



# CHOICES:

How to harness your brain power to  
make healthy decisions!

Presented by  
Conflict Resolution Services

# IN THIS WORKSHOP YOU WILL...

Evaluate how decision making shows up in your life.

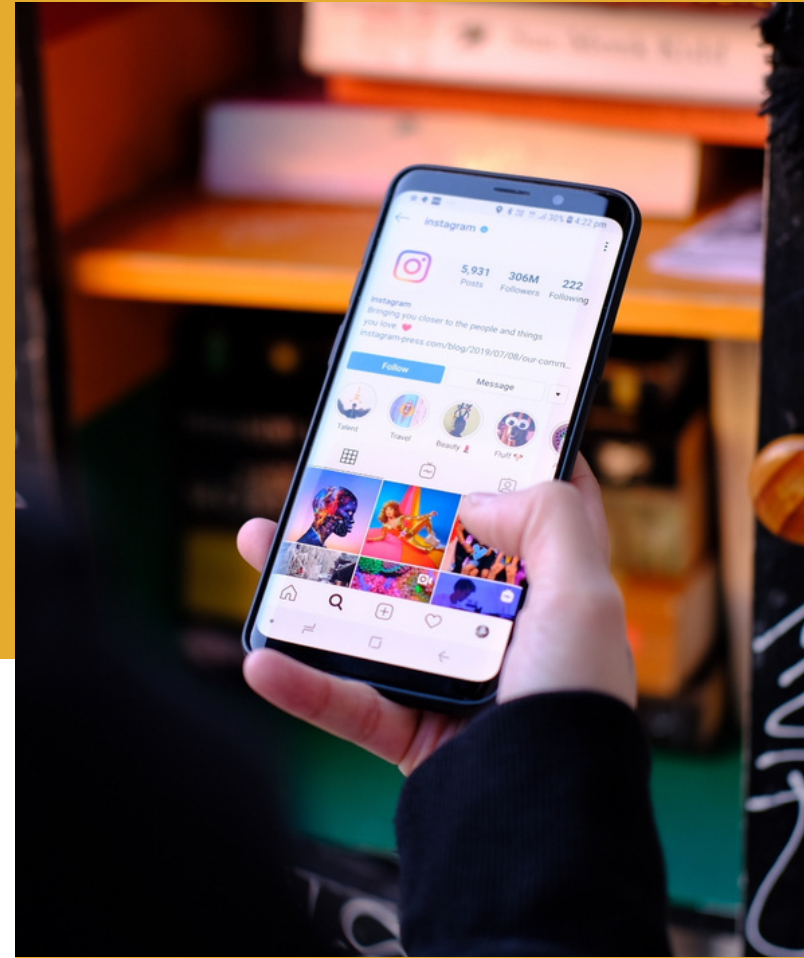
Examine how values, external influences, and brain development impact decision-making.

Consider the impact of choices, the difference between impact & intent, and the balance of empathy, freedom, and accountability.

Practice and set goals for healthy decision making.



Going out with friends



Scrolling on Instagram



Journaling/  
Meditation



Binge eating your favorite snack

# Choose One.

These are all nervous system regulation tools, or coping strategies, for when life gets overwhelming.

**Which one of these methods do you believe is the *best* choice?**

# YES, THAT WAS A TRICK QUESTION!

"Best" is subjective. Every choice depends on the individual, the context, and the potential outcomes.

Many times, we filter choices into a "right" or "wrong" way of thinking when, in reality, it's much more complicated!

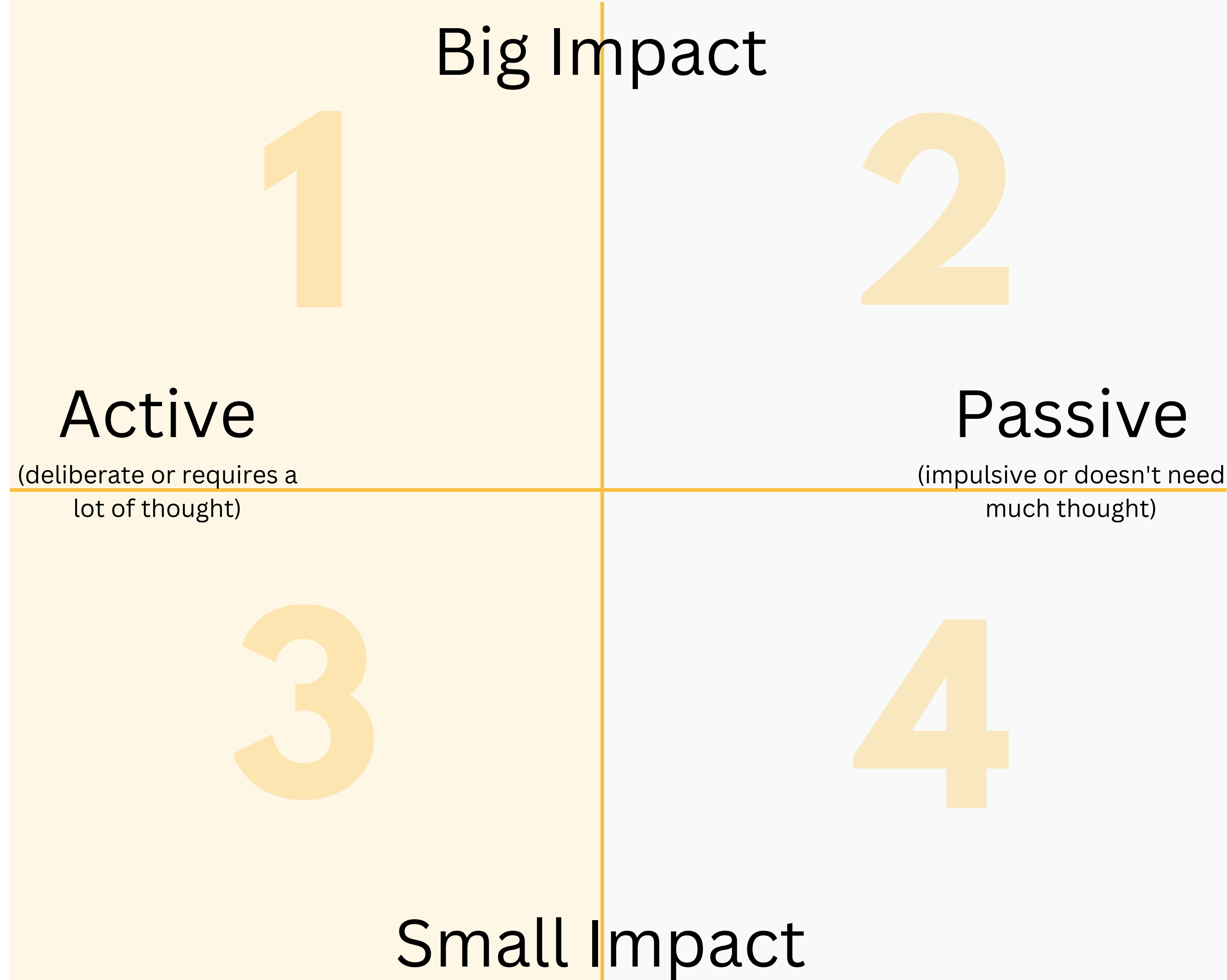
Do all of these coping strategies have the same side effects or impact? Not necessarily, but that's important to think through so you can make informed choices!



