

NL HIV/AIDS - BBB33123



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Workbook Assessments & Activities

Court Ordered Course / Program:

HIV/AIDS Awareness Education

HIV/AIDS AWARENESS EDUCATION WORKBOOK:
**Evidence of My Commitment to HIV/AIDS Awareness Education and Prevention
and Effective Health and Wellness Decision Making**

NAME: _____

INSTRUCTIONS: Check all of the circles indicating your understanding of the material:

WHAT CAUSES HIV/AIDS?

- AIDS stands for **A**cquired **I**mmune **D**eficiency **S**ndrome.
- An HIV-positive person receives an AIDS diagnosis after developing one of the CDC-defined AIDS indicator illnesses.
- An HIV-positive person can also receive an AIDS diagnosis on the basis of certain blood tests (CD4 counts) and may not have experienced any serious illnesses.
- A positive HIV test does not mean that a person has AIDS. A diagnosis of AIDS is made by a physician according to the CDC AIDS Case Definition.
- Over time, infection with HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) can weaken the immune system to the point that the system has difficulty fighting off certain infections. These types of infections are known as opportunistic infections.
- Many of the infections that cause problems or that can be life-threatening for people with AIDS are usually controlled by a healthy immune system.
- The immune system of a person with AIDS has weakened to the point that medical intervention may be necessary to prevent or treat serious illness.

HIV IS THE VIRUS THAT CAUSES AIDS

- “HIV” stands for **H**uman **I**mmunodeficiency **V**irus. To understand what that means, let’s break it down:
- **H** – *Human* – This particular *virus* can only infect human beings.
- **I** – *Immunodeficiency* – HIV weakens your *immune system* by destroying important cells that fight disease and infection. A "deficient" immune system can't protect you.
- **V** – *Virus* – A virus can only reproduce itself by taking over a cell in the body of its host.
- HIV is a lot like other viruses, including those that cause the "[flu](#)" or the common cold. But there is an important difference – over time, your [immune system](#) can clear most viruses out of your body. That isn't the case with HIV – the human immune system can't seem to get rid of it. That means that once you have HIV, you have it for life.
- We know that HIV can hide for long periods of time in the cells of your body and that it attacks a key part of your immune system – your [T-cells](#) or [CD4 cells](#). Your body has to have these cells to fight infections and disease, but HIV invades them, uses them to make more copies of itself, and then destroys them.

- Over time, HIV can destroy so many of your CD4 cells that your body can't fight infections and diseases anymore. When that happens, HIV infection can lead to AIDS, the final [stage of HIV infection](#).
- However, not everyone who has HIV progresses to AIDS. With proper [treatment](#), called “antiretroviral therapy” (ART), you can keep the level of HIV virus in your body low. ART is the use of HIV medicines to fight HIV infection. It involves taking a combination of HIV medicines every day. These HIV medicines can control the virus so that you can live a longer, healthier life and reduce the risk of transmitting HIV to others. Before the introduction of ART in the mid-1990s, people with HIV could progress to AIDS in just a few years. Today, a person who is diagnosed with HIV and treated before the disease is far advanced can have a nearly normal life expectancy.
- No safe and effective cure for HIV currently exists, but scientists are working hard to find one, and remain hopeful.

AIDS

- “AIDS” stands for **Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome**. To understand what that means, let’s break it down:
- **A** – Acquired – AIDS is not something you inherit from your parents. You **acquire** AIDS after birth.
- **I** – Immuno – Your body's immune system includes all the organs and cells that work to fight off infection or disease.
- **D** – Deficiency – You get AIDS when your immune system is "deficient," or isn't working the way it should.
- **S** – Syndrome – A syndrome is a collection of symptoms and signs of disease. AIDS is a syndrome, rather than a single disease, because it is a complex illness with a [wide range of complications and symptoms](#).
- As noted above, AIDS is the final [stage of HIV infection](#), and not everyone who has HIV advances to this stage. People at this stage of HIV disease have badly damaged immune systems, which put them at risk for *opportunistic infections (OIs)*.
- You are considered to have progressed to AIDS if you have [one or more specific OIs, certain cancers](#), or a very low number of [CD4 cells](#). If you have AIDS, you will need [medical intervention and treatment](#) to prevent death.
- For more information, see CDC’s [HIV/AIDS Basics](#).
- Currently, the average time between HIV infection and the appearance of signs that could lead to an AIDS diagnosis is 8-11 years.
- This time varies greatly from person to person and can depend on many factors including a person’s health status and behaviors.
- Today there are medical treatments that can slow down the rate at which HIV weakens the immune system.
- There are other treatments that can prevent or cure some of the illnesses associated with AIDS. As with other diseases, early detection offers more options for treatment and preventative health care.
- Having a sexually transmitted disease (STD) can increase a person’s risk of becoming infected with HIV, whether or not that STD causes lesions or breaks in the skin.

- If the STD infection causes irritation of the skin, breaks or sores may make it easier for HIV to enter the body during sexual contact.
- Even an STD that causes no breaks or sores can stimulate an immune response in the genital area that can make HIV transmission more likely.
- Worldwide: UNAIDS estimates that as of December 2000, there were an estimated 36.1 million people living with HIV/AIDS (34.7 million adults and 1.4 million children under 15). Since the epidemic began, an estimated 21.8 million people have died of AIDS (17.5 million adults and 4.3 million children under 15).
- An estimated 5.3 million new HIV infections occurred in 2000. During 2000, HIV- and AIDS-associated illnesses caused deaths of an estimated 3 million people, including 500,000 children under the age of 15.
- In the United States: According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there are between 800,000 and 900,000 people living with HIV.
- Through December 2000, a total of 774,467 cases of AIDS have been reported to the CDC; of this number, 448,060 persons (representing 58% of cases) have died.
- The only way to determine whether you are infected is to be tested for HIV infection. You can't rely on symptoms to know whether or not you are infected with HIV. Many people who are infected with HIV don't have any symptoms at all for many years.
- Similarly, you can't rely on symptoms to establish that a person has AIDS. The symptoms associated with AIDS are similar to the symptoms of many other diseases. AIDS is a diagnosis made by a doctor based on specific criteria established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

What are the Symptoms of HIV?

