

# 23: Decision Making



## Purpose:

To encourage Native STAND members to focus on the importance of their life goals and consider how sexual involvement could impact achieving those goals; to learn to apply a decision-making strategy; to encourage Native STAND members to make decisions about their sexual behavior when they are not under pressure; to provide positive peer role models.

## Stages of Change Process:

Involving emotions, building self-confidence, getting support from others, making a commitment

## Learning Objectives:

By the end of this session, Native STAND members will be able to:

1. Describe the limitations of using the Feel-Act Decision-Making Method.
2. Describe the steps in the STAR decision-making method.
3. Apply the STAR method to a personal decision.
4. Make an explicit written personal commitment about sexual behavior boundaries that will eliminate or reduce their risk.

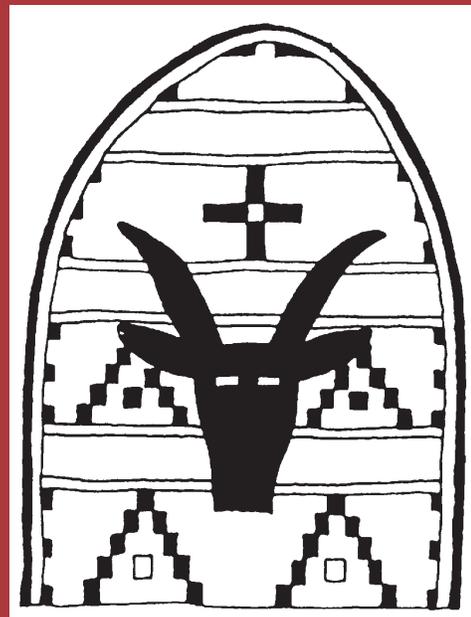
## Supplies/Materials:

## Resources/Handouts:

	RM	PM	HO
Words of Wisdom	●		
Feel-Act Scenarios	●	●	
STAR Decision-Making Method	●	●	
"I Promise"	●	●	

## Preparation:

- Display Words of Wisdom





## 1. Welcome/Overview

*3-5 minutes, large group activity, adult co-facilitator*

- Review Session 22: Negotiation & Refusal Skills
- Answer any questions in the Question Box
- Introduce today's session.
- Read the WOW.

**You already possess everything you need to  
become great.**

*Crow*

## 2. The Feel-Act Method of Decision-Making

*8-10 minutes, adult facilitator role play, large group activity, adult or peer co-facilitator*

- The facilitators will “perform” this role play, “Lee and Lee”. It’s supposed to be funny and “over-the-top”, so have fun with it!
- Introduce it by setting the stage: Lee and Lee have been going out for three months, and, although taking it slow, they’ve been getting closer to having sex. They’re sitting on the sofa together. Music is playing. Lee and Lee begin to get down to some serious kissing and touching.

**Lee:** Don’t, Lee. Let’s stop.

**Lee:** Why?

**Lee:** I don’t know. I don’t think I’m ready for this. And we don’t have anything to . . . you know . . . protect us.

**Lee:** *Being ready just means we love each other. You do still love me, don’t you?*

**Lee:** You know I do, but what if something happens? What if I get pregnant?

**Lee:** *We could handle having a baby. It would look just like you—we could name it Lee. That would be so cool!*

**Lee:** Oh, Lee, I don’t know . . .

**Lee:** *Listen don’t worry about getting pregnant. I can stop before anything happens.*

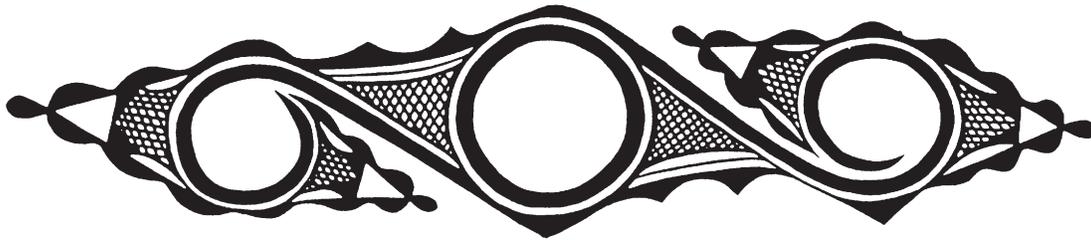
**Lee:** My cousin told me that doesn't work.