We make thousands of decisions every day- some without even thinking about it. Even a decision NOT to do something is still a choice!

Place each of the scenarios on this matrix based on if you see it is an active/passive choice with a big/small impact:

- Choosing to eat breakfast
- Getting a haircut
- Going out to eat vs Eating at home/ in the dining hall
- Making plans with a friend, but then better plans come up



# INFLUENCES

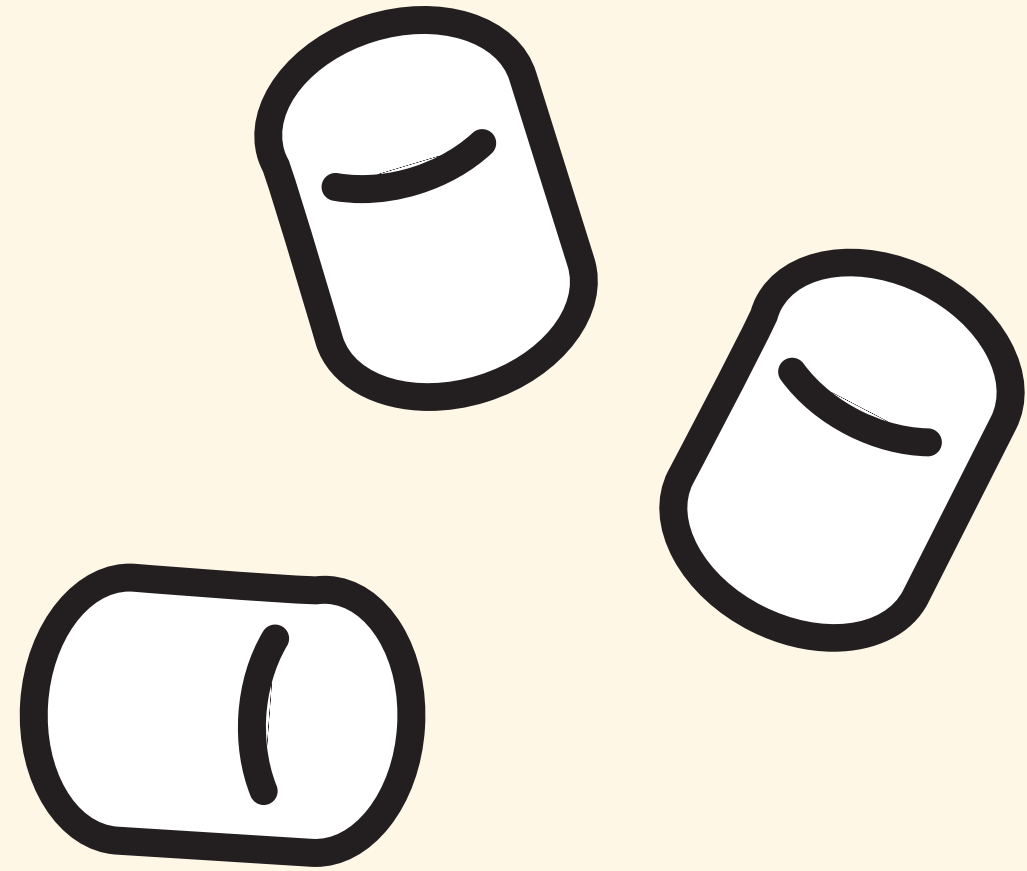
We know that we make choices ALL the time. So, let's think more about the factors that influence our decision-making.

This is the Marshmallow Test: a psychology research study on delayed gratification.

Kids were given one marshmallow and a choice: eat the marshmallow now, or wait for the researcher to return and get a second marshmallow. Can the kids withstand the temptation? Check it out!



