

Help Your Child Make Responsible Decisions

As children grow older, they need to be aware of the decisions they make every day. Some decisions are trivial. Some are very important. You can show children that they make many decisions every day. Help them think about making responsible decisions.

Talk with your children about important decisions you have made. Discuss things like buying a car or changing jobs. Help your children see the things you considered while making the decision.

All Choices Have Consequences

Have each person in your family talk about the choices he/she made during the day. Discuss the results of those choices. This kind of conversation will help your children see that all choices do have consequences. It will help them learn to make responsible decisions.

Here are some examples:

- “I chose to get up early this morning. The consequence was that I didn’t feel so rushed.”
- “I chose to play after school. The consequence is that I’m worrying about whether I’ll have enough time to do my homework.”
- “I chose to go for a walk during my lunch hour. The consequence was that I felt more alert all afternoon.”

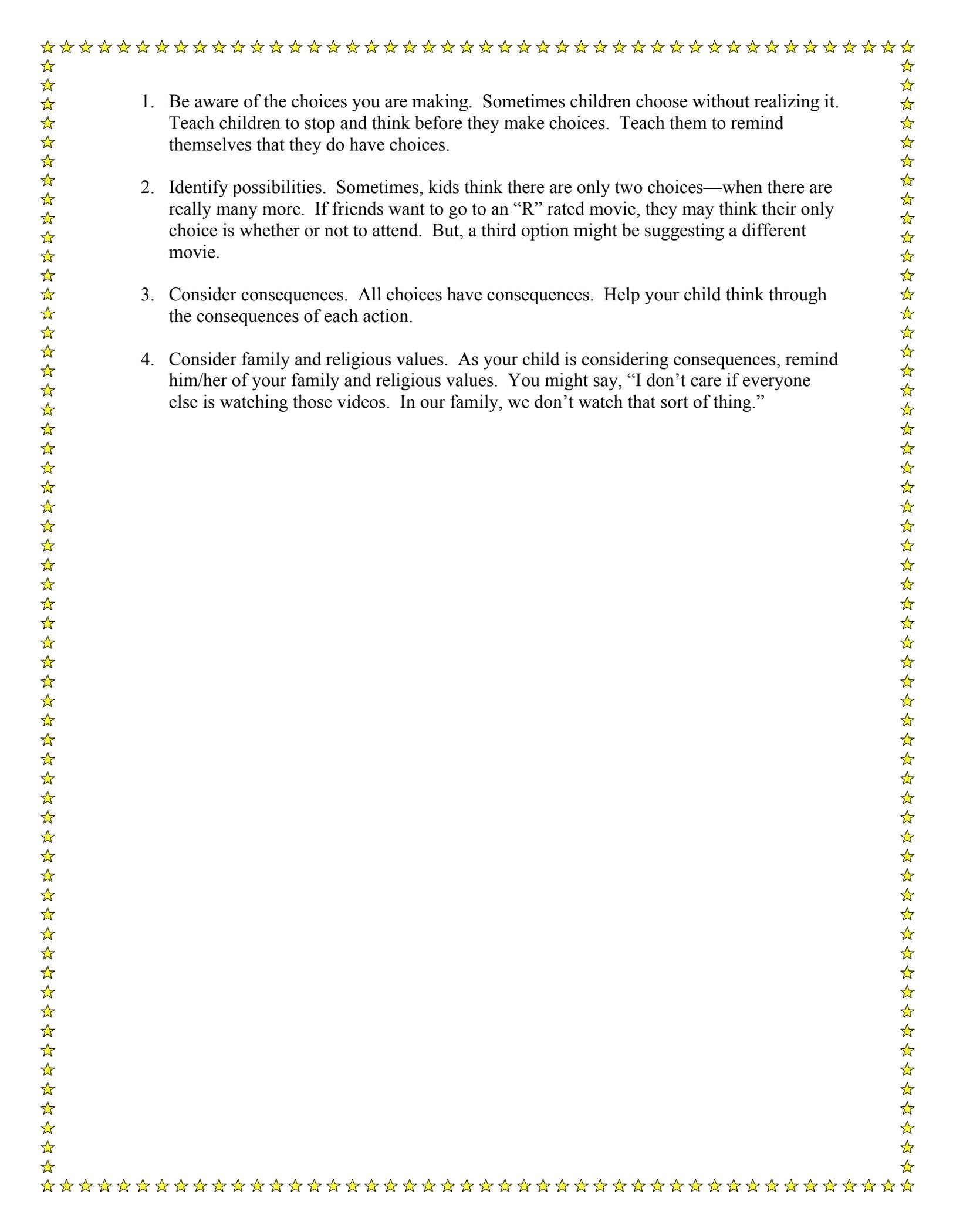
Let Your Child Make Lots of Choices

To learn how to make responsible choices about important things, children first need practice deciding about less important things.

The key is to allow your child choices within limits you set. For a kindergartner, that might mean choosing between blue jeans and the red pants. (You’ve already decided it’s too cold to wear shorts.) An older child can choose which vegetable the family will eat for dinner.

Try This Process for Making Decisions

Teach your child this four-step process. It works for choosing a sweater to wear or a college to attend:

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1. Be aware of the choices you are making. Sometimes children choose without realizing it. Teach children to stop and think before they make choices. Teach them to remind themselves that they do have choices.
 2. Identify possibilities. Sometimes, kids think there are only two choices—when there are really many more. If friends want to go to an “R” rated movie, they may think their only choice is whether or not to attend. But, a third option might be suggesting a different movie.
 3. Consider consequences. All choices have consequences. Help your child think through the consequences of each action.
 4. Consider family and religious values. As your child is considering consequences, remind him/her of your family and religious values. You might say, “I don’t care if everyone else is watching those videos. In our family, we don’t watch that sort of thing.”