

CLARIFYING VALUES



AGENDA

- Starter
- This or That
- Valuable Squares
- Being True to Yourself
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

Objectives

Students will analyze how their values influence the decisions they make.

Students will identify the people, possessions, activities, and future plans they value.

Students will demonstrate how their values influence their decision making.

Materials Needed

- One sheet of paper for each student (Part II)
- One copy of the “Mission to Mars” activity sheet (Part II)
- One role-play scenario card for each group of three to four students (Part III)

Starter (3 minutes)

With a sense of urgency, tell students that they have 30 seconds to choose one person and one possession they would take with them to a deserted island. They can assume that their basic needs, such as food, water, and shelter, will be met.

When 30 seconds have elapsed, ask volunteers which person and possession they chose. Encourage students to explain why they made their particular choices.

After volunteers have responded, explain that different individuals value different things. Tell students that knowing what they value will help them make decisions and plans that they are comfortable with.

Tell students that today they're going to spend some time identifying what they value.

Part I This or That (5 minutes)

Purpose: Students analyze how their values influence the decisions they make.

1. Students listen to instructions.

Explain to students that they will be presented with a series of choices. Depending on what they choose and where you point, they should either stand up or remain seated.

Demonstrate how this will work by saying, "For example, I will ask if you would rather have X (point up, meaning stand up) or Y (point down, meaning remain seated)."

2. Students play a game involving choices.

Beginning with simple choices and moving to more difficult ones, ask students a series of questions such as the following:

- Would you rather wear clothes with patterns or without patterns?
- Would you rather be on stage or in the audience?
- Would you rather be an athlete or an artist?
- Would you rather spend time with your family or with your friends?
- Would you rather do something with others or work on something alone?
- Would you rather be healthy but poor, or terminally ill but very rich?

3. Students reflect on their choices.

Ask students if they thought the choices became more difficult toward the end. Invite volunteers to give examples of choices that they found difficult to make. Encourage them to explain why these choices were difficult, and to describe how they finally made a decision.

Point out that people make decisions every day. Many decisions are easy to make and seem unimportant. But sometimes the decisions are more difficult, and they require more thought. Explain that what is important to us, or what we value, influences the decisions and choices we make.

Tell students that for this reason, it's necessary for each person to know what they consider to be important. Knowing what we value allows us to make decisions and choices with which we are most comfortable.

Part II Valuable Squares (30 minutes)

Purpose: Students identify people, possessions, activities, and future plans they value.

1. Students identify people and things that are important to them.

Give each student a sheet of paper. Demonstrate how to fold, crease, and cut the paper to make 16 squares. First, fold the paper in half from top to bottom, and crease it. Now, fold and crease it from side to side. Then, fold and crease it again from top to bottom, and finally again from side to side. Unfold the paper, and use a ruler or the side of your desk to tear along the crease lines.

Using the 16 squares, students should write a word or two to identify the following:

- Three favorite activities
- Five important people in their lives
- Three goals they have for the future
- Three favorite possessions
- Two things they would like to own someday

Each person, thing, activity, or goal should be written on a separate square.

Tell students to keep the squares in separate stacks on their desks, but to combine the possessions into one stack. In other words, they should have four stacks: activities, people, goals, and possessions.

2. Students listen to an imaginary story and identify whom and what they value most.

Explain to students that you are going to read a story. After you read each part of the story, they will be asked to make a decision. They will have 10 to 15 seconds to make the decision. All decisions are final. Discarded squares must be crumpled or torn up.

Read the “Mission to Mars” activity sheet aloud to students. After each part, pause for 10 or 15 seconds before announcing that time is up.

Then, continue to read the story.

3. Students reflect on their decisions.

Prompt students to think about and evaluate the decisions they made by asking:

- How did you feel about the decisions you made? Why?
- Which were the hardest ones for you to make?
- Would it have been easier if someone else had made the decisions for you? Why or why not?
- Was anyone surprised by the squares they had left at the end? Do these squares reflect what's really important to you?
- If you were to play this game again, would you choose to have different squares at the end? Raise your hand if you would.
- If you were to play this game again, would you change some of the things you wrote on your squares? Raise your hand if you would.

End this activity by explaining that we all value different people and things for different reasons; each person lives by different personal rules. Tell students that while it's important to respect the values and rules of others, it's difficult to be the person you want to be and to respect yourself unless you live according to your own values and rules.

Part III Being True to Yourself (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students demonstrate how their values influence their decision making.

