

39. Who Should Decide?

When is 'old enough'?



Themes	Family and alternative care, Participation
Level of complexity	Level 2
Age	7 – 10 years
Duration	45 minutes
Group size	4 – 24 children
Type of activity	Decision making, small group discussion
Overview	Children respond to a list of questions on who should make a decision in each situation. After each question, the children use a colour-coded card to show their response.
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reflect on decision making processes in families • To discuss child participation in family life • To introduce the concept of evolving capacities
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare questions ready to read out. • Make a set of cards for each child.
Materials	• 1 x Green, Yellow and Orange card for each child

Instructions

1. Ask the group to reflect on what they're wearing and ask them to discuss with a person sitting next to them who decided what they would wear that day. Was it their parent/s? Was it themselves? Was it a joint decision made by the parent/s and child together? Explain that this activity is about making decisions.
2. Give a set of cards to each child (green, yellow and orange). Explain that you will read out a list of decisions that should be made, and after each question you will ask the group to think about who should make the decision. If the child thinks that the parent/s should make the decision, then they should hold up a green card. If they think the child should make the decision, then they should hold up a yellow card. If they think the child and the parent/s should make the decision, then they should hold up an orange card.
3. Read out the questions one by one and after each question wait until everyone in the group has held up their card. Encourage the children to look around at the responses from the rest of the group after each question. Some children in the group will probably make comments, but discourage discussion at this point: hold discussion until the debriefing.

Debriefing and evaluation

1. Debrief the activity by asking questions such as these:
 - a. How did you like this activity?
 - b. Was it difficult to respond to some of the questions? Why?
 - c. Which ones were easier to respond to and which ones were more difficult? Why?
 - d. Why did some people have different answers?
 - e. Is there a right answer or a wrong answer to the questions?
 - f. Does the age of child make a difference in the role they should have in making decisions concerning themselves? Why or why not?



2. Introduce the phrase 'evolving capacities' and explain that it means that children have more decision making opportunities and responsibilities in personal matters as they mature. For older children, you can refer specifically to Article 5 and 14 of the CRC and discuss this concept further. Ask questions such as these about the children's own role in decision making:
 - a. Are you involved in making decisions in your family? Which decisions are they?
 - b. Are there some things that you can make a decision about yourself? What decisions are they?
 - c. Are there some things that you need help and guidance from your parent/s to make decisions about? What things are they?
 - d. What are some ways you can ask for more guidance from your parent/s?
 - e. Is it important for you and your parent/s to participate in your family life? Why or why not?
 - f. What are some ways you can participate more in your family life?
 - g. Do you like the way decisions are made in your family? Are there some decisions you would like to participate in that you do not? What are some things you could do to have a greater role in decision making?
3. Relate the activity to human rights by asking questions such as these:
 - a. Why do you think some human rights concern children and their families?
 - b. Why do you think participation in decisions that concern them is one of every child's human rights?
 - c. Who else makes decisions about children's lives besides themselves and their parents? Why is this important?

Suggestions for follow-up

- You may like to start focusing on the family by running the activity 'WE ARE FAMILY', p. 180 as a start, before this one.
- The activity 'A CONSTITUTION FOR OUR GROUP', p. 56, also involves children in participatory decision making and negotiation.

Ideas for action

- Ask each person in the group to develop a family strategy with their parent/s about how each member of the family can participate further in family life.
- Invite parent/s to speak to the group about their views on participation in family life, including how their role in making decisions about children's personal matters changes as the child/children grow and develop.

Tips for the facilitator

- Some questions may be difficult for some of the children to answer; however, you should encourage them to choose the card or response that is most relevant for them.
- Be sure to know the family situations of the children in the group you are working with. Some children may not live with a parent or parents and may live with a guardian. In these cases, you should also include guardian/s along with parent/s in the activity.
- Some children will want to explain why they have given a certain response straight away but instead of engaging in discussion after each question, remind children that they will have the chance to speak about the activity afterwards.
- You may want to ask children to draw a picture on each coloured card before you read out the questions so that they remember which card represents which response. Alternatively, you can write



this on a chart or board at the front of the room so they can refer to this if they forget which colour responds to who makes the decision.

- Adaptation:
 - For a longer and more in-depth activity, ask the children to discuss their decisions after each set of questions.
 - For older children: ask them to identify which CRC rights the questions refer to.
 - For older children: Ask what human rights protect the participation of children and parent/s in family life? Why are they important?

QUESTIONS TO READ OUT

Who should decide whether you can stay at home on your own when your family goes shopping:

At 5 years old?

At 10 years old?

At 15 years old?

Who should decide whether you can stay in touch with both your parents after they have separated:

At 4 years old?

At 9 years old?

At 17 years old?

Who should decide whether you can join the military service:

At 6 years old?

At 11 years old?

At 16 years old?

Who should decide whether you should wear a raincoat when going out in the rain:

At 3 years old?

At 9 years old?

At 14 years old?

Who should decide whether you should be a vegetarian or not:

At 4 years old?

At 8 years old?

At 13 years old?

Who should decide whether you can smoke cigarettes:

At 6 years old?

At 9 years old?



QUESTIONS TO READ OUT

At 15 years old?

Who should decide whether you can stay up until midnight:

At 5 years old?

At 9 years old?

At 14 years old?

Who should decide whether you can use the Internet without supervision:

At 6 years old?

At 10 years old?

At 16 years old?

Who should decide whether you can choose your own religion:

At 5 years old?

At 9 years old?

At 13 years old?

Who should decide whether you can stop attending school:

At 6 years old?

At 10 years old?

At 15 years old?

Who should decide whether you can join the local choir group:

At 5 years old?

At 9 years old?

At 17 years old?

Who should decide whether you can have your own mobile phone:

At 4 years old?

At 8 years old?

At 14 years old?

Who should decide whether you should be put in foster care:

At 4 years old?

At 10 years old?

At 16 years old?