**Lee:** Listen, don't worry about getting pregnant. Mark and Lisa are doing it and Lisa's not pregnant, right? You think they're using anything? Besides, we're the lucky types. We found each other, didn't we? How else would two people named Lee get together if somebody wasn't looking out for us?

**Lee:** (Laughs and kisses Lee) I really do love you, Lee. You're right—we're two lucky people.

**Lee:** (Moaning) Oh, baby!

- After the laughter dies down (hopefully there will be laughter), tell the group that Lee and Lee went ahead and had sex without using birth control. And—even though Lee said he could stop in time and that he was lucky—Lee did get pregnant. She had the baby the night of the sophomore dance, but neither Lee went to the dance.
  - ◇ Lead a discussion:
    - How did Lee and Lee make the decision to have sex? Did they think through their actions? Or did they act on feelings? (Answer: Feelings)
    - We call this method of decision-making the “Feel-Act” method. Why would we call it this?
      - \* People get a feeling and they act on it without clearly thinking it through.
      - \* You make choices based on how you feel in the moment.
      - \* These decisions are impulsive and do not take short or long-term consequences into consideration.
    - Ask: What kinds of things might you do if you make decisions in this manner? Can anyone think of an example of a time when they made decisions in this way? What happened, or might have happened, as a result of that decision?



### 3. Feelings and the Feel-Act Method

10-15 minutes, small groups/pairs, adult facilitator

- Introduce topic: It's important to identify what we are feeling and how our feelings might guide the decisions we make.
- Divide students into three small groups. (If the group is very large, make six small groups.)
- Refer them to Feel-Act Scenarios in the PM. Assign each group one of the scenarios.
- Ask students to think about and discuss what the person in each scenario might do if they make a decision in the moment, based on their feelings at that time.

#### Feel-Act Scenarios

1. Linda had a really bad day. She got a C on her Biology exam, even though she had studied really hard. Her best friend Casey got mad at her because she didn't go to her birthday party. She was late to pick up her little brother from school and now her mom is mad at her too. She can't seem to do anything right. She feels as though she has disappointed everyone and so nobody cares about her.  
John, a boy in her math class who is kind of annoying and not that attractive, keeps trying to talk to her. He calls her today and says his parents are not home and asks if she would like to come over. He says he thinks she is really sexy and would love to spend time just with her to get to know her better. Even though she doesn't really like him, it feels so nice to hear him say those things.
2. Ramon and Jerri have been going out for a few months. Ramon has wanted to have sex with Jerri for a long time. They started talking about having sex recently and decided they would do it tonight and use a condom because they don't want to worry about anything. Ramon just bought some condoms at the store this afternoon and now they are driving about 30 minutes away to a party at Mia's house because his parents will not be there. Ramon and Jerri go off to a room and start making out and getting really turned on. One thing leads to another and they are naked and ready to have sex. Ramon reaches into his jeans pocket where he thought he put a couple of the condoms he bought today. The condoms are not there!
3. Alexis and Grace drive out to the woods one night with Grace's older brother's friends. Some of the guys have brought some beer. Alexis does not want to drink and no one seems to mind. They hang out for a while talking, telling stories, and having fun. Alexis starts talking to one of Grace's brother's friends, Andy, and they really hit it off. Eventually it is time to go and they all start getting into the car to head home. Grace's brother gets into the driver's seat, even though he has had several beers. Alexis tells Grace that she feels uncomfortable riding with her brother driving. Grace gets upset and tells Alexis that if she doesn't want to come, she can stay alone in the woods. Alexis does not want her friend to be mad at her and she does not want to look stupid in front of Andy.

