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Decision Making

I. - Goal

To facilitate the development of decision-making skills that lead to enhanced and enjoyable driving.

II. - Instructional **Objectives**

The students will be able to ...

- ... identify that decision making behavior is based on knowledge, experience and feelings.
- ... recognize that changes in knowledge, experience and feelings can lead to changed decisions.
- ... define the relationship between expanded knowledge and experience on the quality of driving decisions.

III. - Instructional Method

This is not a single lesson but the first of a series of lessons. Each topic covered in driver education should use the same format to change the student's decision making "feelings" by increasing their knowledge and experiences.

In the past driver education programs taught many "dos" and "don'ts" along with a logical decision making process such as IPDE or SIPDE. This module is based on the recognition that many driving decisions are made by a non-thinking instinctive process. This material refers to this as "feelings." A driver will do an action in a given way because it feels right. A teacher can remind a student of the "safe" way to do an action. The student will not change how the action is done until his or her internal feelings change.

We recommend that the decision making concepts be introduced at the first class or at a parent night activity. Throughout the classroom activities, and during behind the wheel teaching these concepts should be reinforced. Parents should continue the concept during practice driving. As the novice driver becomes more independent, these concepts will be followed without a conscious effort.

This lession can not stand alone. It is designed as a series of triggers for classroom discussion and student thinking. There are several points at which the lession provides opportunities to pause and discuss. The video, without pauses and discussions, would take about 18 minutes. With proper classroom interction the lesson should take 45 to 60 minutes.

Decision Making

The script of the lession follows in smaller type and indented. Information for teachers is inserted within the script in full size type.

The Lesson:

Introduce the lesson by explaining to the students that they are going to examine the decision making process they use. It will be very important for them to think about HOW they make decisions. There are no right or wrong answers.

Begin by making the following two statements and explaining them. There are overhead masters in the attachments.

"Decision Making is the most important skill new drivers need to develop as they become part of the Highway Transportation System."

"Most decisions made are based on intuitive feelings, past experience and or knowledge learned."

Start the video.

> Because new drivers have limited driving experience, they can not rely on experience alone to make good decisions. The beginning driver's decisions are based more on the interaction of feelings and knowledge.
>
> In the next few minutes you will learn how to make some driving decisions based on experience, knowledge and feelings.
>
> You make many decisions each day. Where to shop? What clothes to wear? What food to eat? What friends we choose and where we will go?
>
> These pictures show the many choices you have in deciding what clothes to wear. How did you make the decision to put on what you are wearing today?
>
> Some of you may have decided on those clothes because they look good on you, or on they are in style, or they are appropriate to wear. Where you were going, or how the clothes might feel when you wear them helps in the decision making process.
>
> Sometimes we make decisions that do not feel comfortable. We may look good

in certain clothes and they may even be the hottest fashion, but we don't feel comfortable wearing them.

But we spend time feeling uncomfortable because our decision was based on other factors. When our comfort zone changes we rethink our decision and decide to do something different.

Driving decisions are made in the same way. Choices made on seatbelt use, impaired driving, and how fast to go all depend upon how comfortable or uncomfortable we feel. If we feel comfortable we do not change what we are doing and if we feel uncomfortable we change what we are doing.

This type of choice is yours and yours alone to make. No one forces you to change unless you want to change.

Identify a time when you have been in a situation that made you uncomfortable.

There is no pause screen here but you may want to stop and discuss the uncomfortable feelings or wait until the next pause screen.

The three elements that help us define our comfort zone are feelings, knowledge and experience.

Knowledge and experience gained in Driver Education and in the driving environment throughout your life may result in a changing definition of your comfort zone. Your feelings will be more accurate with increased knowledge and experience. No matter what the situation, the process to make a decision never changes.

As you view Decision Opportunity One, make your choice based on your comfort zone and how you are feeling about the situation shown.

Have you given any thought to your car keys? This is a simple decision. Even simple decisions have consequences.

Where should your car keys be when you approach a car you are going to drive?

Pause here for class discussion.

If you did not stop earlier, ask the students “When have you had uncomfortable feelings?”

Brainstorm the question “Where might you have your car keys as you approach your car to go somewhere?” After many places are listed, group them into “in your car,” “in your hand” and “stored somewhere.”