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QX\\_oy9614HQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QX_oy9614HQ)



What does the marshmallow test have to do with decision-making? Our brains develop over time, and with experience, we get better at evaluating risk & reward, delayed vs. instant gratification, and being aware of our impulses.

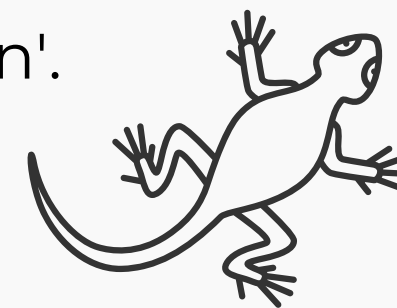
Take a look at some of these brain development facts:

## 25 YEARS

Brains develop over time and some parts take longer to finish. The average age for a fully developed brain is about 25 years.

## LIZARD BRAIN

The Amygdala is a part of the brain we share with reptiles, so we sometimes refer to it as our 'Lizard Brain'.

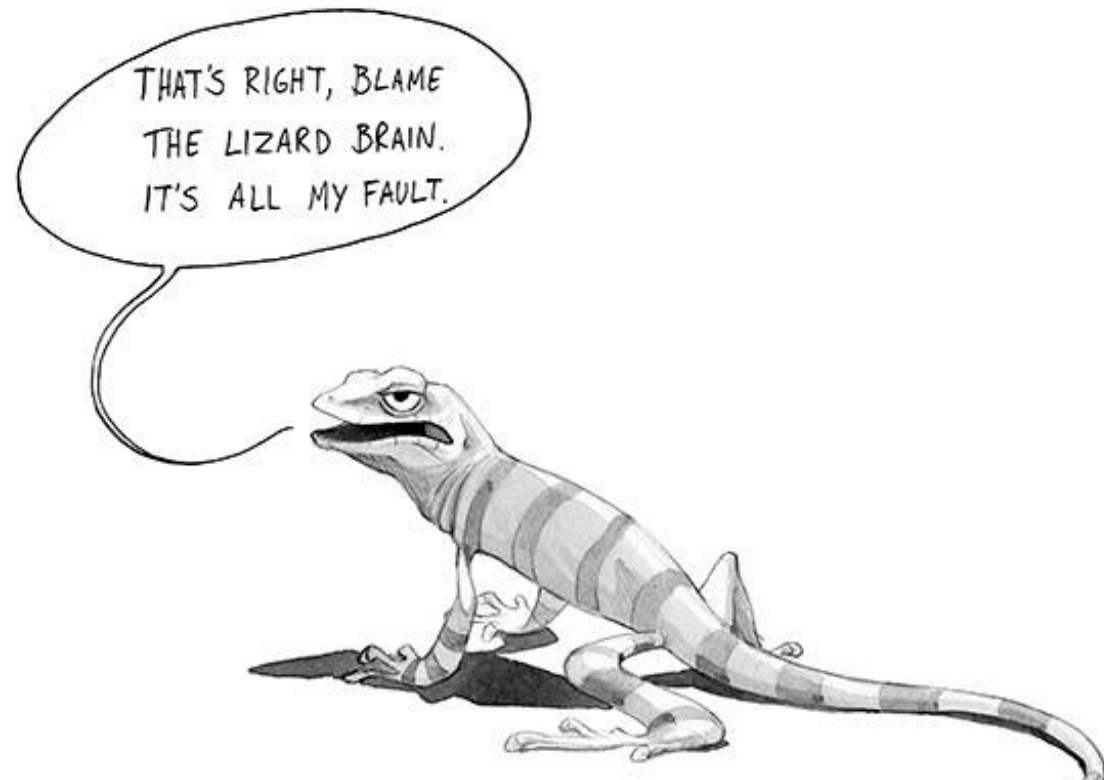


## EMOTIONS > LOGIC

The part of the brain that controls impulse & emotion (the Amygdala) develops before the part that controls logical thought (Frontal Cortex)

