

Unit 1: Foundations for Abstinence

LESSON 9

SLEMA DECISION MAKING STEPS

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Lesson Objectives

Participants will learn about a decision-making process called SLEMA. They will practice applying it to small choices and then to a problem in their own lives. Participants will understand how the TFA Cycle impacts their ability to make good choices for their lives. The steps of SLEMA are written out like a script for the instructor to use as an explanation.

WHAT YOU NEED TO HAVE READY

Materials & Preparation

- One sheet of poster board - write out the SLEMA process on it and keep it posted in the classroom

- *The SLEMA Decision Making Model* 

THE LESSON TEACHING PLAN

Procedures

#1: SLEMA DECISION MAKING PROCESS

Helpful Hints for Group Facilitation

Review the previous lesson about role models and how many of them had to face tough choices in order to persevere to reach their dreams and goals. Explain that the next step is to understand how choices are made and the decision-making process. This lesson describes a step-by-step decision-making process youth can use to make choices.

TYING IT BACK TO ABSTINENCE

Participants need to learn that no matter what the situation, they always have choices. There are decisions to be made every day and those decisions will pave the way for their future. With a strong foundation and formula for making decisions, youth will be able to evaluate their choices. These choices, such as avoiding situations that may make them more vulnerable to sex before marriage will form a foundation in their lives. Youth do not like to be TOLD what to do. They should be empowered to make their own decisions. When doing so, they will be more likely to follow through on them. In evaluating the decision to remain abstinent until marriage, youth can take ownership of their choice to live this healthy and safe lifestyle. They will have the ability to understand the challenges that an abstinent until marriage lifestyle may present in their future, but will also recognize the positive outcomes that it will bring.

#1: THE SLEMA DECISION MAKING PROCESS (CONT.)

Step 1- *State and Understand the Problem*

What is the real problem? State it clearly and write it down so you can look at it. This may sound easy yet sometimes what we think is the problem is actually only our reaction to a deeper concern. You need to look at the important facts and values, be honest about your feelings and understand what the real concern is all about. This means: Be honest with yourself!

For example:

Stated problem: Tony says, “I don’t like school and I am not going.”

Real problem: Tony means, “I can’t read well enough to keep up and I feel too stupid to tell anyone about it.”

Restated problem: Tony’s problem is, “I need help in reading.”

Stated problem: Ann says, “I think I will have sex with my boyfriend so I won’t lose him.”

Real problem: Ann means, “I don’t feel right about having sex, but I am feeling pressure from my boyfriend.”

Restated problem: Ann’s problem is, “I need help living out my goal of sexual abstinence.”

Some problems are simple and obvious, while others are more complex. Whatever type of problem you’re dealing with, the first thing you need to do is understand and state the problem clearly.

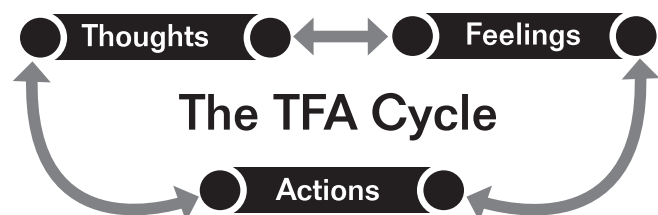
Step 2- *Look at the Choices*

After you have defined what the problem is, you want to know what you can do about it. You need to look at the choices. This means listing on paper the many possible ways that you could deal with the problem. To do this, you have to open your mind to lots of ideas and perspectives. People in your life that you trust can help with this step. Write down all ideas even ones you may not like. Brainstorm the alternatives without judging them yet. Remember to think of options that are in keeping with your values. Look at the choices and determine which values are present in each choice.

Step 3- *Evaluate the Possible Solutions*

You will need to look at each choice and weigh the positive and negative consequences or outcomes of the choice. Be honest about what could happen if you choose an option. How will it work out now and over time? Be open to input from others. Also apply the following six criteria to each option.

1. *Is it safe?*
2. *Is it legal?*
3. *Is it respectful of self and others?*
4. *Does it follow my parent’s guidelines?*
5. *Is it healthy?*
6. *How will it affect my future?*



Step 4- **M**ake a Decision

Look at the list of choices and their consequences and pick the best solution for you. This is a very crucial step, so do it thoughtfully. Keep in mind that if your decision doesn't play out the way you expected, you will be able to go back and use the decision making process again. This time you will have even more knowledge due to what you learned from making a not-so-good choice.