- Primary HIV infection is the first stage of HIV disease, when the virus first establishes itself in the body. Some researchers use the term *acute HIV infection* to describe the period of time between when a person is first infected with HIV and when antibodies against the virus are produced by the body (usually 6- 12 weeks).
- Some people newly infected with HIV will experience some “flu-like” symptoms. These symptoms, which usually last no more than a few days, might include fevers, chills, night sweats and rashes (not cold-like symptoms). Other people either do not experience “acute infection,” or have symptoms so mild that they may not notice them.
- Given the general character of the symptoms of acute infection, they can easily have causes other than HIV, such as a flu infection. For example, if you had some risk for HIV a few days ago and are now experiencing flu-like symptoms, it might be possible that HIV is responsible for the symptoms, but it is also possible that you have some other viral infection.

What are the Symptoms of AIDS?

- There are no common symptoms for individuals diagnosed with AIDS.
- When immune system damage is more severe, people may experience opportunistic infections (called opportunistic because they are caused by organisms which cannot induce disease in people with normal immune systems, but take the “opportunity” to flourish in people with HIV).

- Most of these more severe infections, diseases and symptoms fall under the Centers for Disease Control's definition of full-blown "AIDS."
- The median time to receive an AIDS diagnosis among those infected with HIV is 7-10 years.

HOW IS HIV TRANSMITTED

- HIV can be transmitted from an infected person to another through:
 - Blood (including menstrual blood), Semen, Vaginal secretions, Breastmilk.
 - Blood contains the highest concentration of the virus, followed by semen, followed by vaginal fluids, followed by breast milk.
 - * Activities That Allow HIV Transmission: Unprotected sexual contact
 - Direct blood contact, including injection drug needles, blood transfusions, accidents in health care settings or certain blood products.
 - Mother to baby (before or during birth, or through breast milk)
 - Sexual intercourse (vaginal and anal): In the genitals and the rectum, HIV may infect the mucous membranes directly or enter through cuts and sores caused during intercourse (many of which would be unnoticed). *Vaginal and anal intercourse is a high-risk practice.*
 - Oral sex (mouth-penis, mouth-vagina): The mouth is an inhospitable environment for HIV (in semen, vaginal fluid or blood), meaning the risk of HIV transmission through the throat, gums, and oral membranes is lower than through vaginal or anal membranes.
 - There are however, documented cases where HIV was transmitted orally, so we can't say that getting HIV-infected semen, vaginal fluid or blood in the mouth is without risk. *However, oral sex is considered a low-risk practice.*
 - Sharing injection needles: An injection needle can pass blood directly from one person's bloodstream to another. It is a very efficient way to transmit a blood-borne virus. *Sharing needles is considered a high-risk practice.*
 - Mother to Child: It is possible for an HIV-infected mother to pass the virus directly before or during birth, or through breast milk. Breast milk contains HIV, and while small amounts of breast milk do not pose significant threat of infection to adults, it is a viable means of transmission to infants.
- There is considerable debate within the HIV/AIDS prevention community regarding the risk of transmission of HIV through oral sex. What is currently known is that there is some risk associated with performing oral sex without protection; (there have been a few documented cases of HIV transmission through oral sex).
- While no one knows exactly what that risk is, cumulative evidence indicates that the risk is less than that of unprotected anal or vaginal sex. The risk from receiving oral sex, for both a man and a woman, is considered to be very low.
- Currently, risk reduction options when performing oral sex on a man (fellatio) include the use of latex condoms, but also include withdrawal before ejaculation without a condom (avoiding semen in the mouth) and/or refraining from this activity when cuts or sores are present in the mouth.
- When performing oral sex on a woman (cunnilingus), moisture barriers such as a dam (sheet of latex), a cut-open and flattened condom, or household plastic wrap can reduce the risk of exposure to vaginal secretions and/or blood.
- If you have other questions about oral sex and HIV, call the CDC National AIDS Hotline at 1-800-342-2437 (English), 1-800-344-7432 (Spanish), or 1-800-243-7889 (TTY).

HIV AND KISSING

- Casual contact through closed-mouth or “social” kissing is not a risk for transmission of HIV. Because of the potential for contact with blood during “French” or open-mouth, wet kissing, CDC recommends against engaging in this activity with a person known to be infected.
- However, the risk of acquiring HIV during open-mouth kissing is believed to be very low.
- CDC has investigated only one case of HIV infection that may be attributed to contact with blood during open-mouth kissing. In this case both partners had extensive dental problems including gingivitis (inflammation of the gums). It is likely that there was blood present in both partners’ mouths making direct blood to blood contact a possibility.

CAN I GET HIV FROM CASUAL CONTACT

- Can AIDS be spread through shaking hands, hugging, using a toilet, drinking from the same glass, or the sneezing and coughing of an infected person?
- No. HIV is not transmitted by day-to-day contact in the home, the workplace, schools, or social settings. HIV is not transmitted through shaking hands, hugging or a casual kiss.
- You cannot become infected from a toilet seat, a drinking fountain, a doorknob, dishes, drinking glasses, food, or pets.
- HIV is a fragile virus that does not live long outside the body. HIV is not an airborne or food borne virus.
- HIV is present in the blood, semen or vaginal secretions of an infected person and can be transmitted through unprotected vaginal, oral or anal sex or through sharing injection drug needles.
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CAN A WOMAN GIVE HIV TO A MAN DURING VAGINAL INTERCOURSE?

- The presence of other STDs can increase the risk of transmission. The correct and consistent use of a latex condom or female condom can reduce the risk of transmitting HIV during vaginal intercourse. For more information, call the CDC National AIDS Hotline at 1-800-342-2437 (English), 1-800-344-7432 (Spanish), or 1-800-243-7889 (TTY).

HIV AND LATEX CONDOMS

- How effective are latex condoms in preventing HIV?
- Several studies have demonstrated that latex condoms are highly effective in preventing HIV transmission when used correctly and consistently.
- These studies looked at uninfected people considered to be at very high risk of infection because they were involved in sexual relationships with HIV-infected persons.
- The studies found that even with repeated sexual contact, 98-100% of those people who used latex condoms consistently and correctly remained uninfected.
- For more on these studies, including free written information, call the CDC National AIDS Hotline at 1-800-342-2437 (English), 1-800-344-7432 (Spanish), or 1-800-243-7889 (TTY).

WHERE CAN I GET TESTED FOR HIV?

- Many places provide testing for HIV infection. It is important to seek testing at a location

that also provides counseling about HIV and AIDS. Common locations include local health departments, private physicians, hospitals, and test sites specifically set up for HIV testing.