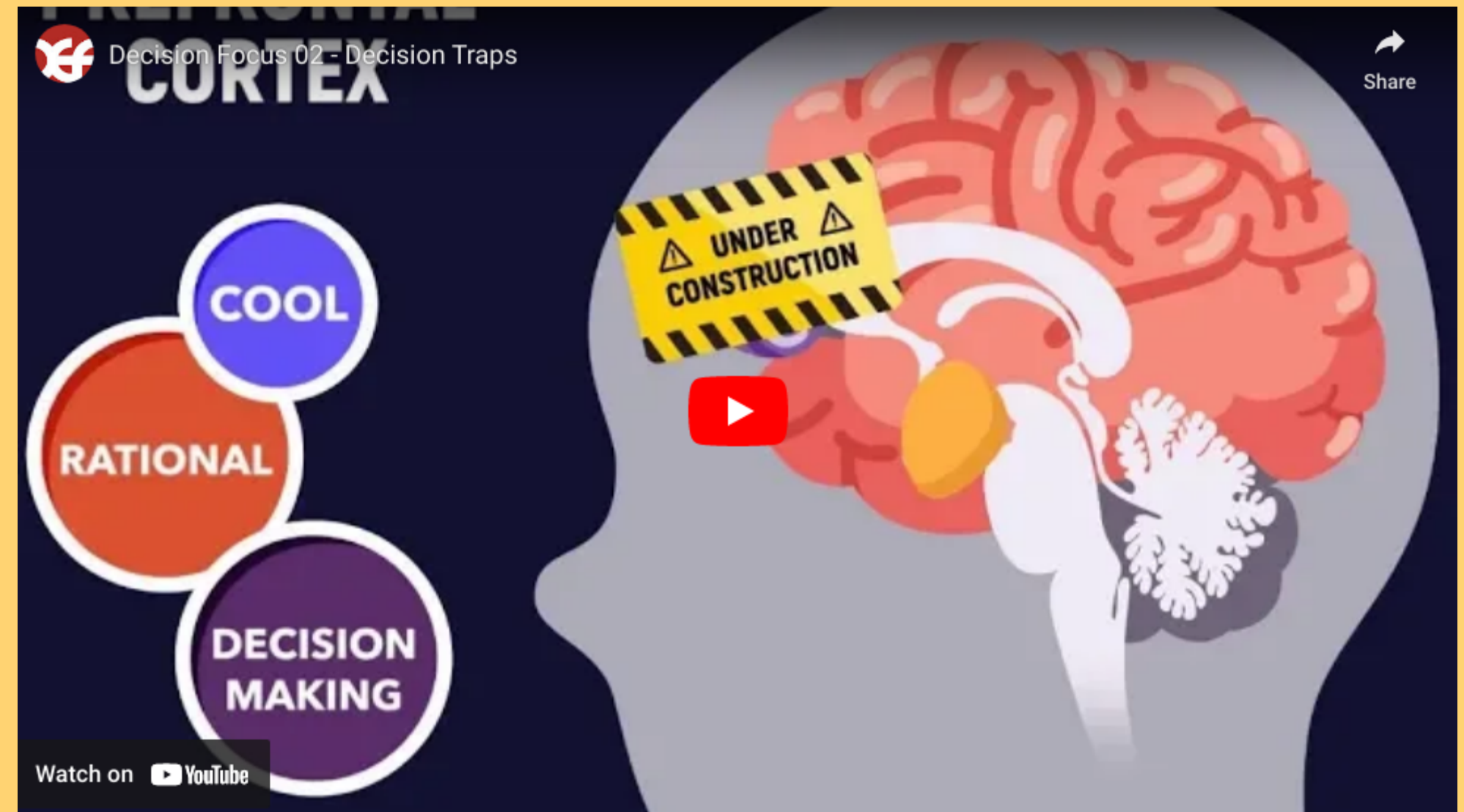
## YOU ARE IN CONTROL

Even though our brains might default to the emotional impulse, we can train our 'lizard brain' by slowing down thinking about our options!



# WATCH THIS!

Watch the first 3 minutes of this video and answer the questions on the next slide!



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=1&v=ERm0sKunR6g&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=ERm0sKunR6g&feature=emb_title)



# LET'S REFLECT

Answer the following questions based on the video from the previous slide:

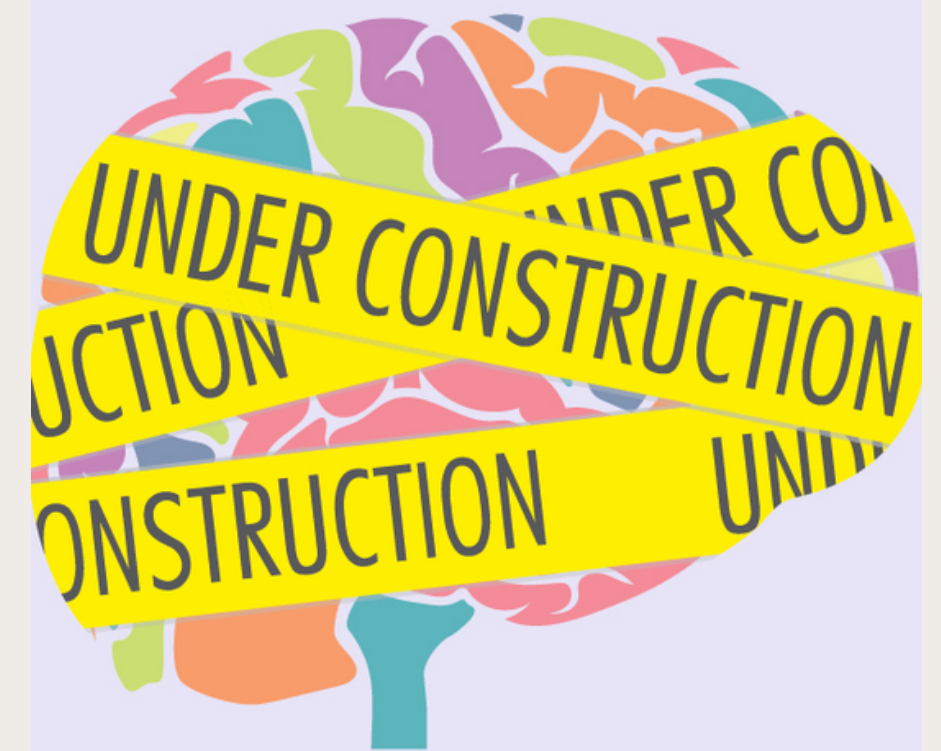


What is one benefit of our impulsive thinking?

What is one benefit of our rational thinking?



How can our environment impact decision-making?



