



LAKE COUNTY NARCOTICS AGENCY

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Parent's Guide Week #9 Decision Making

This week we are talking to the class about the cause(s) and effect(s) of decision-making. We talk about how *one action can have varying consequences depending on the thought process and follow through*. We demonstrate this concept with a balloon. We blow up a balloon and tell the students we want the balloon to gently float to the ground. Then we let go of the balloon and it zips around the room and splats on the floor. *What's the thought process we overlooked?* Again we blow up the balloon with the intention of the balloon gently floating to the ground. This time we tie the balloon before we let it go. Guess what? Mission accomplished. The action on the balloon was the same both times; blew up the balloon. The consequences of letting go of the balloon were totally different each time due to our thought process and follow through (or lack there of).

It's pretty easy to predict the consequences and final results of our balloon activity. But what if we find our self in a situation where we don't have quite as much experience. What do we do then? It's pretty clear....we do what we have been taught. If we have learned to proceed without caution, then that's what we do. If we have learned to proceed with some hesitation and thought, then that's what we do. But, there are always those times when we have other influences redirecting our choices...that's when we need to stop and think, and put to use the following formula. We give the students a formula to use to help them figure out, and follow through with positive decisions. The formula is **PICS-r-ARS**. Here is what it means:

PICS:

P - what's the **problem**? Sometimes the problem is easy and straightforward like: should I do my homework or play on the internet? Other times the problem is more difficult to see like: should I smoke with a group of kids who I want to hang with? We all know that I should not smoke. That is not the problem. The problem is *I want to hang with this group* and *I want to fit in!*

I - what **ideas** can I come up with to solve the *problem*? Ideas are our choices or options. We need to brainstorm and list several different ideas. My first idea might be: "Okay, I'll smoke, but only once." If that is the only idea I can come up with it will be the only idea I act upon. Another idea might be to say "No" and use my humor, personality, athletic or musical ability to gain acceptance. Another idea is to say "No" and think about the pressure I will get to smoke if I hang with this group so now I Need To Leave. We need to come up with many ideas to increase our chances of making a better decision.

C - what will be the **consequences** of each of my *ideas*? There are many consequences of smoking even if it is only once. How will my parents react when they smell

the smoke on me, or a neighbor tells them what they saw? How long can I resist the pressure and not do what the rest of the group is doing? My parents will trust me more, other students will respect me more, and I will have more confidence in myself by saying No and finding another group to hang with who believe in the things I believe in.

S - this is where I figure out the **solution** that is right for me. We need to be sure the solution is best *for me* because I am the one who will have to live with the consequences. Sometimes our solution is based on what we think our friends would like. If these so-called friends want me to do something I know is dangerous and wrong then basing my decision on what I think *they would like me to do* is surely a dangerous way to make decisions.

ARS:

A - this is the **action** phase. Once we make our decision we need to carry it out. For example: we decide not to smoke and find another group to hang with. Here are my action steps: 1) Say No, and don't hang around that group. 2) Get involved in other activities so I can meet some other kids. 3) Let people know how I feel about smoking. That way there won't be any misunderstandings, I don't smoke!

R - now I **review** my decision and actions to make sure they are right for me. Do they still feel comfortable? Do I need to revise any of them? Do I need to get some additional information by talking to my parents? Am I sure my decision is the right one for me and not just to please my friends?

S - it's time for **self-praise**. We all feel better and respond better to praise than we do to ridicule. If we have made a good, positive decision, why not give ourselves a pat-on-the-back? Simply telling yourself you have done a good job and made a good decision will *help* you do your best the next time.

Parents: Helping youth make decisions about high-risk behaviors needs to be done ahead of time. Talk with your child about decisions regarding tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, and inhalant use now. Believe me, your children know they should say "No to drugs", **what's hard is saying no to the pressure they feel to fit in and belong to the group.**

Student/Parent Homework (Week 9):

The students have a worksheet following the PICS-r-ARS formula. They need to identify a recent decision they had to make regarding pressure from a *friend(s) or sibling*. They may need some help picking out a situation that will work for this example. By working through the formula your child will be reviewing what they did and did not do regarding solving the problem.