Decision Making

Hand out the "Student Response Sheets." Point out the area in the upper left corner where they are to circle their answers. The students should know that what decision they make is not as important as how they decide.

Drivers must park their cars in a variety of places and settings. Pictures of a yellow Volkswagen parked in various settings creates our first decision-making opportunity. Assume for now that the yellow Volkswagen is your car.

When viewing the following pictures, decide where your keys would be as you approach the yellow Volkswagen. Are your keys in your car, in your hand, or stored in your pocket, purse, backpack etc?

Scene A: Your car is parked in your driveway. Where would your keys be? In your car, in your hand or stored.

Scene B: Your car is parked in front of your house. Where would your keys be? In your car, in your hand or stored.

Scene C: Your car is parked on the street by your school. Where would your keys be? In your car, in your hand or stored.

Scene D: Your car is parked downtown. Where would your keys be? In your car, in your hand or stored.

Scene E: Your car is again parked downtown. Where would your keys be? In your car, in your hand or stored.

Scene F: Your car is parked in a parking lot. Where would your keys be? In your car, in your hand or stored.

Scene G: Your car is parked in a park. Where would your keys be? In your car, in your hand or stored.

Scene H: Your car is parked in a parking ramp. Where would your keys be? In your car, in your hand or stored.

Scene I: Your car is again parked in a parking ramp. Where would your keys be? In your car, in your hand or stored.

Each time you were presented with a choice of what to do as you approached the parked car you encountered different degrees of personal risk. Approaching the car with your keys in your hand, minimizes the time you are vulnerable. Searching for or fumbling for keys outside of the car can extend the time a driver is at risk.

Pause here for class discussion of risks.

Drivers should consider risks such as stolen vehicles, personal belongings and personal harm.

Decision Making

Ask “Who might be the most vulnerable in these situations?” “Did you see the person lurking in the park or parking ramp?”

How can you hold the keys to ward off an attacker?

Ask “What other circumstances might you want your keys in your hand?” Possible answers include:

1. bad weather
2. arms full of packages
3. darkness
4. toddler in your charge

Imagine being in a rainstorm. How wet can you get searching for your keys? Imagine trying to unlock your car with your arms full of packages or with someone trying to hassle you.

Here is an illustration of how you could hold your keys to ward off an attacker.

Developing a habit of always approaching your car with keys in your hand can reduce your discomfort in this situation.

Let’s reexamine scenes A through I and mark your choices again with your new knowledge of how to approach your parked car.

Pause here until everyone has marked all choices again.

After the students have marked their answers ask “Have you changed your decision based on the new knowledge?”

As you gained new knowledge, did your decisions change or did you reinforce your original safe choice of always having your keys in hand?

Experience can effect the decisions we make. Decision Opportunity Two gives you another chance to make a series of decisions. You are going to be seeing driving scenes from the point of view of a passenger.

In which scenes in this trip to the mall will you have your seatbelt on? Circle yes or no for each scene.

Scene A: You enter your friend's car to talk.

Scene B: You decide to ride along to the mall.

Scene C: The road is not busy.

Scene D: There is more traffic.

Scene E: You wait a long time at this signal.

Scene F: You are almost there.

Scene G: You arrive at the mall.

Pause here to discuss your answers.

Pause for discussion of risks.

Ask “Was your decision based on feelings, knowledge or experience?”

Ask “Are there any personal experiences when you were involved in a crash?”

Ask “Do some people think that they will not be in a crash?”

Ask “Do these drivers feel the need for wearing seat belts?”

Ask “Should they be concerned about what other drivers might do?”

Ask “Do any of you think that wearing a seat belt is not needed all of the time.”

Say “Some people see the benefit of wearing seat belts all the time. Others wear set belts only when driving on the highway at high speeds or in other high-risk situations”

Say “Deciding to always wear seatbelts reduces the overall risk of injury.”

Ask “Could you be injured even when a car is not moving?”

Discuss these facts about seat belts and crashes.