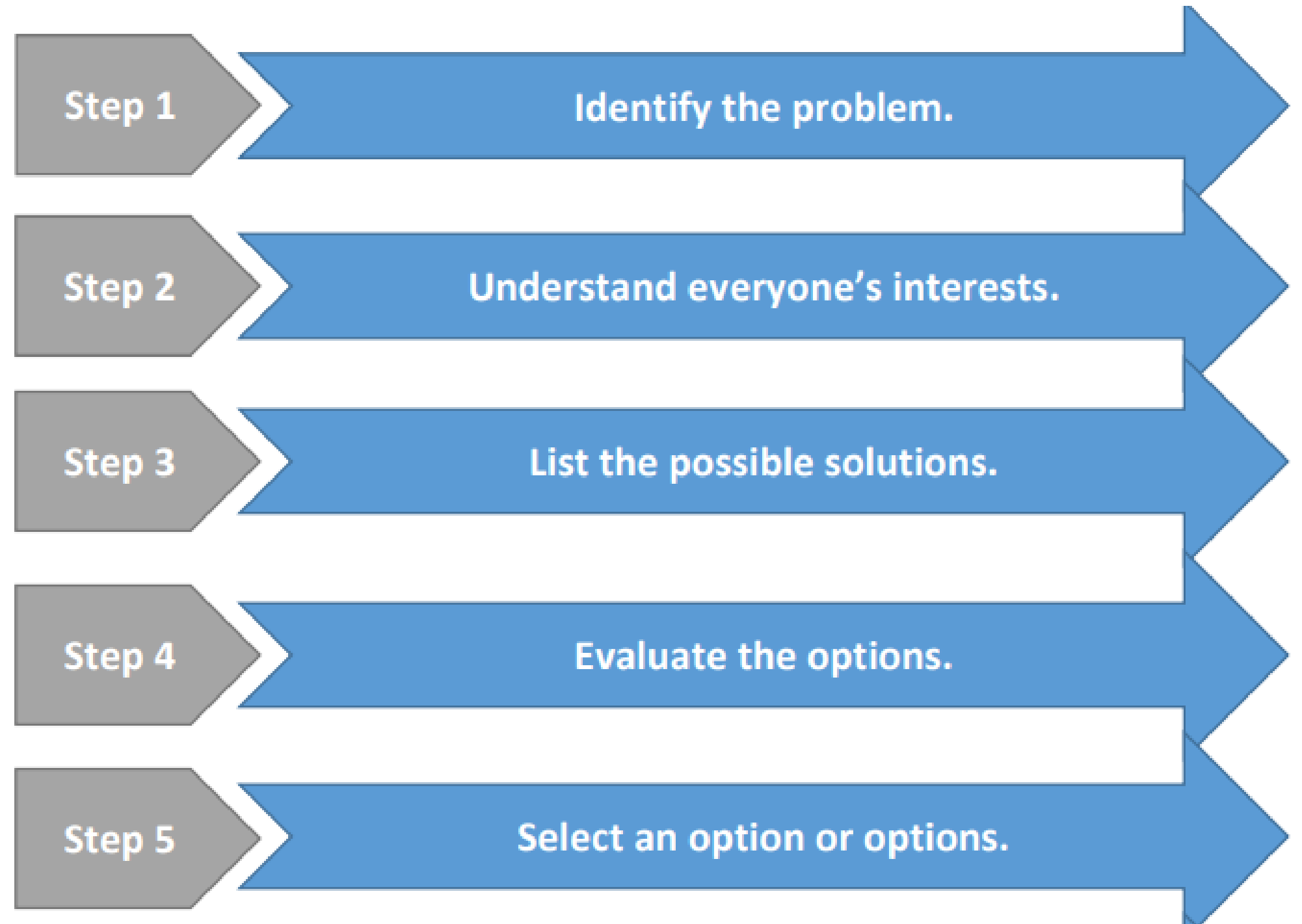
What is one takeaway about decision-making you have after watching the video?

# DECISION MAKING MODEL

Our brains get better with practice. The more you slow down and think through decision making, the more likely you are to use the strategies in the moment.

Take a look at this decision making model.

This can be useful in making decisions like weekend plans, or in a future work environment when faced with a dilemma.



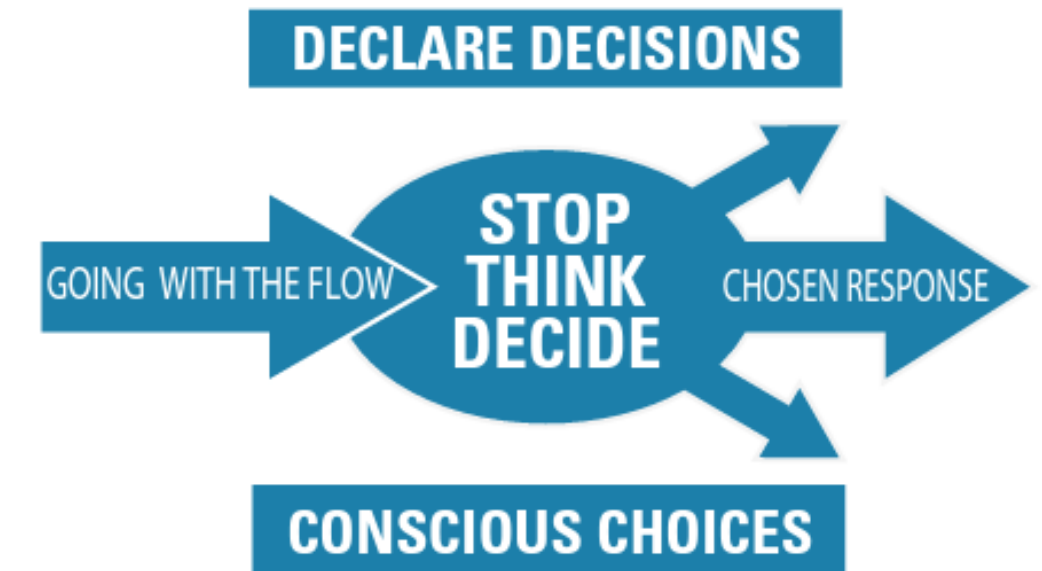
# QUESTIONS FOR DECISION-MAKING

Step 1- IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM

Step 2- UNDERSTAND EVERYONE'S INTERESTS

Before making a decision, you can ask yourself some questions to determine what the issue is, who could be impacted, and if you're in a good place to be making a decision.

