



Tips on Collaborative Decision Making for Families

There are lots of ways children and teenagers can be involved meaningfully in decisions, even if it's not appropriate for them to make the final decision.* By making decisions with our children, they learn . . .

- What kinds of things to take into account when making a decision
- How to get more information when needed
- How to think through options
- How to weigh pros and cons
- How to factor in the consequences of different decisions
- Skills for negotiating and influencing decisions¹

Here are some things parents and children can do together to make collaborative decisions:

Parenting adults . . .	Children and teenagers . . .
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask your child for their opinion or ideas about what to do.• Ask your child for information that would help make a better decision.• Give options to choose from. Explain pros and cons.• Suggest ideas and share information.• Explain why you made your decision. Make sure your child understands.• Check for the child's understanding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask your parent for advice or information.• Express your opinions.• Suggest ideas or share information.• Identify barriers or problems that could come up from different choices.• Tell your parent when you make a decision they're interested in.• Ask questions about a decision your parent makes.

* Of course, sometimes it is appropriate for young people to make a decision on their own, particularly as they get more mature and have more practice in making decisions together. As one researcher wrote about children sharing in decisions about their care when facing chronic health challenges: "When independent decision making emerges out of a collaborative process between parents and children, children may be better prepared to make decisions effectively on their own."¹

¹ Miller, V. A. (2009). Parent-child collaborative decision making for the management of chronic illness: A qualitative analysis. *Families, Systems & Health, 27*(3), 249–66. doi:10.1037/a0017308

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