- When each group has had a chance to read and discuss the scenario, lead a discussion:
  - ◇ What are the individuals in the scenarios feeling at the moment?
  - ◇ How will their feelings at that moment impact their decisions?
  - ◇ What will they decide to do if they use the Feel-Act method of decision-making?
  - ◇ What would most people do and why? (*They would let their feelings sway their actions.*)

#### 4. Using the STAR Decision-Making Method

*8-10 minutes, large group lecture, adult co-facilitator*

- Introduce the topic by discussing the relevance of stars in Native American cultures.
  - ◇ Many tribes traditionally have looked to the skies and used the movement of the stars, the moon and the sun to guide the timing of ceremonies, agricultural activities, and other important tribal events.
  - ◇ Although each tribe has a unique creation story, in many of them, first man and first woman were created from stars, the moon, and the sun. For example, Pawnees believe that the first human, a female, came from the union of the Morning and Evening stars, and that the first male came from the Sun and Moon.<sup>1</sup>
  - ◇ In other tribes, the stars guide tribal laws, practices, and decision-making processes. For example, in a traditional Navajo story, First Woman uses the stars to write the laws that govern the Navajo people:

*“I will use these to write the laws that are to govern mankind for all time. These laws cannot be written on the water as that is always changing its form, nor can they be written in the sand as the wind would soon erase them, but if they are written in the stars, they can be read and remembered forever.”<sup>2</sup>*

- In Native STAND, we will use the STAR Decision-Making Method. Refer them to STAR Decision Making in the PM and ask them to follow along as you explain the method.

**STAR Decision-Making Method**

STAR is an acronym for the steps of this decision-making model: Stop, Think, Act, and Review.



1. **Stop:**
  - Take time out to collect your thoughts before making a decision.
2. **Think:**
  - Identify the problem.
  - Ask: What is the most important goal? *For example, is taking the risk getting pregnant and having a baby right now important or is going to college or being true to your values more important?*
  - Generate alternatives: *For example, could we only go out on group dates for a while, can I have an honest discussion with my partner and share my decision not to have sex until I'm older?*
  - Evaluate your choice: What is the choice that will help me reach my most important goals?
3. **Act:**
  - Make that choice.
4. **Review:**
  - Ask: How did that work out? How did my actions affect my relationship with my partner (and others)? How do I feel about myself for this action? How did my actions impact whether I can achieve my goals or not?

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.clarkfoundation.org/astro-utah/vondel/ducks.html>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.firstpeople.us/FP-HTML-Legends/TheSunMoonandStars-Navajo.html>

- Explain that STAR is an acronym for the steps of this decision-making method: Stop, Think, Act, and Review.
  - ◇ **Stop:** Take time out to collect your thoughts before making a decision.
  - ◇ **Think:** Identify the problem.
    - Ask: What is the most important goal? For example, is taking the risk of getting pregnant and having a baby right now important, or is going to college or being true to your values more important?
    - Generate alternatives: For example, could we only go out on group dates for a while; can I have an honest discussion with my partner and share my decision not to have sex until I'm older?
    - Evaluate your choice: What is the choice that will help me reach my most important goals?
  - ◇ **Act:** Make that choice.
  - ◇ **Review:** How did that work out? How did my actions affect my relationship with my partner (and others)? How do I feel about myself for this action? How did my actions impact whether I can achieve my goals or not?

## 5. Using the STAR Method in Your Own Life

*8-10 minutes, pairs then large group, adult co-facilitator*

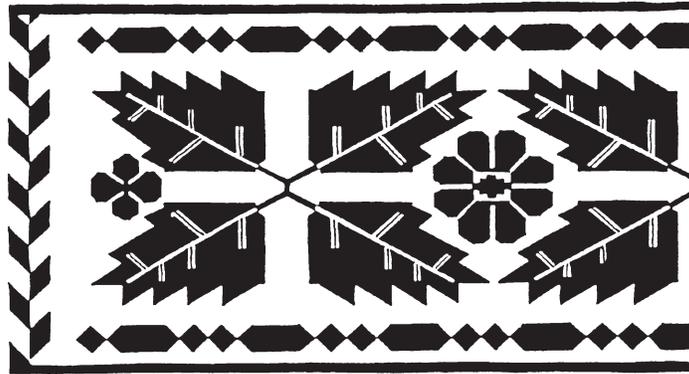
- Have students choose a partner.
- Ask each person to think of a decision she or he needs to make. (Tell them to make up one if they can't think of a real decision they're facing. It doesn't need to be a sexual or high-risk decision).
- Each person should use the STAR Method to come to a decision. Ask them to describe their step-by-step process to their partner.
- Reconvene group and ask for 1-2 volunteers to share their decision-making process.