- In addition to traditional testing procedures, there are other options. For those who prefer not to have blood drawn, many sites now offer oral fluids testing, which involves testing of a sample of fluid taken from inside the mouth with a cotton swab.
- The OraSure Test (<http://www.orasure.com/>) is currently only available through a health care provider or clinic. Some clinics may also offer urine testing as an alternative to blood tests.
- There is also testing which can be performed anonymously in the privacy of your own home.
- There are many home tests advertised through the internet, but only the Home Access Test has been approved by the FDA. The Home Access test kit can be found at most local pharmacies.
- The testing procedure involves pricking your finger with a special device, placing a drop of blood on a specially treated card, then mailing the card in for testing.
- You are given an identification number to use when you phone in for the test results— 3 days or 2 weeks later, depending on the test kit purchased.
- The CDC National AIDS Hotline can answer questions about testing and can refer you to testing sites in your area. The hotline numbers are 1-800-342-2437 (English), 1-800-344-7432, (Spanish), or 1-800-243-7889 (TTY).

WHAT IF I TEST HIV POSITIVE?

- If you test positive, the sooner you take steps to protect your health, the better. Early medical treatment, a healthy lifestyle and a positive attitude can help you stay well. Prompt medical care may delay the onset of AIDS and prevent some life-threatening conditions. It is important to know that a positive HIV test should always be confirmed, to be sure that it is a true positive. If your test result is positive, there are a number of important steps you can take immediately to protect your health:
- See a doctor, even if you don't feel sick. Try to find a doctor who has experience treating HIV. There are now many new drugs to treat HIV infection. There are important tests, immunizations and drug treatments that can help you maintain good health. It is never too early to start thinking about treatment possibilities.
- Have a tuberculosis (TB) test done. You may be infected with TB and not know it. Undetected TB can cause serious illness. TB can be treated successfully if detected early.
- Recreational drugs, alcoholic beverages and smoking can weaken your immune system. There are programs available to help you stop.
- Consider joining a support group for people with HIV infection or finding out about other resources available in your area, such as HIV/AIDS-knowledgeable counselors for one-on-one therapy. There are also many newsletters available for people living with HIV and AIDS.
- There is much you can do to stay healthy. Learning as much as you can is a step in the right direction. Local and/or national resources may be available. Many HIV/AIDS organizations provide services free or on a sliding scale, based on ability to pay.
- Call the CDC National AIDS Hotline for more information and referrals at 1-800-342-2437 (English), 1-800-344-7432, (Spanish), or 1-800-243-7889 (TTY).

HOW LONG AFTER EXPOSURE SHOULD I BE TESTED?

- The time it takes for a person who has been infected with HIV to seroconvert (test positive) for HIV antibodies is commonly called the “Window Period.”
- The California Office of AIDS, published in 1998, says about the window period: “When a person is infected with the HIV virus, statistics show that 95-97% (perhaps higher) of all

infected individuals develop antibodies within 12 weeks (3-months).”

- The National CDC has said that in some rare cases, it may take up to six months for one to seroconvert (test positive). At this point the results would be 99.9% accurate.
- * What does this mean for you?
- The three-month window period is normal for approximately 95% of the population. If you feel any anxiety about relying on the 3-month result, you should have another test at 6 months.

HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU ARE HIV NEGATIVE?

- The tests commonly used to determine HIV infection actually look for antibodies produced by the body to fight HIV.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), most people will develop detectable antibodies within 3 months after infection. In rare cases, it can take up to six months.
 - Therefore, the CDC recommends testing at 6 months after the last possible exposure. (unprotected vaginal, anal or oral sex or sharing injecting drug needles). It would be extremely rare to take longer than six months to develop detectable antibodies.
 - It is important, during the six months between exposure and the 6-month test, to protect yourself and others from further exposures to HIV.
 - The CDC National AIDS Hotline can provide more information and referrals to testing sites in your area.
 - The hotline can be reached at 1-800-342-2437 (English), 1-800-344-7432 (Spanish), or 1-800-243-7889 (TTY).

WHAT DO THE HIV TEST RESULTS MEAN?

A positive result means:

- You are HIV-positive (carrying the virus that causes AIDS).
- You can infect others and should try to implement precautions to prevent doing so.
- A negative result means:
- No antibodies were found in your blood at this time.

A negative result does NOT mean:

- You are not infected with HIV (if you are still in the window period).
- You are immune to AIDS.
- You have a resistance to infection.
- You will never get AIDS.
- If I test HIV positive; does that mean that I will die?
- Testing positive for HIV means that you now carry the virus that causes AIDS. It does not mean that you have AIDS, nor does it mean that you will die.
- Although there is no cure for AIDS, many opportunistic infections that make people sick can be controlled, prevented or eliminated.
- This has substantially increased the longevity and quality of life for people living with AIDS.
- If I test HIV negative does that mean that my partner is HIV negative also?
- No. Your HIV test result reveals only your HIV status.
- Your negative test result does not tell you about the HIV status of your partner(s).
- HIV is not necessarily transmitted every time there is an exposure.

- No one's test result can be used to determine another person's HIV status.
- Yes. If the woman is infected, HIV is present in vaginal and cervical secretions (the wetness in a woman's vagina) and can enter the penis through the urethra (the hole at the tip) or through cuts or abrasions on the skin of the penis.

WHAT IF I'M HIV POSITIVE?

- The CDC National AIDS Hotline can offer practical information on maintaining health and general information about a wide variety of treatments, including antiretrovirals and prophylaxis for opportunistic infections.
- The hotline numbers are 1-800-342-2437 (English), 1-800-344-7432, (Spanish), or 1-888-480-3739 (TTY).
- The CDC National AIDS Hotline can also provide referrals to national treatment hotlines, local AIDS Service Organizations and HIV/AIDS-knowledgeable physicians.
- Detailed information on specific treatments is available from the HIV/AIDS Treatment Information Service (ATIS) at 1-800-448-0440. Information on enrolling in clinical trials can be obtained from the AIDS Clinical Trials Information Service at 1-800-874-2572 (English and Spanish) and 1-888-480-3739 (TTY).
- Go to the [HIV/AIDS Treatment Information Service website](#)

IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO TO STAY HEALTHY?