Step 5- **A**ct on Your Choice

Now it is time to put your choice into action. Feel good about the fact that you have used a tested process and are now working on the solution to your problem. You can be proud of your action.

The more you use this process, the easier and more natural it will become. It is a helpful tool when you are faced with pressure from friends to make choices that are against your values and would lead you away from your goals. The focus of this program is to help you remain sexually abstinent until marriage. Using the SLEMA process will help you to think through this very important decision and how to maintain your choice in the face of different situations.

#2: DECISIONS, DECISIONS!

Activity Purpose Statement: *The purpose of this activity is to use the SLEMA Decision Making Model to examine some decisions participants have already made today.*

- (A) Ask participants to brainstorm a list of decisions that they have already made today.
- (B) Handout the *SLEMA Decision Making Model*. Give participants time to pick one and try to go through the model on their handout. 
- (C) Ask for four volunteers to share how they applied the SLEMA process to one of the choices for the rest of the group. Instructor can begin with the following stream of consciousness example: I chose to wear my older jeans today.

S My problem was to decide which pair of pants to wear.

L My options were either a pair of clean jeans or a pair of black or khaki pants.

E The other jeans look better on me, but I wanted to wear them when I go out with my friends tonight and I didn't want them to get dirty. The khakis are too tight these days; the black ones are okay and are comfortable, but not as good-looking as my other jeans. The black option and the ones I chose were both good choices. Neither option was unsafe, illegal, or disrespectful of self and others (though, my grandma doesn't understand wearing jeans to work, but she won't see me today). My parents are cool with whatever I wear; the choices don't impact my health or my future.

M I chose to wear these today and the black ones tomorrow.

A I am wearing the jeans!

#3: DIFFERENT WEIGHT OF OUR CHOICES & THE TFA CYCLE

(A) ***Helpful Hints for Group Facilitation***

Share the following with the group:

- People actually use SLEMA every day in many ways without even thinking about it. However, once they are aware of it, people may apply it to those situations where choice can make a big difference in their lives.
- Sometimes people decide “not to decide.” They may begin to think about all the possible solutions and realize to take action would be uncomfortable, so they do nothing. This actually is a decision, too. At times, choosing not to decide has the worst possible consequences.

(B) Ask the group to brainstorm some situations in which people might find themselves in danger if they do not act on good choices.

(C) Take two ideas from the brainstormed list and ask participants how the TFA Cycle would impact the decision process for this issue. What might the person be thinking that would hurt his or her ability to see all the options? What thoughts would lead to feelings that keep him or her from being able to accurately evaluate the options?

(D) Conclude by making the following comments:

When we apply SLEMA to our problems, we must challenge our thoughts about the issue in order to focus on the real problem, to consider several options and to understand the real consequences. How we think and feel will greatly impact whether we act on what we know to be best.

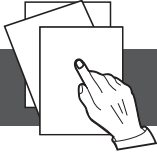
YOUTH REFLECTION

In The Journal



Write the following directions on the board:

- a. Describe a problem that you are facing or one that you recently faced.
- b. State the problem and list two thoughts that feed this understanding of the problem.
- c. Look at choices that you can think of and a feeling that you have related to each option.
- d. Evaluate the possible solutions. Write 2-3 pros and 2-3 cons about each option.
- e. Make a decision. Circle the option that appears to be the best for you, and state how you feel about acting upon that option.
- f. Act on your choice. Will you act on this? If yes, what will you do first? If no, why not?
- g. Identify a trusted adult from whom you would like to get input on this problem.
- h. List two thoughts related to this problem about which you could talk to that adult or one of your peers to see if your facts are accurate. What resource could you go to and check out the facts?



THE SLEMA DECISION MAKING MODEL

1. **S**tate and understand the problem - What's going on?
2. **L**ist and Evaluate the possible choices - What are my options?
3. **E**valuate the possible solutions - What would happen if...?
4. **M**ake a decision based on everything you know. I have decided to ...
5. **A**ct on your choice. My first step will be to ...

(Remember to revisit your choice in a few weeks and think about how things turn out and how you might do things differently next time.)

CHOICES

CONSEQUENCES

	First Choice	Second Choice	Third Choice
Is it safe?			
Is it legal?			
Is it respectful of self and others?			
Does it follow my parent's guidelines?			
Is it healthy?			
How will it affect my future?			
Other consequences			
Is it the right thing to do?			