On the right you will see some example questions. Come up with a couple additional questions that could be helpful in identifying the problem and understanding everyone's interests



## Internal:

- How am I feeling?
- What do I want?
- Who am I / What do I believe?
- Am I ready to make a decision?

## External:

- Who or what is influencing my decision?
- What is at stake?
- What are my options and the potential outcomes?
- Who or what could be impacted outside of myself?

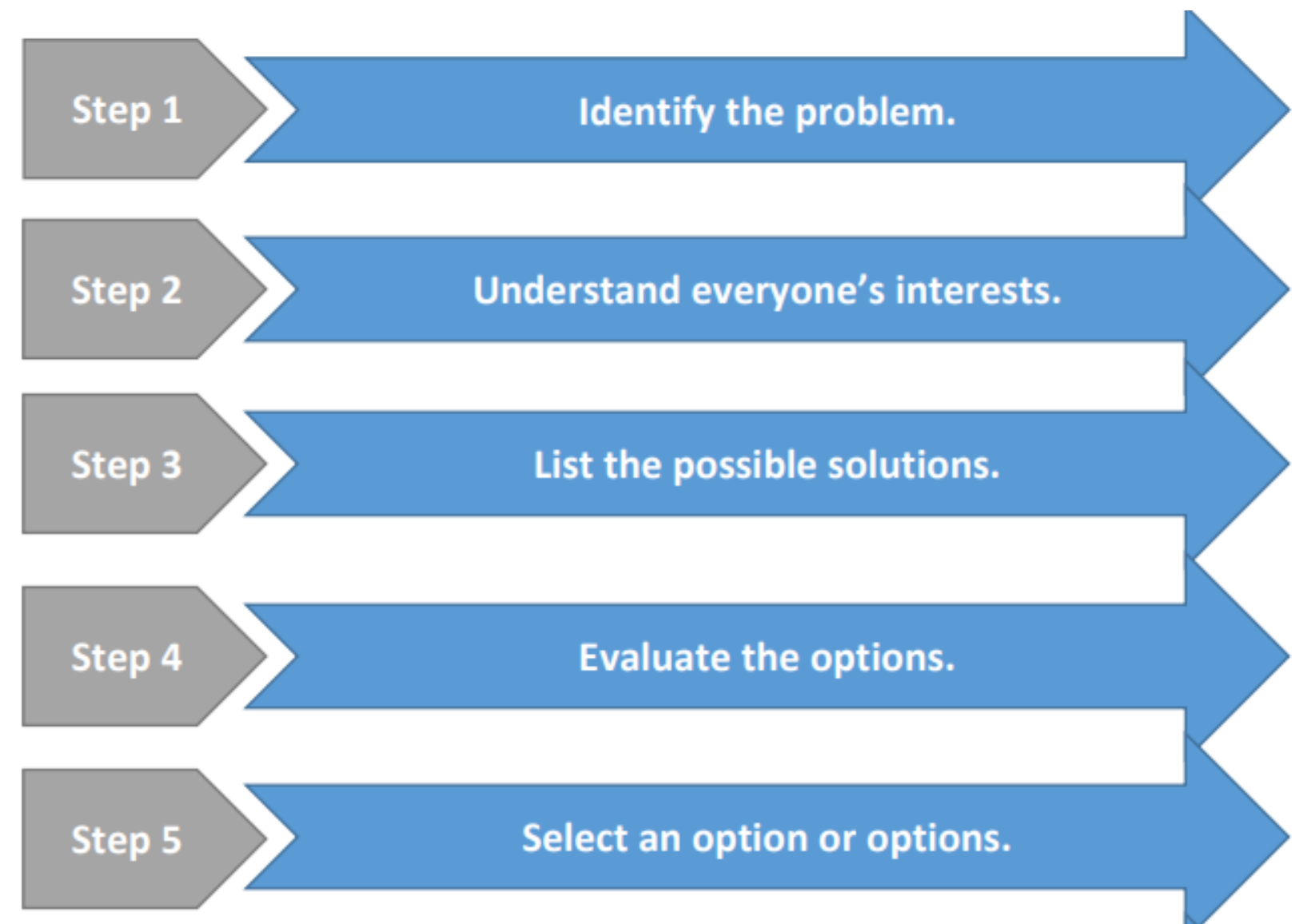
# BRAINSTORMING OPTIONS

## Step 3- LIST THE POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Once you understand the problem, then you can think through what the options are. In this stage there are no wrong ideas, but various choices you can make.

**Scenario:** You own a deli. Your busiest time of the day is the lunch hour rush when many working people from nearby factories and businesses come to grab something quick. A new fast food restaurant is opening up next door to you.

How can you avoid losing your lunch customers to this new competitor?