- The short answer is yes. There are things that you can do to stay healthy.
- Emotional support may be very important for HIV-positive people because it breaks the isolation and provides a safe way of sharing both feelings and practical information.
- Medical Care: Once you find a doctor or clinic, your main objective is to get an evaluation of your general health and immune function.
- Many doctors do the following:
 - Administer lab tests to evaluate your immune system.
 - Determine if you have other diseases that might become problematic in the future, including syphilis, TB, hepatitis-B, and toxoplasmosis.
 - If you are already infected with one or more of these other illnesses, there may be treatments or prophylaxis available to prevent it from becoming more serious or recurring in the future.
 - If you're not already infected, doctors may be able to prevent future infection by:
 - Administering vaccines.
 - Many HIV positive people get a hepatitis-B vaccine and bacterial pneumonia vaccines, since contracting these diseases could be dangerous for immune suppressed people.
 - Prescribing antiviral treatments and protease inhibitors when tests show immune system impairment.
 - Scheduling regular checkups. Checkups may be scheduled every three to six months.
 - Some people need more frequent check-ups, particularly when they are starting new antiviral drugs.

DO THE NEW DRUGS CURE YOU?

- The new drugs you are referring to are a class of anti-HIV drugs known as protease inhibitors.
- There is NO cure for AIDS, but these drugs are helping to prolong the lives of many people with AIDS and delaying the onset of AIDS in many people with HIV.
- You should consult your own health care provider regarding treatment issues.

- There is no standard treatment for everyone. Your health care provider will discuss your individual options.
- Where can I get printed materials about HIV/AIDS for my school project or organization?
- The [CDC National AIDS Hotline](#) can help you with requests for printed materials. Call them and tell them who you are and what you need. If you are doing a school project, tell them.
- If you are giving a presentation to some other kind of group, tell them that. The more they know about what you need, the better they can help you. They are available 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year toll-free at (800) 342-2437.

I HAVE MORE QUESTIONS ABOUT HIV/AIDS

- You most certainly can! You can call the [CDC National AIDS Hotline](#) at (800) 342-2437 anytime, 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.
- They are there to help you with your questions, to provide you with further information, and to listen.
- Additionally, most states also provide their own [state AIDS hotlines](#) – although their hours of operation may vary.
- CHECK THE INTERNET for our listing of available state AIDS hotlines.

EARLY HIV DRUG THERAPY PROTECTS PARTNERS FROM INFECTION

- **Starting drug therapy early can help to limit rates of transmission of the virus that causes AIDS.**
- **People with HIV can reduce the risk of infecting their sex partners by more than 90 percent if they start treatment with antiretroviral drugs when their immune system is still relatively healthy.**

Your Life and Your Destiny Are Designed by You through Your **Thoughts, Emotions and Decisions**

- Every decision that you make points you in a certain direction in life.
- Bad decisions are circular, they keep getting you into trouble
- Start making good decisions and take control of the direction of your life.

Critical thinking is when you apply criticism to a decision that you are trying to make.

- Practice criticizing your own decision; play devil's advocate.
- Do I have all of the information, or am I missing something?
- Does my decision make sense? Are there any conflicts?
- What about alternative decisions?
- Is this decision best for me and those around me?

Neurology and Decision Making: The Human Brain

- Current research **points to evidence that the human brain is not fully developed until over 26 years of age!**
- The amygdala controls emotional instincts like joy, happiness, anger, fear, aggression and develops early on...
- The frontal cortex controls reasoning and critical thinking and isn't fully developed until the late 20's.
- **When the brains of adolescents are scanned during decision making, they are mostly using the amygdala, compared to most adults who are actively using the frontal cortex**

Young people are FULLY CAPABLE of making good decisions. In fact, often they are MORE capable than some adults in making good decisions.

- Excellent decision can be made by young people when they are based on “feel good emotions.”
- However, bad decisions can be made when they are based on “feel bad emotions.”
- Making decisions based on the way you feel is a highly effective method of good decision making **provided that you FEEL GOOD** about the decision you are making.
- When young people (or adults for that matter) feel bad, their decision making naturally suffers.

THESE BRAIN DIFFERENCES DON'T MEAN THAT YOUNG PEOPLE CAN'T MAKE GOOD DECISIONS OR TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RIGHT AND WRONG.

IT ALSO DOESN'T MEAN THAT YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULDN'T BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR ACTIONS.

- It does mean that young people base most of their decisions on their feelings and emotions.
- Furthermore, feelings and emotions can be a highly effective method of good decision making.

ALL GOOD DECISIONS CONSIDER THE WELL BEING OF SELF AND OTHERS.

- **Young people** who make bad decisions may get involved in crime, abuse drugs, get pregnant, drop out of school, or generally find themselves in trouble.
- However, **older adults also** make bad decisions as a result of not developing good decision making and critical thinking skills.

Brain development doesn't really have much to do with the ability to make good decisions.

- However, **understanding how your brain functions when you make decisions can help you improve your decision making skills.**
- So, understanding that young people are using their amygdala during the majority of their decision making processes can help you realize that young people mostly make decisions based on their emotions or the way they feel...
- ***When young people (and adults) feel good and consider the wellbeing of self and others, they make good decisions.***

While emotions cannot be controlled (they just happen, and you feel them). The way you act out your emotions—your behavior—can be controlled.

- **Behavior, including critical thinking and decision making, is a learned skill and behavior is a choice.**
- Young adults (and some older adults!) have to consciously practice critical thinking and decision making skills to get good at it!

DECISION MAKING ABILITY ASSESSMENT

The decision assessment determines your ability or potential to make effective decisions.

Mark each statement as Y (yes) or N (no) and count the number of yes responses when completed		
Y or N		
1		Sometimes I wonder why I made a certain decision in the past
2		Sometimes I regret some of the decisions I have made in the past
3		Sometimes I think about decisions I should have made instead
4		At times I have changed my mind from a bad decision to a good decision
5		At times I have changed my mind from a good decision to a bad decision which I later regretted.

6	I can clearly see some of the mistakes I have made in my decision making
7	I feel like making good decision can be easy instead of hard
8	I have confidence in my ability to make good decisions—if I really wanted to
9	I can easily spot a bad decision when someone else is about to make it
10	I have given family and friends good decision making advise in the past
11	I have talked family or friends into making bad decisions in the past, which I later regretted.
12	Deep down inside I know that making better decisions can help me in my life
13	Deep down inside I feel that I need to improve my decision making

Decision Making Ability Assessment Results:

- A high score indicates a potential for excellence in decision making and critical thinking skills (7-13 points)
- A lower score indicates a need for critical thinking training to reach excellence in decision making (1-6 points)

The bottom line is that everyone makes decision mistakes once in a while. The key to having excellent decision making skills is recognizing those mistakes and using them as opportunities to learn and improve.

- People with a strong sense of their decision making errors are more likely to improve and become better at critical thinking and decision making.
- Understanding that mistakes are OPPORTUNITIES for personal growth can build self-esteem and self-efficacy (self-empowerment).
- Developing decision making skills starts with viewing life as containing the opportunities for change necessary for personal growth and wellbeing.