## 6. Feel-Act vs. Using the STAR Method

*15-20 minutes, pairs, large group discussion, adult facilitator*

- Instruct students to get back into the small groups they formed in activity #3 with the Feel-Act Scenarios.
- Ask them to go back and look at the same Feel-Act Scenario they discussed earlier in the session. Ask students to predict how the person in each scenario might change their decisions if they used the STAR method of decision-making.
- Discuss:
  - ◇ If the individuals in the scenarios took the time to think through their actions, could they have come up with less risky alternatives?
  - ◇ What are some of those alternatives?
  - ◇ How does taking time out to really think through our decisions and look beyond the feelings we have in the moment impact our decisions?
  - ◇ Which decision-making method would help you make decisions that are more aligned with your goals and values?





## 7. Making a Personal Commitment

*10-15 minutes, individual activity, then pairs, adult co-facilitator*

- Encourage students to think about their own personal sexual boundaries—what they are and are not willing to do.
- Ask: Have you thought about this and made a conscious decision about your limits? Or are you using the Feel-Act method? Think about your personal values and the values of your family, tribe, community, church, etc. Do your decisions fit with who you are and who you want to be now and in the future?
- Direct students to the “I Promise” worksheet in the PM.
- Let the students know they won’t have to share information from this exercise if they choose not to.
- Ask the students to choose one of the behaviors listed on the handout that they need to have a clear boundary about and circle it. Encourage them to be realistic and not over-commit themselves to something they will not be able to do.
- Direct students to the middle section of the handout. Ask them to answer the questions, then use the STAR Method to set a limit/boundary about a sexual behavior. Tell the students to write their decision at the bottom of the page and sign it. Stress that no one will see their information if they don’t want them to, but that it is important to write it down. Stress that the decision they make only has to be what’s right for them right now; they can change the boundary later.
- Once students are done writing, encourage them to share their commitment with another trusted peer educator. They don’t have to share it with anyone, but if they do, they should ask that person to help them stick with their decision. In the future, if they are feeling tempted to engage in the behavior, they can go to this person as a “safety line”. They can support each other and help one another make a good decision.

**I Promise**

Choose and circle one behavior to make a decision about:

Holding hands	Hugging and kissing
Touching above the waist	Touching below the waist
Having oral sex	Having vaginal sex
Having anal sex	Using birth control
Using a condom to prevent STDs	Being abstinent

Decisions to make about the behavior:

1. Is it okay for me to do this? (Now? In the future? Never?)
2. Under what circumstances is it okay for me to do this? (When? With whom?)

Setting My Own Limits

Consider the alternatives for the behavior you selected. Try to choose the alternative that reduces your risks of STDs and pregnancy as much as possible.

*I promise to myself and to those who care about me to:*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- Ask whether anyone else would like to share their decision with the group. If so, encourage and support all decisions that reduce/eliminate risk.
- Thank the students and let them know that making wise decisions about sex is what we have been working on so far in Native STAND. They may be thinking about how hard it will be to live up to their decisions, so let them know that now we'll start working on developing skills so they can stand by their decisions and learning how to work with others as peer educators.

## 8. **Closing**

*3-5 minutes, large group lecture, adult or peer co-facilitator*

- Preview next session: Being a Peer Educator
- Direct the students' attention to the Words of Wisdom on the wall. Ask a volunteer to read the words and to share with the group what those words mean to him or her and how they relate to today's session and activities.
- Adjourn.

# NOTES

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