# VALUES

## CORE VALUES LIST

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Accountability	Curiosity	Focus	Knowledge	Purpose
Achievement	Daring	Forgiveness	Leadership	Reliability
Adventure	Decisiveness	Friendship	Learning	Resiliency
Altruism	Dependability	Fun	Logic	Security
Ambition	Determination	Generosity	Loyalty	Self-Awareness
Appreciation	Development	Gratitude	Love	Self-Regulation
Autonomy	Dignity	Happiness	Mastery	Social Intelligence
Beauty	Discipline	Health	Meaning	Spirituality
Belonging	Drive	Honesty	Mindfulness	Stability
Bravery	Efficiency	Honor	Openness	Strength
Boldness	Empathy	Hope	Optimism	Success
Calmness	Enthusiasm	Humility	Originality	Talent
Candor	Excellence	Humor	Passion	Teamwork
Change	Excitement	Impact	Peace	Thoughtfulness
Collaboration	Expertise	Independence	Perspective	Trust
Comfort	Exploration	Innovation	Perseverance	Truth
Community	Fairness	Intelligence	Playfulness	Understanding
Compassion	Faith	Joy	Positivity	Warmth
Cooperation	Family	Judgment	Power	Wealth
Courage	Fearless	Justice	Productivity	Wisdom
Creativity	Flexibility	Kindness	Prudence	Zest



# VALUES

We can check in with a choice to see if it is something that aligns with our values. We can ask ourselves, "Who am I / What do I believe?"

For example, I value loyalty because I like to be someone my friends can count on.

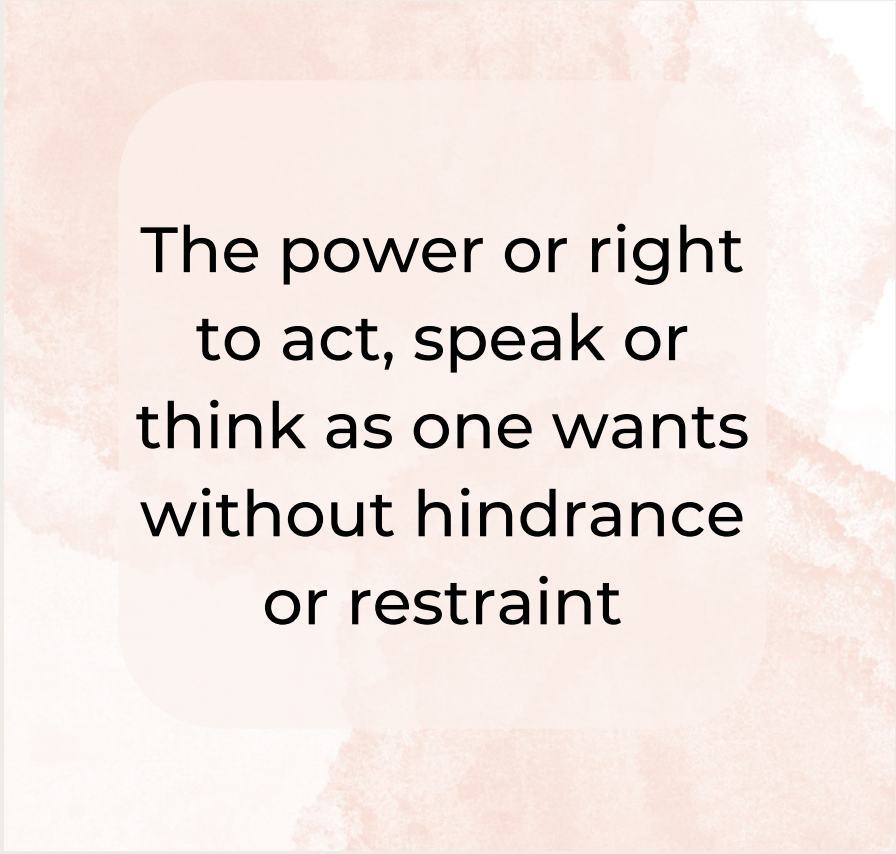
Because I value loyalty, I am less likely to cancel established plans with a friend even when presented with more exciting options.

Use the previous slide to answer the following questions:

1. What value helps you reach your goals?
2. What value reminds you of your family or support system?
3. What value do you want to grow in?
4. What value do you like your friends to possess?
5. What value best represents you?

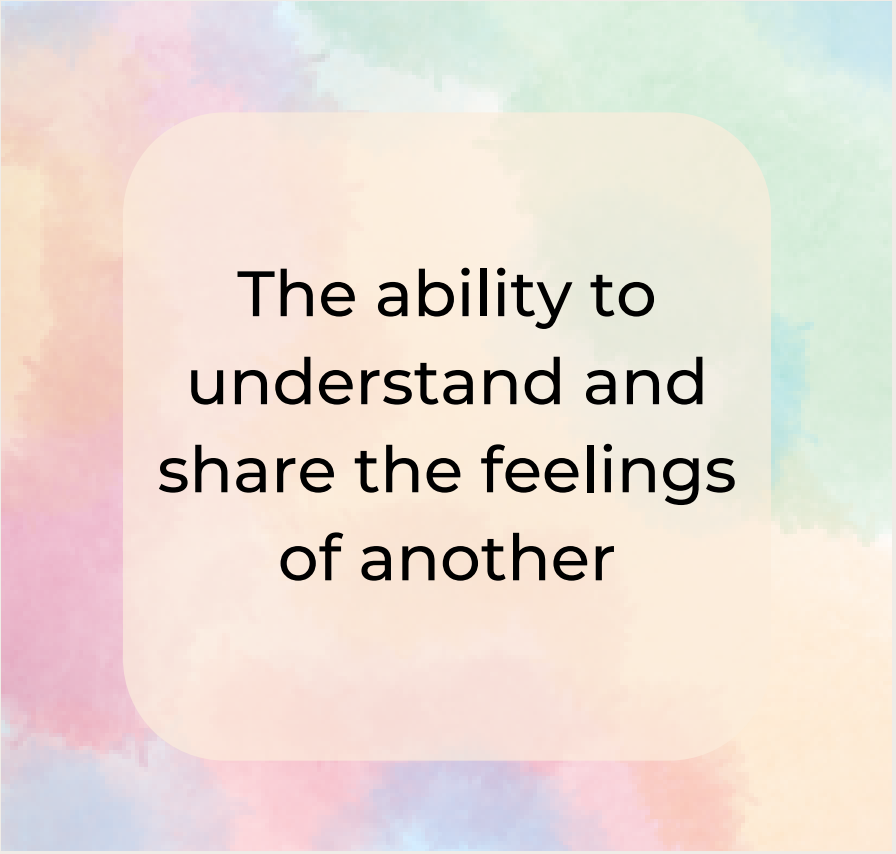
**Step 4- EVALUATE THE OPTIONS**  
Does the choice align with your values?