EXAM REVIEW

- Your life and your destiny are designed by you through your decisions.
- Critical thinking involves criticizing a decision you are about to make.
- Young people make decisions using mostly their amygdala which is responsible for emotions
- Behavior, including critical thinking and decision making is a learned skill that anyone can learn.
- The truth is that brain development doesn't have much to do with making good decisions

Your emotional state when making decisions has an effect on your decision making ability.

- When making decisions, actively practice being aware of how you feel.
- How does the decision you are about to make, make you feel?
- Be aware if you are highly emotional when you are about to decide—nervous, excited, exhilarated, apprehensive.
- Trust your instincts, if it doesn't feel right, don't do it.
- If possible, put the decision off until you are calmer.

Young people are usually making decisions while under a tremendous amount of pressure.

- So, not only are young people making decisions based on their emotions, but they are in the middle of the most emotional time of their lives!
- **There is nothing wrong with emotions, EMOTIONS ARE NEVER WRONG.**
- **What is right or wrong, though, is THE WAY YOU ACT OUT YOUR EMOTIONS.**

- If your emotional behavior is out of control, you could be making some very bad decisions.
- So, making good decisions begins with controlling your emotional behavior.

Emotions (like anger, jealousy, fear, etc.) just come into your mind without your permission and you feel them. It just happens.

- The truth is that the behavior you choose to deal with your emotions will either make the emotion stronger or weaker.
- If you choose to react to your angry emotions by throwing temper tantrums, your anger will keep getting stronger and it will be more and more difficult to control.
- If you choose to react in a calm manner (it might be very difficult at first), your anger will grow weaker and it will be easier to control in the long run.

There is a fascinating connection between emotions and behavior in the human brain.

- Any emotion that you consistently act upon will become stronger.
- So, acting on the emotion of anger by yelling, throwing things, or getting physical is like a workout for the emotion of anger.
- And what happens when you work out? You get stronger!
- **It's the same with anger; if you exercise your anger, it will get stronger.**
- **And if you DO NOT exercise your anger and stay calm, your anger will grow weaker.**
- When your anger grows weaker, you take control!

You have more power and control over your emotions than you think.

- Your internal dialogue (your inner voice) has a powerful effect on your ability to control your emotions and your behavior.
- Practice maintaining a positive inner dialogue. When a negative thought comes in say, "NEXT" and change it to a positive thought.
- Tell yourself, "I have made good decisions before, and I can do it again! I can and will control my behavior."
- Good thoughts = good feelings = good decisions / I know this is easier said than done. **Start small.** Tell yourself you will have only good thoughts for the next 15 minutes, next 30 minutes, and next day. Practice every day whenever you think about it and build up with time.

□ YOU ARE CREATING YOUR DESTINY WITH YOUR THOUGHTS, EMOTIONS AND DECISIONS!

Dealing with peer pressure while making decisions:

- The fact of the matter is that misery loves company, so often people will encourage others to engage in unhealthy activities so they will not be **"the only one doing it."**
- There are methods to deal with peer pressure to help you make better, autonomous (self-controlled or directed) decisions.
- 1. Direct the questioning or interrogation back to the person interrogating you. Why do you keep asking me?
- 2. Question the person's integrity or intentions. What's your problem? Why are you so desperate for me to do that?
- 3. Flat out say, "No and please don't ask me again."
- 4. Treat the request like a Joke. "Yeah, right. Who would be stupid enough to do that? Let's

go play on the freeway instead.”

- 5. Say “no” and apply peer pressure of your own. “Come on! I thought you were smarter than that.”
- 6. Use humor. “No thanks, I’m allergic to smoke; it gives me cancer.”
- 7. Walk away. Just leave. “I’m outta here, later!”
- 8. Defend yourself. “No way, my IQ is higher than that!”
- 9. Use your parents as an excuse. “My parents would send me away to military school for that!”
- 10. Have a plan B. “I’ve gotta run, I have to babysit my little sister.”

EXAM REVIEW

- Any emotion you consistently act upon will only get stronger.
- If you are highly emotional before making a decision, wait until you are calm to decide.
- While you can’t really control incoming emotions, you can control your behavioral response to those emotions.
- The behavior you choose to deal with your emotions will either make the emotion stronger or weaker.
- If you exercise your anger, it WILL get stronger.

There is a definite relationship between poor decision making and stress. While a little stress may be beneficial, stress overload can cause distress.

- When you are stressed, the feelings may include feeling overwhelmed, feeling disrespected, helpless, and fearful and so on.
- It is very important to look at the feelings behind the stress to better understand why you are having this reaction.
- Once this insight is gained, then steps may be taken to relax and feel much better.

If you are feeling stressed, actively take steps to alleviate your stress as much as possible.

- This can also have the effect of alleviating your tendency towards bad decisions.
- While there is no excuse for irresponsible decisions, feeling stressed can be overwhelming when the stress is chronic.
- Take time for enjoyable activities, exercise, play sports with friends; pet a dog, go for a hike, and connect with nature.
- If your stress is causing depression, seek professional help; your well-being is important!

I can’t stress enough the importance of managing your stress, MANAGE YOUR STRESS AND YOU WILL BE HEALTHIER!

- **MYTH:** A stressor, or stressful event will always precipitate stress.
- **FACT:** Stress symptoms can occur at the mere thought of a past or future stressful situation.
- **MYTH:** People who are not competitive and have no time urgency, are not successful in life and have more stress.
- **FACT:** People who are competitive and always feel rushed are likely to have more stress regardless of their success. People who are relaxed will be less stressed and healthier.
- **MYTH:** Drinking coffee or tea reduces stress.
- **FACT:** Coffee and tea are stimulants and increase stress.

- **MYTH:** Smoking relaxes the body and relieves stress.
- **FACT:** Nicotine has a high affinity for oxygen; smoking robs the body of oxygen and increases stress on the organs.
- **MYTH:** Exercise robs the body of energy, causing stress.
- **FACT:** Exercise is a highly effective method to relieve stress and actually increases the production of natural stress relieving chemicals such as endorphins.
- **MYTH:** Acquired behaviors for stress cannot be changed.
- **FACT:** Behaviors can and should be changed to reduce stress, starting with relaxation and exercise.

