feelings and values. It’s important to acknowledge and take care of our feelings, emotions and personal values and to consider them when making the decision that are right for us.

- Ask these questions to yourself when you are using the checklist and listening to your heart- ***How does it make me feel? Does it fit with my values?***
- **Give the students a few examples** of personal values that you may have, and ask them to share a few of their values, such as: Family, being a good friend, taking care of myself, my mental/physical health, etc.
- **Example:** If we value our physical health, we will dress properly for cold weather so we don't get sick!

Trust your gut is the third part of the checklist. When we say “Trust your gut!” What does that mean?

- Our bodies often tell us a lot about how we really feel about a situation or circumstance and these feelings shouldn't be ignored.
 - Our bodies react in different situations to tell us how we feel, like when we are scared. What does your body do when you're scared? Ex: butterflies in your stomach, goosebumps, sweaty palms, etc.
 - Ask these questions to yourself when considering this part of the checklist- ***What do my instincts say? What is my body trying to tell me? Why?***
 - **Ask** students if they have ever experienced “butterflies in their stomach” or raised hairs on their arms when they are nervous or scared. **Explain** this is the body's response to situations and can give up a lot of help with making difficult decisions.
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Using the Checklist – 10 minutes

- **Say:** When you are making a decision and using this tool, go through each aspect of the checklist, asking the key questions we just reviewed for your brain, heart and gut. Put a ☒, an “X”, or a “?” beside each section based on how you are able to answer the questions.
- **If we have confidently placed a check mark (yes) in all of the boxes**, then moving forward with this decision is probably a safe and healthy choice for us.
- **If any of our check boxes are “X's” (no)**, this means that the decision might be unsafe or unhealthy for us, or we just don't feel good about it. We should choose not to move forward in this decision and say “No” instead.
- **If one or more of our check boxes is a “?”**, this means we need help, have questions, or need more information or a better feeling before we can make

this choice. **This is a good thing!** It means that the best thing to do is pause, and talk with someone we trust about the decision.

- **Who should you go to for help?**- Ask for a few student responses.
 - **Answer:** a safe and trusted adult is the best person, or people, to go to in these situations. This is an adult that you trust, and their words and actions make you feel safe. Many people in your life can be a safe and trusted adult, and those people can be different for everyone.
 - **Who are some safe and trusted adults in your life?** Encourage students to take a few seconds to try and visualize a few of those people. **They could be:** parents/guardians, other family members, family friends, teachers, coaches, school counsellors, doctors, police officers.
 - *Please be sure to assist students in coming up with examples outside of their immediate family (i.e. parents/guardians).*
 - **Remind students:** It is ok to ask for help! There are many people and organizations who want to help – but they can't help if they don't know!
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OPTIONAL- Red Light/Green Light Scenarios – 5-10 minutes

- **Say:** Now we are going to use our Smart Choices Checklist to look at some scenarios that will help us prepare for our field trip at YouthLink. We are going to play a game of **red light/green light**.
 - **Please note that there are several ways to facilitate this activity.** If red light/green light is not a good fit for your students, feel free to have them examine the scenarios in small groups, or discuss them as a class.
- **Have students stand in a line, with space behind and in front of them.**
- **Read the scenarios** out loud and instruct students to:
 - Take a step forward if they think it is a smart choice.
 - Take a step backwards if they think it is *not* a smart choice.
 - Stay where they are if they are not sure and need to ask a safe and trusted adult.
- Ask a few students to share their reasoning for their choice, then use the talking points below each scenario to guide a short group discussion.

Scenarios

- **Scenario 1: You have a friend who is planning to meet up with someone they met playing a game online. They ask you not to tell anyone.**
 - **Head:** This person could be an unsafe stranger who could hurt your friend. You may have feelings of guilt if you do not speak up and say something to deter your friend from making this choice.
 - **Heart:** If you value your friendship, you want your friends to be safe.
 - **Gut:** What is your gut telling you? Does this make you nervous?

- **Scenario 2: You come across an Instagram account that is dedicated to rating the people in your school out of 10. Some people have very high scores, while others are rated very low. You think you should report it, but you don't want your classmates to find out it was you.**
 - **Head:** This could make someone feel insecure, hurt feelings, or create arguments among your classmates.
 - **Heart:** If you value kindness, you might feel sad or disappointed to see someone being intentionally mean to people you know.
 - **Gut:** What are your instincts telling you to do?

- **Scenario 3: You are playing video games with someone you do not know, and they ask you to add them on social media outside of the game.**
 - **Head:** Do you know this person in real life? This person could be an unsafe stranger who may have negative intentions.
 - **Heart:** Another thing we can value is our safety! This choice may not align with keeping yourself safe.
 - **Gut:** Use your gut instincts. Is your body giving you any signs that guide your decision?