

EXPLORING ALTERNATIVES AND CONSIDERING CONSEQUENCES



AGENDA

- Starter
- Hit the Nail on the Head
- The Gift
- Fallout Shelter: Considering Consequences
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

Objectives

Students will discover that they should think creatively about alternative solutions to problems and not restrict themselves to obvious choices.

Students will practice weighing the consequences of various alternatives by investigating the positives and negatives of each.

Students will apply the steps of exploring alternatives and weighing options to the fallout shelter simulation.

Materials Needed

- Nails, a long wood board, a rock, a hammer, a mallet, and a balloon (Part I)
- One copy of “The Gift” activity sheet for each student (Part II)
- Fallout shelter folders (Part III)

Starter (3 minutes)

Ask students to imagine that it's a rainy Saturday evening, and they're on their way to a concert. They hear that an accident has closed the route to the concert. What will they do? (*Students will likely mention taking an alternate route.*)

Now, ask them to imagine that a fire has closed the alternate route they've chosen. What will they do now? (*Students will likely mention taking yet another route.*)

Ask them which route they would choose. (*Students should respond that to get to the concert on time, they will try to find the shortest alternative route.*)

Explain that to get to their destination, they must identify their goal, look at all the possibilities, and consider the advantages and disadvantages of each one. Explain that the same is true when they make any decision—they must know what is important, explore all the alternatives, and consider the consequences of each possibility.

Part I Hit the Nail on the Head (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students discover that they should think creatively about alternative solutions to problems and not restrict themselves to obvious choices.

1. Students identify solutions to a challenge.

Place a hammer, several nails, wood, a rock, and a balloon on a table in the front of the room or on the floor in the middle of the classroom. Ask a student volunteer to figure out a way to drive a nail into the wood. Ask the volunteer to write a sentence describing the solution on the board (e.g., "I would use the hammer to drive the nail into the wood").

Ask other volunteers to demonstrate other solutions. Have each volunteer write their solution on the board.

2. Students recognize that they instinctively weigh options.

Ask students why none of them chose to drive in the nail with the balloon. (Responses should indicate that the balloon would pop and would not drive in the nail.)

Ask students to consider why you might have asked such a silly question. Lead students to the understanding that they used their experiences to weigh options and disregard possibilities that obviously would not work.

3. Students create alternative solutions.

Ask students why no one used their shoe. (Students may respond that you did not tell them that they could use something that was not on the table.) Explain that you told them to figure out a way to drive the nail into the wood, not what to use or where to find it.

Now that students know this, ask them to suggest other ways they could achieve the goal. Have students brainstorm possibilities and add them to the list.

When students have finished brainstorming, explain that what they have just done is come up with some creative alternatives that contribute to well-thought-out decisions. Remind them that when they are exploring alternatives, they shouldn't restrict their thinking; they should evaluate their options and consider consequences only after they've created a list of alternatives.

Part II The Gift (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students weigh the positive and negative consequences of various alternatives.

1. Students are presented with a situation that requires a decision.

Distribute "The Gift" activity sheet to students.

Read aloud the following situation:

You have just won \$2,000. You've wanted to buy a used car that a neighbor is selling. The last time you asked, the owner said she would sell the car for \$1,995. You know what money you have saved and what you earn weekly.

On the chart, list the positives and negatives of buying the car.

2. Students analyze positive and negative consequences.

As students begin to fill out the positives and negatives on the activity sheet, prompt them with the following questions:

- Have you considered the cost of gas, maintenance, and insurance?
- Would you have to give up spending money on some things to pay for car expenses? How will you deal with this?
- How will your time be affected if you buy the car?
- Could car ownership affect your social life?
- Are there any consequences that might affect your family?

Ask students to share some of the positive and negative consequences that they listed. Allow students to add consequences that they find relevant.

Ask students to raise their hands if, after analyzing the positives and negatives, they will buy the car.

3. Students are confronted with unexpected consequences.

Say, “You’ve decided to buy the car. You tell a close friend that you’re getting wheels next Tuesday. Your friend says, ‘That’s great. I can’t wait to borrow it.’ What are the consequences of telling your friend that he can drive the car? What are the consequences of telling your friend he can’t drive the car?”

Give students a minute to fill in the positives and negatives of each choice in the second row.

When students have finished listing the consequences, say, “Something else has come up. When you tell your mom that you’re going to buy the car, she tells you that if you buy the car, you will have to pick up your brother at the elementary school and your sister at the middle school every day. Then, she adds that you can also help her take the groceries to your grandmother every Saturday morning. What are the positives and negatives here?”