Unit 1: Foundations for Abstinence

LESSON 10

THE DECISION MAZE OF SEXUAL ABSTINENCE

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Lesson Objectives

Participants will apply SLEMA and the TFA Cycle to the decision to be sexually abstinent until marriage. This is an introduction to ideas that will be more fully developed in later units of this program.

WHAT YOU NEED TO HAVE READY

Materials & Preparation

- Duct tape or masking tape - lots of it! With tape, construct a large maze on the floor or outside on a large area such as a playground. You may also set up a kind of physical obstacle course similar to one a gym educator or military leader might set up.
- Stopwatch or other timing device (optional)
- SLEMA and TFA Cycle visuals from previous sessions
- 4 index cards with the following Obstacle Decisions written on them:

1. Your date wants you to come back to his or her house after a movie. His or her parents are going to be next door at a friend's house.
2. You watch TV a lot and constantly see people choosing to have sex without being married.
3. Two of your friends have become sexually active and tell you about it.
4. Your parents are divorced and you can't imagine going through the pain that they went through both during the marriage and during the divorce. Marriage isn't for you!

TYING IT BACK TO ABSTINENCE

Life is full of choices. Youth already know that! Helping them to see abstinence until marriage as a realistic choice for them is a goal of FUPTP. Through their decision making process, goal identification and development of a supportive peer group, youth are able to view an abstinent lifestyle as a choice they want to make. Understanding that there may be difficulties along with recognizing all of the potential benefits of abstinence will encourage youth to make that choice and stick to it.

Procedures

#1: INTRODUCTION

Activity Purpose Statement: *The purpose of the next two activities is to introduce how the decision-making process affects the choice to remain abstinent from sexual activity until marriage. Participants will use the TFA Cycle and the SLEMA Decision Making Model to explore this connection.*

- (A) As the participants enter, allow each one to go through the maze to become familiar with it. You may want to have fun by using a stopwatch and timing them.

#2: PUTTING YOUR CHOICES INTO ACTION

ENTERING THE MAZE!

- (A) Introduce the activity by making the following comments:
Last session we talked about SLEMA as a way to decide what to do in problem situations. Today we are going to take the next step and look at what it is like to put our choices into action. We are going to look at the decision to remain sexually abstinent until marriage and the maze of obstacle decisions that may need to be made along the path.
- (B) Ask for volunteers for the following jobs:
- **Judges** who will vote whether the maze-walker has answered a challenge using the points of SLEMA. (Choose 5 participants)
 - **Obstacle Decision Holders** to stand at the roadblocks in the maze. (Choose as many participants as you have cards).
 - **The Maze-Walker** who is trying to remain true to the decision of abstinence until marriage. This person will verbally talk through SLEMA when faced with obstacles.
 - **The TFA Detective** who will point out the thoughts that might be in error after the Maze-Walker goes through the SLEMA process.
 - The rest of the group will be the **support for the Maze-Walker**. The Maze-Walker can ask for guidance at any point by asking one youth at a time and no more than two participants for each obstacle.
- (C) The Maze-Walker begins walking through the maze. When he or she runs into a roadblock, the obstacle decision is read aloud and the Maze-Walker must verbally go through the SLEMA process. The Maze-Walker may ask the support group for help.
- (D) The TFA Detective is given a chance to point out some potentially inaccurate thoughts which the youth might want to check out before moving ahead. The youth is not required to check these out unless it is something the instructor or participants can verify.

- Ⓔ The Judges vote on whether the youth has completed the task well enough to move on. It is best to ensure the Judges' votes remain private to avoid arguments. You can do this by having Judges write their votes on a sheet of paper. If the Judges vote no, the Maze-Walker can ask the support group for help to gain passage from the Judges.
- Ⓕ At any point along the way, if the Maze-Walker's frustration gets too high, allow him or her to swap with someone else in the group.
- Ⓖ This process can go as fast or as slow as the group and the instructor want. Make sure that all participants are engaged in the activity. You may want to have two very different youths go through the maze process to show the different reactions to the obstacles.
- Ⓕ If the participants are enthusiastic about the activity, allow them choose another problem to "walk-out" with their peers.

YOUTH REFLECTION

In The Journal



Draw a maze to represent a solution that you believe would solve a problem in your family or friendships. Include the obstacle decisions which are keeping you from your goal. Alternately, create a picture to symbolize the confusion, fear and hope that people feel when faced with making a difficult decision.

