



Exploring Leadership

PROBLEM SOLVING: RISK

Taking risks is a natural part of growing up that builds confidence and decision-making skills. Contrary to what many believe, risk-taking can be healthy and helps young people thrive—if it's done responsibly. Healthy risks push boundaries in positive ways and open the door to growth and success.

CONVERSATION STARTER:

When was the last time you tried something risky? What were the potential gains or losses, and how did it turn out?

'Risk' means the chance of something unpleasant happening due to a decision or action. But not all risks are the same. Healthy risks are thoughtful, generally safe, and offer meaningful rewards. Dangerous risks may prioritize a quick thrill but bring little benefit and unnecessary harm. Understanding this difference is key to smarter choices.

KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Differentiate between healthy and dangerous risks.
- Discuss the positive and negative outcomes of taking risks.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Computer and projector to watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6rravJ7RVsY> (1:15 minutes)
- Copies of the Appendix, cut apart
- A cup or bowl
- Paper and writing utensils

EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES:

This activity helps youth think through different types of risks—both good and bad—and how to make smart decisions about them.

FACILITATOR TIPS:

- Watch this video ahead of time (2:34 minutes) to get a clear understanding of healthy risk-taking: https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/healthy_risk_taking.
- Encourage respectful disagreements and ask questions to inspire reflection rather than providing answers.

- Divide into groups of 2-4.
- Place folded topic slips in a cup or bowl and pass it around so each pair or group can draw one.
- With your group, talk about the positive and negative risks within your chosen category:
 - Identify the responsible risks you could take in that category and what you might gain if you succeed.
 - Discuss possible dangerous risks and what you could lose if those risks go wrong.
- After five minutes, invite each group to present their ideas:
 - Name the category of risk.
 - One person shares the healthy, responsible risks and their benefits.
 - Another person shares the negative, dangerous risks and their potential consequences.
- After each presentation, invite peers to add more positive or negative risks.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- Which kind of risks were harder to think up: responsible ones or dangerous ones? Why?
- How did you decide which member of your pair would present the healthy risks and the negative risks? Did personal experience play a role?
- What other categories of risk can you think of that were not included in the topic choices?

APPLICATION DISCUSSION:

- Which types of risks do you tend to take most often? Do you think them through beforehand?
- Share an example of a time you took a risk that led to positive rewards.
- What is one type of healthy risk you'd like to take more often, and how could it help you grow?



CONCLUSION:

Embracing healthy risks helps you face challenges, build resilience, and overcome the fear of failure. Responsible risk-taking means thinking ahead, weighing the potential rewards and dangers, and making thoughtful decisions. Watch the video called [Taking Responsible Risks | Habits of Mind](#) (1:15 minutes) to learn why planning ahead is essential for responsible risk-taking. Remember, every step outside your comfort zone brings the potential for growth and success.

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REFERENCES

- Teen Choices Workbook: <https://wholeperson.com/pdf/TeenChoices.pdf>
- 7 Reasons Why Risk-Taking Leads To Success: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/seven-reasons-why-risk-taking-leads-to-success_n_3749425
- 8 Reasons Risk Takers Are More Likely To Be Successful: <https://www.lifehack.org/285038/8-reasons-risk-takers-are-more-likely-successful>
- Teens and Risk Taking: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kh4-R9xFAys> (2:15 minutes)
- Healthy risk-taking: https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/healthy_risk_taking
- Taking Responsible Risks: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6rravJ7RVsY> (1:15 minutes)



APPENDIX:

Photocopy and cut out enough topics for each group of 2-4 to draw one.

- Educational Risks
- Social Risks
- Risky Behaviors
- Family Risks
- Legal Risks
- Physical Risks
- Financial Risks
- Health Risks