4. Students learn that a decision can be revised when unexpected consequences appear.

Give students time to add the consequences in the third row. Then, have students discuss their responses. Ask if any of these unexpected consequences caused them to change their decision. Why?

Point out to students that decisions can be changed or revised when they have considered all the consequences, if a situation changes, or if more information becomes available. Explain that in this case, their decision affected not only themselves, but others around them (including friends and family).

Part III Fallout Shelter: Considering Consequences (30 minutes)

Purpose: Students apply the steps of exploring alternatives and weighing options to the fallout shelter simulation.

1. Students review their progress in the fallout shelter simulation.

Have students return to their simulation groups. Return the fallout shelter folders. Ask a volunteer to summarize the situation and the decision that each group must make. Reinforce the understanding that the groups must decide which six individuals make the best combination of people.

Remind them that during the last lesson, they developed questions for which they needed answers to help make the decision. They also identified sources that would be useful in obtaining pertinent information. In addition, they learned more about the characters.

2. Students determine the alternatives.

Have students work in their groups to determine as many alternative groupings as possible. Remind students that they should keep their minds open and look for alternatives that are “outside the box.” Remind them that they should not restrict themselves or comment on others’ suggestions at this stage. Explain that they should also not be weighing consequences yet; they are just brainstorming alternatives and will weigh consequences next. Allow them 10 minutes to complete this step.

3. Students consider the positive and negative consequences of each alternative.

After 10 minutes have passed, suggest that the group decide on a simple method of recording positives and negatives (e.g., pro/con lists). Allow them 10 minutes to weigh the positives and negatives for each alternative. Remind them to look for unexpected consequences.

4. Students participate in a debriefing process for the simulation.

Ask groups to identify how many alternatives they discovered. Then, ask them to think about the process of considering the consequences. Inquire:

- What methods or procedures did your group develop in order to consider the positives and the negatives?
- What problems or challenges did your group face?
- How did your group resolve any difficulties?
- If you were to do this step again, what would your group do differently?
- What were some of the surprising or interesting alternatives and consequences your group considered?

Have the groups return any materials to their folders. Collect the folders.

Tell students that during the next session, they will make their decisions.

Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students to explain why it is important to consider the long-term effects of their decisions. Ask students to explain how it is possible that the decisions they make may affect other people. Elicit from students the following key points that were taught in this lesson:

- When making a decision, consider all the alternatives and think creatively.
- Carefully weigh the consequences of each alternative by examining the positives and the negatives of each possibility.

Student Assessment

1. List five positive consequences and three negative consequences of doing volunteer work in your community.
2. Describe a situation in which you made a decision that led to unexpected consequences. How did you react to those unexpected consequences? Would you react differently now?

LESSON EXTENSIONS

Using Quotations

“Most of the things we decide are not what we know to be the best. We say yes, merely because we are driven into a corner and must say something.” —Frank Crane

Have volunteers relate situations in which students might say yes when they want to say no. Discuss the consequences of these decisions.

Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

Have students create comic strips illustrating decisions they must soon make, the options available to them, and possible consequences for each alternative.

Post the strips around the classroom.

Writing in Your Journal

Have students identify a problem in their communities. Tell them to list options for solving this problem and write the possible positive and negative consequences for each option.

Have students share their work in small groups. Ask the groups to discuss options/consequences that might have been overlooked.

Using Technology

Show *Hoop Dreams*, a documentary that follows the high school careers of two African American teenage boys, both extraordinary basketball players who hope to earn NBA contracts.

Discuss with students who and what influenced the boys' decisions, the alternatives open to them, and what consequences seemed to be most important in their decisions.

Homework

Have students chart their TV viewing for one week. The chart should include shows, genres, characters, decisions made, and how those decisions were made (e.g., peer influence, advice, research). Students should also include the outcome of each decision.

Have students construct a bar graph categorizing the influences on decisions in each show, using a different color for each one.

Additional Resources

Have students read *Into Thin Air* by Jon Krakauer, his taut first-person account of the 1996 Everest expeditions that resulted in the deaths of 12 people—a chronicle of bad decisions from start to finish.

Have students chart the reasons for the various decisions in the book and the consequences of those decisions.

THE GIFT

You have just won \$2,000. You've wanted to buy a used car that a neighbor is selling. The last time you asked, the owner said she would sell the car for \$1,995. You know what money you have saved and what you earn weekly.

On the chart, list the positives and negatives of buying the car.

	Positive Consequences	Negative Consequences
1. Expected Consequences		
2. Unexpected Consequences		
3. Unexpected Consequences		