1. Students role-play situations in small groups.

Divide the class into groups of three or four. Explain that each group will role-play a situation involving peer pressure. Tell students that each group must select one person to play the main character. The rest of the group will then try to convince the main character to do something that they don't want to do.

Give each group a notecard with one of the following scenarios:

- Amy loves playing basketball. Two days before a big game, her friends try to convince her to skip practice, and go instead to see a popular new movie.
- Darien made plans to hang out with his best friend. Darien's other friends want him to ditch his best friend and hang out with them.
- Serena's favorite possession is a tablet that her older brother gave to her. It's engraved with the words "Best sister ever!" Her friends want her to trade in the tablet to get the latest model.
- Alan has a dream of making the honor roll. His friends try to convince him that studying is not important.

Tell students that they have five minutes to work. Circulate among the groups, listening and observing as students role-play their scenarios.

2. Students reflect on their experiences.

Ask those students who played a main character if it was hard not to be swayed by their classmates. As students respond, ask them if they would rather have been on the other side of the role play. Invite other students to describe how it felt to try to convince the main characters to do something they didn't want to do.

Acknowledge that being true to yourself is not always easy to do. Explain that when you have a clear understanding of what you value, it becomes easier to be true to yourself. Tell students that this program will help them learn more about their values and their goals, and give them practice in being true to themselves.

Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students to define “values.” Have them describe how their values affect the way they choose to live their lives. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- The things you value influence everything you do.
- Decide on what you value, and make choices and decisions based on that.
- Be respectful of what others value, but always make your own choices.
- Your decisions may be tough, but if you stay true to yourself and what you value, you’ll feel good about whatever you decide.

Student Assessment

1. Define “personal values.”
2. Why would someone make a decision that goes against what they value? What problems could this cause?
3. Describe a decision you have made in your life, and explain how this decision relates to your personal values.

LESSON EXTENSIONS

Using Quotations

Quote: “The best things in life aren’t things.” —Art Buchwald

Activity: Ask students if they agree or disagree with this quote. As a class, discuss how valuing only material goods leads to an unhappy life.

Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

Activity: Have students bring in an object that’s important to them. Encourage them to think about objects that reveal something about themselves. Have students explain the importance of their objects in small groups. As a whole class, categorize the objects that students value (e.g., possessions, family relationships).

Writing in Your Journal

Activity: Have students write a letter to someone they value (e.g., a friend, a family member, a public figure), telling this person what they mean to them. Have students discuss why these people are important to them.

Using Technology

Activity: Have students use the internet to locate the mission statements of several corporations and organizations. You may want to assign a few familiar ones (e.g., Girl Scouts, McDonald’s, the NBA). Have students analyze the different mission statements and generate a list of company values. What similarities are found? Do all companies stay true to their mission statements?

Homework

Activity: Distribute the “Mission to Mars” activity sheet and have students play the game again, once with a partner and once with someone not in the class. Have students share their observations with the class. Did the results change the second time around? How did their friends’ and family members’ answers compare with their own? Were they surprised by anything they observed?

Additional Resources

Activity: Have students read “Raymond’s Run,” a short story by Toni Cade Bambara printed in *America Street: A Multicultural Anthology of Stories*. Have students discuss Hazel’s values. How do her values compare with their own?

MISSION TO MARS

- 1.** You have volunteered to undergo training to journey into space and take part in an effort to make Mars habitable. You will need to dramatically change your daily routine to begin training for the mission. You have to give up one of your favorite activities to prepare.
- 2.** Because of the mission, you will be away from your normal life for some time. You must lose one of your goals.
- 3.** There is a limited amount of room on the spacecraft that will take you to Mars. You must give up one of your possessions.
- 4.** The engineers have redesigned the spacecraft in order to make it safer, but there is less extra space now. You have to give up another possession.
- 5.** You are given news that in order to make the most out of the mission, you will be on Mars longer and must undergo even more training for the mission. You lose one of your goals and must give up an activity. And because of how busy you are now, two important people disappear from your life since you are no longer able to maintain relationships as easily.
- 6.** Space becomes even more limited onboard the spacecraft and as stress mounts for the impending mission, you find it even harder to make time for the people you care about. Discard two important people and two possessions.
- 7.** As you prepare to embark, it becomes more and more clear that the mission will take up decades of your life. You must discard three of your remaining squares. Which will they be?
- 8.** You have returned from the mission and will live out the rest of your life with only this person, possession, goal, or activity.