STRESS ASSESSMENT

This activity helps you build awareness of your stress coping skills. While you answer the questions, think about how to build your coping skills using patience & practice.					
RATE EACH STATEMENT	Very Good	Good	OK	Needs Work	Not So Good
1. My ability to relax when I want to is...					
2. My ability to explain myself and be understood is...					
3. My ability to keep my anger under control is...					
4. My ability to resolve conflicts at work and home is...					
5. My ability to manage my time well is...					
6. My ability to exercise regularly is...					
7. My ability to cope with anxiety over future events is...					
8. My ability to cope with my anxiety over past events is...					
9. My ability to practice healthy eating behaviors is...					
10. My ability to set goals and accomplish them is...					

A NOTE REGARDING STRESS:

- **Practice stress relieving activities** (exercise, comical movies, engaging in a hobby) then take this assessment again in one month!
- Taking active measures to relieve my stress will increase my health and well-being.

PERSONALITIES AND STRESS

- Some personalities are more prone to stress.
- **TYPE B PERSONALITY:** Type B's have little urgency of time and are not very competitive. They tend to be cooperative, patient, happy-go-lucky kind of people.
- **TYPE A PERSONALITY:** Type A's are more prone to stress and its negative consequences. They tend to be very competitive, are usually in a hurry and are less optimistic.

PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT

Mark each statement as Y (yes) or N (no) and count the number of yes responses when completed		
Y or N		
1		Do I accentuate key words when speaking and hurry the last few words of my sentences.
2		Do I always eat, walk, talk and move rapidly?
3		Do I get impatient and irritated when things do not move fast?
4		Do I often attempt to do or think more than one thing at a time?
5		Do I always try to move the topic of conversation to my interest?
6		Do I often feel guilty when I try to relax?
7		Do I often fail to stop and take in the new things around me?
8		Do I feel more concerned with acquiring material things than enhancing my wellbeing?
9		Do I always feel like I'm in a big hurry?
10		Do I feel a need to compete with, or challenge others?
11		Do I accentuate my speech with exaggerated gestures like pounding the table or waving my arms?
12		Do I feel that it is necessary to maintain a fast pace in my life?
13		Do I rate my success in life in terms of numbers?

RESULTS:

Scores range from 0 - 13. A high score indicates a TYPE A Personality type (7-13 points). A low score indicates a TYPE B Personality type (1-6 points)

- People with a strong Type A personality type are very competitive, have an ambitious drive, are always in a hurry and are aggressive and impatient.
- Type A's are tend to exude hostility and insecurity.

HOWEVER, PEOPLE WITH TYPE "A" CAN LEARN TO BE MORE RELAXED

- People with a strong TYPE A can alleviate the negative consequences of their personality by **building their self-esteem.**
- Type As can work on their control issues, commitment issues and seek healthy challenges instead of fierce competitions.
- Building their sense of control can help type A's accept responsibility for their behavior in order to change the behavior that is causing them stress. Also creating a commitment to have good self-esteem can help type A's realize their purpose in life.
- **Building self-esteem starts with viewing life as containing the opportunities for change necessary for personal growth and wellbeing.**

Communication style has a direct impact on decision making skills.

- Have you ever noticed that some people capture everyone's attention when they speak?
- While others can't seem to capture anyone's attention? They speak and no one listens. So, what's the secret ingredient to effective communication?

Psychologically, our communication style sends a strong “winner” or “loser” message when we speak.

- One communication style involves directness or how direct we are in expressing our views, wants and opinions – some people can be very direct or blunt and others less so – they might imply or infer.
- Another style involves the thought or consideration that the sender of the message gives to the opinions, wants and needs of the recipient—some people can be very thoughtful and others thoughtless—they may be rude or too blunt.

Assertiveness communication communicates your desires while considering the thoughts and feelings of others.

- **Assertiveness is not the same as aggressiveness.**
- Are you an aggressive communicator?
- Do you violate the rights of others when communicating?
- Do others react to you by feeling angry or upset when you communicate?
- Do you intend to win, or do you intend to be fair to all concerned?

Rate each statement as excellent or needs improvement to enhance awareness of your communication abilities.

COMMUNICATION ASSESSMENT					
WHILE COMMUNICATING...	Rate each statement from (5) excellent to (1)not good				
1. I am concise and to the point	5	4	3	2	1
2. I express myself clearly	5	4	3	2	1
3. I regulate the tone of my voice to convey precise meaning	5	4	3	2	1
4. I use appropriate body gestures and facial expressions	5	4	3	2	1
5. I am assertive and definite, rather than hesitant and apologetic	5	4	3	2	1
6. I summarize the key points for clarity	5	4	3	2	1
7. I am direct, I do not “beat around the bush.”	5	4	3	2	1
8. I am specific and give examples to make my points clear	5	4	3	2	1
9. I directly let others know when I do not understand them	5	4	3	2	1
10. I pause to ask others if they understand me.	5	4	3	2	1
11. I encourage others to participate in the discussion.	5	4	3	2	1
12. I listen while expressing interest	5	4	3	2	1
13. I don’t get too emotional or aggressive when speaking	5	4	3	2	1
14. I do not react negatively to the feelings of others	5	4	3	2	1
15. I listen to understand rather than just waiting for my turn to speak	5	4	3	2	1

16. I avoid using slangs; I use simple language the listener will understand	5	4	3	2	1
17. I give equal respect to others as valuable communicators	5	4	3	2	1
18. I try to see the other person's point of view	5	4	3	2	1
19. I stay focused while communicating	5	4	3	2	1
20. I can tolerate silence well	5	4	3	2	1

NEXT: Give this assessment to your friends and family and have them fill it out with YOUR communication style in mind. This will help you enhance your awareness of how others view your communication abilities compared to how you view your communication.

- The communication assessment is designed to enhance awareness of your communication abilities.
- If your answers are all close to 5s (or excellent), then you are a very effective communicator. If your answers are lower than work on your communication and take the assessment again at a later date.
- To gather more accurate information, let your family and friends rate your communication skills (and vice versa) to get feedback from others who know you about your communication skills.

We make bad decisions that cause us problems when we fail to practice mindfulness.

- What is Mindfulness?
- Mindfulness simply means “thinking things through” and “being aware” of the moment when we are faced with any decision.
- Sounds simple right? Think of the hundreds of decisions you make every day. How often do you think every single decision through and consider all possible consequences?

Think of mindfulness when going through a maze. How much harder would it be if you did not think it through?

- Practicing mindfulness takes a proactive effort.
- Think about it. How often have you done something and then thought, “I shouldn’t have done that,” or even, “why did I do that?”
- We make hundreds of decisions each day, and it takes effort to be mindful of each and every decision.
- The first step is recognizing yourself when you practice mindfulness versus when you don’t.
- Think of a time when you made a good decision. Did you think about it before you made it? Or are you now thinking about how lucky you were that it was a good decision?