# OTHER VALUES TO CONSIDER:



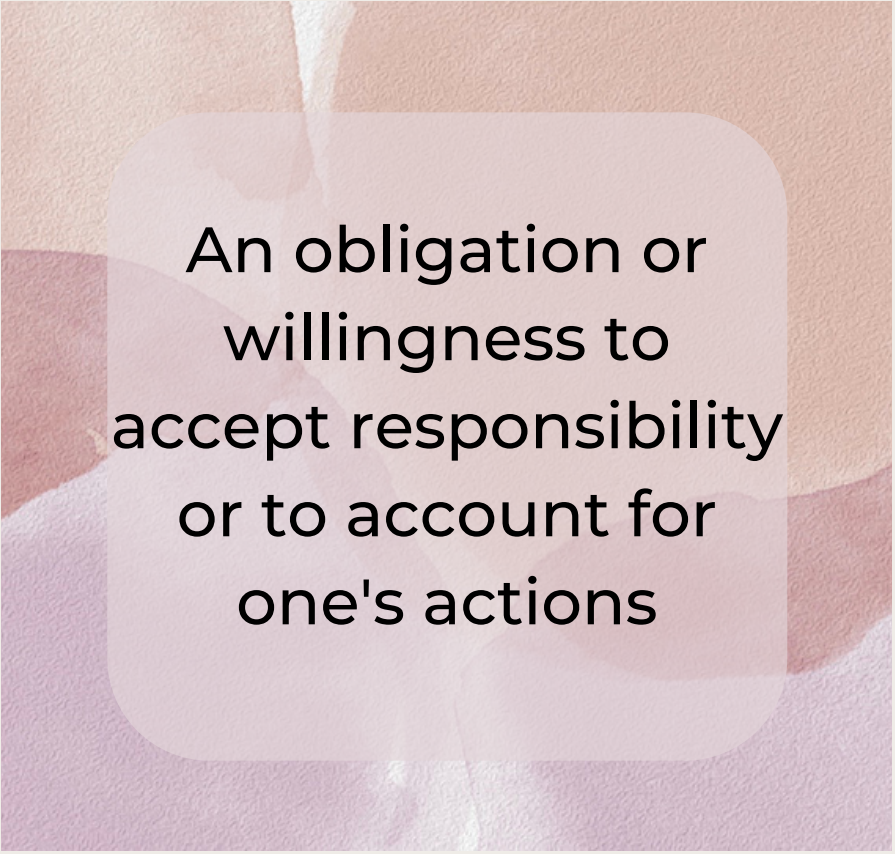
The power or right to act, speak or think as one wants without hindrance or restraint

FREEDOM



The ability to understand and share the feelings of another

EMPATHY



An obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions

ACCOUNTABILITY

# IMPACT VS INTENT

Have you ever said "I didn't mean for that to happen" or "It wasn't my fault because that wasn't my intention"?

Every choice has an impact on ourselves or others. Thinking through potential impacts first can help you decide what to do!

What happens when a choice you made did has a different impact than what you intended? It's important to think through who/what can be impacted before you make a choice!



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=1&v=bBMWkHHAkN8&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=bBMWkHHAkN8&feature=emb_title)

**Step 4- EVALUATE THE OPTIONS**  
What is the impact of this choice on myself or others?



# LET'S PRACTICE

Does Omar have the freedom to choose his own major? Why or why not?

Why might Omar's parents want him to study engineering? How could Omar communicate what he wants with his parents?

What could happen if Omar chooses to study Engineering? What could happen if Omar chooses to study Creative Writing?

Omar is a first year student at CSU who has always loved writing. He wants to study English with a concentration in Creative Writing.

Omar's parents help him pay for college and want him to be an Engineering Major.

The commitments for Engineering would not allow Omar to double major.

# GOALS FOR DECISION-MAKING:

Let's recap.

- There is generally not a singular "right" or "wrong" choice, but a variety of options with varying levels of impact on yourself or others.
- It's our brain's natural impulse to act quickly, but we can intentionally slow down and engage the critical thinking part of the brain.
- Factors such as your environment, mental state, and values can also help you decide which choice makes the most sense for you and which choices align with your goals!

## Choose One:

Create one goal that will help you to be in the best mindset for decision-making

Write one question for decision making you'd like to implement more often

Select one value that you thought about today and how you can be more intentional with it

Write one takeaway you have from this workshop

*that's all!*

**COMPLETE THE CHOICES ASSESSMENT TO  
RECEIVE CREDIT FOR THE WORKSHOP**

Click this link to access the Assessment: [CHOICES ASSESSMENT](#)