If a parked car is struck from behind at 30 mph, a tissue box that was placed on the rear window ledge may hit the windshield or a person with the force of 900 pounds. Can you imagine what force you will hit the windshield, steering wheel or dash? If a parked car is struck from the front with enough force to deploy the airbag and the occupant is not belted, the body will first go back and then forward into the airbag which may cause injury.

Decision Making

A 1998 news story reported a low speed parking lot crash in which a passenger airbag inflated killing an unbelted child in the front seat. Following this report a survey was taken in which 2480 women believed that this could also happen to their children.

Some new drivers as well as experienced drivers believe that they control whether or not they will be in a crash. These drivers may not feel the need to wear seat belts.

Deciding to always wear seatbelts reduces the overall chance of injury. People have been injured even when the car is not moving. If a parked car is struck from behind at 30 mph, a tissue box that was placed on the rear window ledge will hit the windshield with the force of 900 pounds. Can you imagine what force you will hit the windshield, steering wheel or dashboard?

If a parked car is struck from the front with enough force to deploy the airbag, and the occupant is not belted, the body will first go back and then forward into the airbag. This may cause injury.

Decision Opportunity Three involves a simple choice concerning the driver's side window. You will be shown five scenes. You are to decide if you would drive with your car window in each position? For each scene circle yes or no.

Scene A: Would you drive with your window closed?

Scene B: Would you drive with your window 1/4 way open?

Scene C: Would you drive with your window open 1/2 way?

Scene D: Would you drive with your window 3/4 way open?

Scene E: Would you drive with your window wide open?

Your reasons may vary on when you want your window up or down. In some vehicles the rear window will only go half way down. Your decision is based on your comfort. However, did you ever consider what risk you take if you have a crash and the window is half way down?

Pause here for a demonstration and discussion.

Ask: “What made you decide what you did in each position?”
List the reasons. These might include comfort, blowing hair, temperature and so forth.

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Do this experiment to show the danger of partially open windows. Use a sheet of plexiglass, plywood or even a notebook. Ask a student to hit the sheet with a reasonable amount of force. Turn the sheet to its edge and ask if the student would hit it as hard.

Ask "What do you think might happen to a head that hits the edge of a partially opened window?"

Ask "Does your family car's back window only opens half way?"

Ask "What does that mean for back seat passengers?"

Ask: What role does glass play in roof support strength? Up to sixty percent of the roof support comes from the windshield. In a roll over crash it protects the driver and passenger from injuries to the head and upper spine.

Say "The 1999 Minnesota Crash Facts showed that 163 people were killed and 11,680 people were injured in side impact collisions." (Update these facts as needed.)

Say "Some new cars have side impact airbags. These air bags need the window to be up for effectiveness."

Say "Even with this knowledge there are times when your comfort level becomes more important than your knowledge level. Things like temperature in the car and hair blowing in the wind are important factors to consider."

> You just saw how a simple decision on window position is really not simple at all. In 1999 163 people were killed and 11,680 people were injured in side impact collisions. How many of these injuries could have been avoided by always having your window all the way up or down? Drivers who are aware of all risks constantly struggle with decisions concerning comfort versus safety.
>
> How has this new information affected your decision to drive with your window partially down?
>
> Let's look at the pictures again and please mark your answers yes or no one more time.
>
> Scene A: Would you drive with your window closed?

Decision Making

Scene B: Would you drive with your window 1/4 way open?

Scene C: Would you drive with your window open 1/2 way?

Scene D: Would you drive with your window 3/4 way open?

Scene E: Would you drive with your window wide open?

Did you change your decision on window position based on safety knowledge?

Pause here to discuss if the students changed their answers. Ask "Did you change your decision on window position based on safety knowledge?"

Decision Opportunity Four begins with a bit of knowledge and a small amount of experience. You will decide when to cross an intersection after stopping at a stop sign. When you think it is safe to do so, you will be going straight across the intersection.

The knowledge: As a car approaches an intersection with a stop sign, the driver should always stop before the crosswalk. When there are no pedestrians to be concerned with, the driver rolls through the crosswalk looking left, center and right. If something will be in the way the driver stops. On the other hand, if there are no problems, the driver goes on. It takes about three seconds from the decision point until the intersection is cleared.

The experience: Since it takes about a second to scan, a car needs to be over four seconds away as you look left and over three seconds away as you look right for it to be safe to cross. For that reason these cars are at the decision points. Mark that in your mind.