3 un-mindful decision making practices:

- making decisions without thinking about it.
- making significant split-second decisions.
- making risky, on the spot decisions because “it won’t happen to me.”

This activity helps you build awareness of your mindfulness during decision making. While you are answering the questions, think about how you can enhance your decision making skills.

Rate each statement:	Good	Very good	ok	Needs work	Not so good
1. My ability to think through my decisions is...					
2. My ability to explain myself and be understood is...					
3. My ability to make good decisions is...					
4. My ability to resolve conflicts at work, school and home is...					
5. My ability to detect my emotional state is...					
6. My ability to detect a bad decision is...					
7. My ability to manage bad decisions under peer pressure is...					
8. My ability to recognize a good decision is...					
9. My ability to think through consequences of a decision is...					
10. My ability to put highly charged decisions on hold is.					

LOCUS OF CONTROL - The Locus of Control is a term that indicates whether people tend to;

- See themselves as having the power to control the events in their lives (**internal locus**)
- or*
- They locate the power to control events in their lives outside of themselves (**external locus**) in other people and in other forces
- **INTERNAL LOCUS OF CONTROL** “**I control my life!**”—External Locus of Control “Other forces control my life”
- Having an internal locus of control is a CHOICE.
- **Having an internal locus of control will empower you to own and control your behavior.**

LOCUS OF CONTROL ASSESSMENT

Choose the statement you agree with circle the amount next to the statement (1 or 0) then add up each statement that you agree with that has 1 credit and keep a tally of it as you go along. Next, add up your tally.		
1		Many of the unhappy things in people’s lives are partly due to bad luck.
		People’s misfortunes result from the mistakes they make
2		One of the major reasons why we have wars is because people are involved enough in politics
		There will always be wars, no matter how hard we try to prevent them.
3		In the long run, people get the respect they deserve in this world.
		Unfortunately, an individual’s worth is often not recognized no matter how hard he tries.

4		The idea that teachers are unfair to students is nonsense.
		Most students don't realize how much their grades are influenced by accidental happenings.
5		Without the right breaks, you cannot be an effective leader.
		Capable people who fail to become leaders have not taken advantage of their opportunities.
6		No matter how hard you try, some people just don't like you.
		People who can't get others to like them don't understand how to get along with others.
7		I have often found that what is going to happen will happen.
		I prefer to decide on a definite course of action rather than just trusting fate.
8		For a well-prepared student, there is rarely, if ever, such a thing as an unfair test.
		Many times, exam questions are so unrelated to the course work that studying is useless.
9		Becoming a success is a matter of hard work, luck has little or nothing to do with it.
		Getting a good job depends mainly on being at the right place at the right time.
10		The average citizen can have an influence in government decisions.
		The world is run by a few people in power, and there is not much the little guy can do about it.
11		When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work
		It doesn't always help to plan ahead, because many things are just a matter of luck
12		In my case, getting what I want has little or nothing to do with luck
		Many times, it's just as well to decide what to do by flipping a coin.
13		What happens to me is my own doing.
		Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking.
=		= TOTAL POINTS EARNED

RESULTS: Scores range from 0 - 13. A high score indicates an external locus of control (7-13 points) A low score indicates an internal locus of control (1-6 points)

- People with a high INTERNAL LOCUS OF CONTROL are happier, healthier, and more successful in life.
- People with a mostly external locus of control are less happy, more anxious, less healthy, and less successful in life.
- IT IS VERY DESIRABLE TO HAVE AN INTERNAL LOCUS OF CONTROL!

If you do not exercise control and make good decisions to direct your destiny, someone else will do it for you!

- Good decisions empower you and put you in control of your own destiny.

EXAM REVIEW

- Mindfulness means having awareness and thinking things through before making a decision.
- Making a good decision involves deciding which things are important for your wellbeing and thinking them through.
- To make good decisions, recognize when you practice mindfulness versus when you don't.
- Un-Mindful decision making involves unconscious decisions, impulsivity and the "It won't happen to me" syndrome.
- Having an INTERNAL locus of control will empower you to make better decisions.

The Active Listening Activity

The Active Listening game is a role-playing activity designed to enhance your active listening skills. Practice this when you both are not angry. Ask a partner to *imagine* that he or she is very angry at you and follow the following guidelines:

- **Direct Questioning:** Start asking the reasons for your partner's anger in a calm manner.
- **Your partner answers you in a calm manner.** *Your partner may say, "I'm sorry but I'm too angry right now, your questions are important to me so I will give you an answer in 15 mins."*
- **Rationalizing:** Try to understand your partner's feelings and the reasons for his or her behavior.
- **Your partner now discusses the way he or she feels using "I feel angry (or sad, frustrated, etc.) when..." statements.**
- **Clarifying:** Clarify your partner's responses: "So, you're saying you feel sad when..."
- **Your partner clarifies his or her feelings using "I" statements:** "Yes, I feel sad when..."
- **Supporting:** As much as possible support your partner's viewpoint. "I understand your feelings."
- **Your partner thanks you for any support that you offer for his feelings.**

NOW SWITCH ROLES!

SCENARIOS

SCENARIO 1: JOHN'S DILEMMA

Jon is drinking beer and watching the football game with his son and his son's friend, Pal. Jon usually permits his son to have a beer with him while they watch the game. This time, however, Pal asks if he could also have a beer. What should Jon do?

Jon should:

- A. Give Pal a drink, it's okay if there is adult supervision.**
- B. Only give his son a drink.**
- C. Tell the boys, that neither of them can have a drink today, and drink all of the beer himself.**
- D. Tell the boys that today no one is going to drink beer, not even Jon.**
- E. ALL OF THE ABOVE**

SOLUTION

Jon pretty much has two options. He can have a beer himself or announce that there will be no beer drinking (this is his best option).

Jon can get into a lot of trouble serving alcohol to minors in his home. Social host refers to adults who host parties where alcohol is served on property they control. Through social host liability laws, adults can be held responsible for these parties if underage people are served alcohol, regardless of who furnishes the alcohol.

Jon should never give alcohol to his son's friends, and he should NOT allow his son to drink in front of his friends in his home.

SCENARIO 2: MAY'S ESCAPE

May is shopping with her friends and notices that June is stealing makeup. May feels very uncomfortable and a little nervous. Suddenly, June asks May to leave the store with her.

