

## Recognizing & Avoiding Potential Problems



### the goal

The ability to identify and address or avoid potential problems is not often learned but it's a useful skill. The students need to know how to evaluate situations, determine the risks of certain situations, and then act accordingly. This skill is based on the students ability to gain perspective about situations that are, or could, become problematic.

### the objective



This exercise will help the students learn how to evaluate a situation, find the potential problems within that situation, and make choices accordingly.

## exercise

- 1 Explain to the students that the ability to identify potential problems and then address those problems is an important acquired skill. This skill will help them deal with
- 2 Tell the following story and have the students identify the potential problems that Randy faces:
 

Randy is a sophomore who makes decent grades. He doesn't really get into trouble and gets along well with other students and teachers. Randy and some friends head to a party on a Friday night. Randy is driving and his friends are already talking about the wild time they are going to have.

When they get to the party, Randy's friends all head in different directions. About an hour into the party, Randy sees Sue, a junior cheerleader that he has liked for some time. It is obvious that she has been drinking pretty heavily and she seems to be in a compromised state. Randy looks around and realizes he is the only person at the party not drinking. Everyone looks like they're having fun and a few of the guys are telling Randy to go ahead and have a drink. About that time Joe walks in. Randy has had an ongoing feud with Joe and Randy really doesn't like him. Joe has also been drinking heavily and is being really obnoxious.
- 3 Have the students identify potential problems Randy faces based upon some decisions he has to make. Look at Randy's situation and the people involved and decide what bad things could happen.

4 After the students have given responses, have them identify how Randy's choices could affect the following people:

- Randy's friends
- Sue
- Joe

5 After the students respond to this, share the following:

**Friends** – Randy will directly impact his friends in his decision of whether he should drink. Randy is the driver and if he begins drinking he will have his friends' lives in his hands.

**Sue** – Sue is obviously drunk. Her defenses are down and she doesn't know what she's doing. If Randy ever wanted a chance with her, now would be the time. Randy has a decision to make - whether he should make a move on Sue.

**Joe** – Randy has always disliked Joe but Joe is much larger. Under ordinary circumstances, he can't really fight back when Joe starts trouble. Randy knows that in Joe's current state he could take him on and probably do some damage.

6 Ask the students to think of Randy's possible consequences for different actions. Have the students identify how Randy's decisions could affect him and the other people involved.

**Friends** – Randy is the designated driver. If he starts drinking, then his friends will be riding with someone who is impaired. At best, Randy will get everyone home unharmed. However, Randy could be facing a DWI, or worse case, he could be in an accident hurting himself, his friends, and/or others on the road. On top of all of this, drinking alcohol is illegal for underage kids. If he gets caught, driving or not, he could be in a lot of trouble.

**Sue** – Randy has been infatuated with Sue for some time. She is beautiful and popular and to be honest, out of Randy's league. Randy could make a move on Sue and probably take advantage of her current state. If he did and was successful, Randy could be facing, at best, a very angry girl. When Sue realizes what happened she will likely feel taken advantage of. Worst case, Sue could have legal recourse against what Randy has done. Sue has put herself in a bad spot by drinking but Randy could be in an even worse spot if he doesn't keep his ethics and priorities straight.

**Joe** – Joe is much larger than Randy and has given him grief before. Randy is pretty sure that in Joe's drunken state he can take him on. If Randy follows through and starts a fight with Joe, he risks winning a fight with someone who is impaired now but will be sober and angry tomorrow. Randy could possibly hurt Joe and end up in legal trouble, or maybe even get beaten up by Joe. Either way, nothing good is going to come of a fight..

7 Ask the students what they would do in each of these scenarios given the potential consequences listed.

8 Make sure the students know that they had the luxury of being an observer to a situation and could look at consequences from the outside. However, when you have to make tough decisions it can be much more difficult to think through solutions and understand the consequences.

9 Tell the students that using the following rules can minimize the risk of making a decision with troublesome consequences:

- Stop
- Look at the entire situation and everyone involved
- Identify at least two choices you can make
- Think about how these choices will impact you, the other people involved, and the people close to you
- Think about how your choice will impact you now, tomorrow, and next week
- Make a choice you and your family can live with

10 Tell the students that it may sound corny but think of someone that they respect and then make decisions that they know would make that person proud.

11 The students also need to make comfortable decisions now and in the future because they will live with their decisions for the rest of their lives.

12 Spend a few moments identifying times in the day when potential problems and opportunities arise and how the students can make sure that the wisest choices are made.

### summary

Potential problems are inherent in every decision people make. The students need to know how to weigh options, make a choice that has the right outcome, and keep other people in mind as choices are made. This ability to make choices based on a desired outcome is a specifically relevant skill for moving towards independence..



## and hints

outcomes



As you tell the story of Randy, use a name and gender that is most relevant to the students.

Have the students name a time when they made poor choices and had to live with the consequences.

Have the students identify an upcoming decision in the near future, and work through the decision-making process identifying potential problems that could arise.

## talking points

- Share a story with the students about someone you know who failed to look at the potential problems from a decision and ended up with bad consequences.
- Talk to the students about how seemingly innocent choices can have a lasting impact on the student, their family, and their friends.
- Talk about how the student’s choices directly reflect on their family and friends.



## probing questions



- Have you ever been in a situation where you had to make tough choices ? How did you finally decide what to do ?
- In what way do your choices, behaviors, and words reflect on your family and friends ?
- What process do you go through to avoid making poor decisions when you are faced with a problem ?



## Skills Lesson Recap



### the goal

The ability to identify and address or avoid potential problems is a skill that is necessary, but often not learned. You now know how to evaluate situations, ascertain the risks of certain situations, and then act accordingly. This skill is based on your ability to gain perspective about situations that are or could become problematic.

### exercise key points

- You were given a scenario involving a young man who is faced with making personal decisions that if not dealt with appropriately could negatively effect him as well as others around him. You were then asked to identify potential concerns about the decisions the young man had to make.
- You identified how the character's choices could have affected others involved in the story such as his friends.
- The instructor led you through a number of likely consequences resulting from different actions taken by the young man in the story.
- This exercise trained you on a simple set of decision making rules that when followed will help minimize the potential of future problems down the road.

### consequence of not

By not following the steps outlined within this exercise you are less likely to succeed in recognizing and avoiding potential problems in everyday life; and therefore are ill prepared to make decisions based upon intended outcomes. This leaves others around you to constantly question the decisions you make.

using this skill



benefits

### of using this skill

By utilizing the skills taught in this lesson you will be better prepared to make sound decisions based upon looking at the entire situation, including possible consequences, and the affect your decisions will have on those around you.

## Recognizing and Avoiding Potential Problems

Listen to the story and complete the following:

identify potential problems from the story (look at situations & people)	What bad thing could happen to Randy?

	how do choices affect:	Consequences?
friends		
Sue		
Joe		

Learn the following rules for evaluating situation and making better decisions:

- Stop
- Look at the entire situation and everyone involved
- Identify
- Think
- Make a choice

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Facilitator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_