The decision: You will be shown a series of scenes. In each scene you will be shown the view left, then center, and then to the right. These will move as quick as in real life, so you must be very attentive. You will then be given time to mark your decision to stop or go. The correct answer will be given right away.

Scene A: Look left, look center, look right. Would you stop or go?

An experienced driver would have stopped.

Scene B: Look left, look center, look right. Would you stop or go?

An experienced driver would have gone.

Scene C: Look left, look center, look right. Would you stop or go?

An experienced driver would have gone.

Scene D: Look left, look center, look right. Would you stop or go?

Decision Making

An experienced driver would have stopped.

Scene E: Look left, look center, look right. Would you stop or go?

An experienced driver would have stopped.

Scene F: Look left, look center, look right. Would you stop or go?

An experienced driver would have stopped.

Scene G: Look left, look center, look right. Would you stop or go?

An experienced driver would have stopped.

Scene H: Look left, look center, look right. Would you stop or go?

An experienced driver would have stopped.

As you have experimented with these four decision opportunities you have been shown that good decisions are based on knowledge, experience and that personal intuition we have called feelings. In your driver education class you will gain knowledge and experience. You will continue to gain both knowledge and experience through out your lifetime of driving.

With this new knowledge and experience your intuitive feelings will change. These feelings allow you to make the quick decisions that must be made while you are driving.

Conclude the lesson by discussing how knowledge, experience and feelings can help make better decisions. Have the students explain that they need to learn as much new knowledge and gain as much experience as possible in order to become good drivers.

Continue to use the knowledge, experience and feelings approach to teaching other topics in driver education.

Name _____ Decision Making

Circle your choice Student Response Sheet

Decision Opportunity One

Scene A:	Car	Hand	Store	Scene A:	Car	Hand	Store
Scene B:	Car	Hand	Store	Scene B:	Car	Hand	Store
Scene C:	Car	Hand	Store	Scene C:	Car	Hand	Store
Scene D:	Car	Hand	Store	Scene D:	Car	Hand	Store
Scene E:	Car	Hand	Store	Scene E:	Car	Hand	Store
Scene F:	Car	Hand	Store	Scene F:	Car	Hand	Store
Scene G:	Car	Hand	Store	Scene G:	Car	Hand	Store
Scene H:	Car	Hand	Store	Scene H:	Car	Hand	Store
Scene I:	Car	Hand	Store	Scene I:	Car	Hand	Store

Decision Opportunity Two

Scene A:	Yes	No	Scene A:	Yes	No
Scene B:	Yes	No	Scene B:	Yes	No
Scene C:	Yes	No	Scene C:	Yes	No
Scene D:	Yes	No	Scene D:	Yes	No
Scene E:	Yes	No	Scene E:	Yes	No
Scene F:	Yes	No	Scene F:	Yes	No
Scene G:	Yes	No	Scene G:	Yes	No

Decision Opportunity Three

Scene A:	Yes	No	Scene A:	Yes	No
Scene B:	Yes	No	Scene B:	Yes	No
Scene C:	Yes	No	Scene C:	Yes	No
Scene D:	Yes	No	Scene D:	Yes	No
Scene E:	Yes	No	Scene E:	Yes	No

Decision Opportunity Four

Scene A:	Stop	Go
Scene B:	Stop	Go
Scene C:	Stop	Go
Scene D:	Stop	Go
Scene E:	Stop	Go
Scene F:	Stop	Go
Scene G:	Stop	Go
Scene H:	Stop	Go

IV. - References

This unit is only part of the total Decision Making Module for Driver Education. Additional resources exist that should be included in the overall discussion of impaired driving and decision making.

Anatomy of a Winter Storm discusses winter driving and interaction with snow removal equipment.

Orange IQ discusses road construction and interaction with workers and equipment.

It Could Happen to Anybody discusses the decision to wear seat belts.

Traffic Mix Module discusses the decisions we need to make about other traffic.

V. - Credits

After the initial free distribution to Minnesota schools the video will be available from the Minnesota Highway Safety Center.

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Most decisions made are based on intuitive feelings, past experience and or knowledge learned.