May should:

- A. Leave with June and wait outside.**
- B. Call security and have June arrested on the spot**
- C. Tell June no and stay in the store with the others.**
- D. Make an excuse and leave the store without June and go home**
- E. None of the Above**

SOLUTION:

May has a lot of options available to her. She is not a member of security and has no business having June arrested. If she leaves with June or even stays with the other girls, she risks getting caught, getting fined or jailed, having to go to court, having a record and spending a lot of time and money over a bad decision. How does she know that the others aren't stealing too?

Yes, even being with June or other girls when she suspects they are shoplifting can get her into serious legal trouble.

The best option for May is to walk away and leave. Even if she refuses to leave with June and stays with the others, just being in the mix of this drama could result in the same headache.

May's feelings of nervousness are gut instincts she should pay attention to; always follow your instincts, if it doesn't feel right, it probably isn't.

SCENARIO 3: SHAWN'S RESPONSE

Shawn is hanging out in his favorite bar watching the game and having a friendly argument with Tom about sports. Suddenly Tom gets serious and starts yelling at Shawn from across the table. Shawn can feel himself getting angry too. At some point, Tom stumbles out of his seat (he's obviously drunk) and gets in Shawn's face.

Shawn should:

- A. Get in Tom's face and challenge him.**
- B. Start a fist fight with Tom**
- C. Do nothing and take it.**
- D. Stand up and leave the bar and tell Tom he's not interested in starting anything with him.**
- E. None of the Above**

SOLUTION:

This is a tough one, it's hard to walk away from a challenge. But what Shawn is walking away from is actually the risk of getting involved in a fight in a bar which could land him and Tom in jail.

Both Men could end up going to court, having to take court ordered classes (decision making and anger management) and basically ending up wasting a lot of time and money in the court system.

When you think about the risk of getting mixed up with public intoxication laws, assault and battery laws, it just isn't worth it.

The best option for Shawn is to walk away and go home stress and drama free.

But he should definitely avoid this flammable guy in the future.

SCENARIO 4: ALEX'S TEST

Alex is hanging out with his friends having a few drinks in a night club. It's 2am and the bar is closing. He is suddenly aware that he has had a few too many to drink. Why is it a bad idea for him to drive home?

Alex shouldn't drive home because:

- A. He could get a DWI.**
- B. He could get into a minor accident (not even his fault) and get a DUI and all of the faults too.**
- C. If he gets into an accident and someone is killed (not even his fault) he will automatically be at fault for drinking and driving and be charged with manslaughter.**
- D. A DWI is a very expensive crime that could cost Alex thousands as well as a lot of wasted time in court.**
- E. ALL OF THE ABOVE**

SOLUTION:

No one likes to think about all of the bad things that could happen. But sometimes it helps to think these things through, especially when the stakes are high.

Getting caught drinking and driving would cost a small fortune in attorney's fees, court costs, court classes and other fines; not to mention a bad record that will haunt Alex for a long time. It's just not worth the risk.

And if Alex has an accident and someone gets hurt. Even if it is not his fault, he will be held at fault because he has been drinking and decided to get behind the wheel and drive.

When you think it through (especially the financial cost of drinking and driving, cab fares are cheap!

Never drink and drive. There are too many risks and too many better options available to you.

SCENARIO 5:

Linda, a single working mom, has discovered that her two teenage sons are using her car to pick up drugs and then selling them out of her home. She has confronted them before with this criminal behavior and demanded that they stop, but they have obviously decided to ignore her.

What should Linda do?

- A. Nothing. She has done all that she can do.
- B. Let them be, if they get caught by police, they will learn a good lesson.
- C. Confront them a second time and hope that they stop.
- D. Call the police and follow their advice.
- E. None of the above.

SOLUTION:

Civil forfeiture (also known as asset forfeiture) allows the government to seize property that was involved in certain types of criminal activity (typically drugs or prostitution), *even if the property owner is completely innocent of any crime herself*. For example, children who store or sell drugs in their parents' home are putting their parents' house at risk. If the police arrest the child for possessing or dealing drugs, the state can seize the house, kick out the parents, sell the house and keep the proceeds from the sale. Likewise, if somebody is pulled over in his parent's car and the police find drugs, the car can be seized and sold.

Another risk if your child is storing drugs in the home is that the parents themselves can be charged with drug crimes, such as possession or distribution. This is more likely to happen if the drugs are found in a common area of the home or if the police believe that the parents knew about the presence of drugs and did nothing.

Linda could even find herself facing criminal charges if she is not careful in her handling of this precarious situation.

EXAM REVIEW

- The Statement, “Staying out of trouble is a matter of Luck” is an example of an external locus of control.
- The statement, “if you follow the rules, you’ll stay out of trouble” is an example of an internal locus of control.
- If you do not make good decisions to direct your destiny, someone else may do it for you.
- Good decisions empower you and put you in control of your own destiny.
- I have the power to make good decisions and control my own destiny.

Respond to the following questions honestly and provide feedback as to the management of your own anger.

- How do I know when I’m making a bad decision?

- How do I feel inside when I’m making an important decision?

- What actions do I take regarding my decision making?

- The last time I made a bad decision, what happened?

- What are the reasons I usually make bad decisions?

- What problems have been caused by my decision making?

These questions will give you insight into situations that test your decision-making skills. Identifying the situations, circumstances and the consequences of your decisions is the first step toward practicing critical thinking and effective decision making.

Identify ways to practice critical thinking and develop your decision-making skills.

1. Identify a situation in which you have made a bad decision. Analyze your goals and desired expectations. *Break the situation down into steps. Examine each step...*

2. Situation: *Describe the situation...*

3. Goals/Expectations: *Describe your ideal self in regard to the situation (or how you would have liked to react) ...*

4. Steps in the event: *Now describe the situation in each step.*

5. Describe any benefits that this decision produced.

6. Did the decision cost you anything or cause any harm?

7. Did you experience regret due to your actions? Why?

8. What would you do differently?

9. What prevented you from doing things differently then?

10. How can you overcome these barriers in the future?

CONGRATULATIONS, YOU HAVE COMPLETED THIS COURSE!

Please proceed to the **FINAL EXAM** *and good luck!*

“I will not propose to you that my way is the best; the decision is up to you...”—Dalai Lama

- Please remember: Change is an inevitable process of life. You do not have to force yourself to practice the concepts in this course. Simply being aware of and understanding the concepts will create small changes in your life.
- **Every day** is a new day. **Every day** is a new opportunity.
- Educating yourself is the key to a healthier, more satisfying life.

We wish you the very best,

gisela bryant

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