

Upper Intermediate – Consider the Consequences of Your Actions

Aim: To encourage students to think about how decisions they make can have negative long-term consequences, even if they have positive short-term ones.

Lead-in: Discuss with the class what kinds of choices and decisions they have to make every day about the following things:

- *money*
- *going out*
- *school work*
- *telling friends something*
- *telling parents or teachers something*

Ask which decisions they find easy and which more difficult. What factors make the difficult decisions problematic? Ask students to work in pairs and tell their partner about a recent decision they made which had negative consequences and a decision that resulted in a more positive outcome.

Write the following questions on the board, and ask students to answer them for each decision:

- *How did you feel at the time?*
- *What external forces influenced your decision?*
- *What happened in the end?*
- *What would you do differently?*

Choose A Scenario: Ask students to work in pairs and choose one of the three scenarios (A–C). Explain to students that they should think of all the possible courses of action they could take in the scenario and the consequences each decision will have. Ask them to think of at least three. Write on the board:

- *Who will be affected by the decision?*
- *What are the positive consequences? Are they long or short term?*
- *What are the negative consequences? Are they long or short term?*

Ask students to consider the questions above in relation to each possible decision they thought of for their scenario. Ask students to say what they would probably do in the scenario and what

they should do. Are they the same? Encourage students to look at the Reflection Point while they are working.

Reflection Point: Explain to students that it's often hard to think of what the long-term consequences of our decisions will be when we are thinking of short-term rewards.

Although it's hard, it's sometimes advisable to exercise some self-control when making decisions, so we are not impulsive and do something we may regret later or which may hurt another person.

Class discussion: Ask each pair to work with another pair who chose the same scenario. Ask students to compare the possible decisions they thought of for the scenario, and what the possible short and long-term consequences might be. Did they have the same ideas? Which decisions were best? Ask students to discuss what external factors and emotions might have been important when making a decision in the scenario (e.g., *peer pressure, fear of looking silly, etc.*).

Discuss with students whether any of the scenarios portrayed situations similar to those students have been in themselves. Ask the following questions:

- *Have you been in a similar situation?, What did you do then?*
- *Do you think you made the right decision at the time?*
- *What were the consequences?*

Encourage students to think of other situations in which they might face difficult decisions which have long-term consequences.

Work alone: Ask students to work alone and choose a second scenario from A–C and follow the same steps as in section 2. Focus students on two simple questions to ask when making a decision for their scenario:

- *How will this decision help you now?*
- *How will it affect you in the future?*

Ask them to choose one decision that has a positive outcome and one that has a negative outcome, and to think of all the possible consequences and

their subsequent consequences and so on, as far as they can go. Once they have finished, invite volunteers to present their possible decisions and consequences to the class.

Extension: _ Write the following questions on the board:

- *How many decisions that we make in our daily lives is it possible to plan?*
- *What kinds of decisions can have serious consequences for our health or for our future lives as adults?*
- *What kinds of decisions can affect our relationships with friends, parents, or teachers in a negative way?*

Allow groups time to discuss the questions before holding a whole-class discussion. Ask, *how can we make sure our decisions have the best possible outcomes for ourselves and for other people?* Ask students to come up with a five-step plan of things to consider when making important decisions.