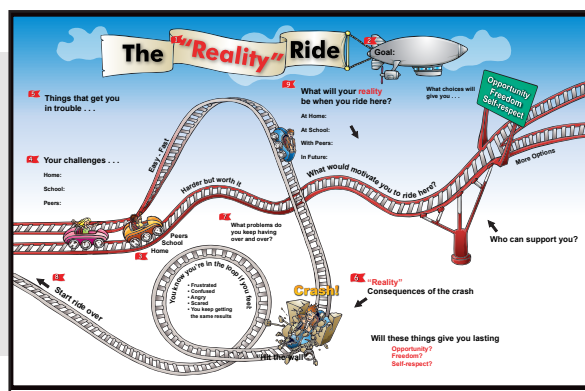


Spotlight Lesson: Decision Making & Consequences (Reality Ride - Part 1)



Lesson Summary:

This lesson teaches students the core skill of understanding how their decisions lead to real consequences and how those consequences shape their future opportunities, freedom, and self-respect. Students learn to connect the choices they make—especially in moments of challenge—to the outcomes that follow, whether positive or negative. The Reality Ride metaphor is used as a visual tool to support this learning. The roller coaster image helps students see how decisions can place them on either the Easy-Fast track, which may feel exciting in the moment but leads to a crash of consequences, or the Harder But Worth It track, which requires effort and intentionality but leads toward goals and long-term success. The metaphor supports the skill; it is not the skill itself.

Throughout the lesson, students also practice supporting skills such as identifying personal goals, recognizing the environments where they make most of their decisions (home, school, and peers), identifying challenges without shame, understanding cause-and-effect relationships, recognizing patterns of repeated behavior, and reflecting on how emotions can signal when they feel stuck in a loop. They are encouraged to think critically about “possible consequences,” not just immediate outcomes. This skill matters because students make decisions every day that impact their relationships, academic success, freedom, and future opportunities. When students can clearly connect their choices to their reality, they are better equipped to pause, think ahead, and choose behaviors that move them closer to what they truly want in life.

Learning Objectives:

- I can explain how a decision will lead to real consequences; whether positive or negative.
- I can explain how decisions can lead us closer to our goals.
- I can connect events in my life with choices I have made, both positive and negative.
- I can explain how the two tracks apply to my life.

Lesson Tools:

- Lesson plan PowerPoint deck (Windows)
- Lesson plan Keynote deck (Mac)
- Make sure the Emotional Rollercoaster video in the lesson plan works and is cued ready to go. Practice sharing the video and stopping it at key moments.
- Read through and practice the Activity: Count Your Fingers if you have never used it before.

- Have the supplies necessary for the Reality Ride Journal Booster #4 student booster (art or journal project)

Note: these resources can all be accessed on this lesson's webpage.

Vocabulary:

- **Decision** – A choice you make between two or more options.
 - **Consequence** – What happens as a result of a decision. Consequences can be positive or negative.
 - **Possible Consequence** – An outcome that could happen because of a choice, even if it doesn't happen every time.
 - **Loop** – A repeated pattern of behavior that keeps leading to the same results, especially when those results aren't working.
 - **Harder But Worth It Track** – Choices that may require more effort, patience, or courage in the moment but lead toward your goals, greater opportunity, more freedom, and stronger self-respect.
-

Optional Vocabulary Processing Activity: "Track It in Real Life" (3–5 minutes)

Purpose:

This optional activity can be used during the lesson or revisited throughout the week to reinforce decision-making concepts. The goal is to help students notice how Reality Ride vocabulary shows up in everyday life.

Example Frame:

- "Let's come back to one of our Reality Ride words."
- "These aren't just lesson words—they're life words. You'll see them show up every day."

Instructions:

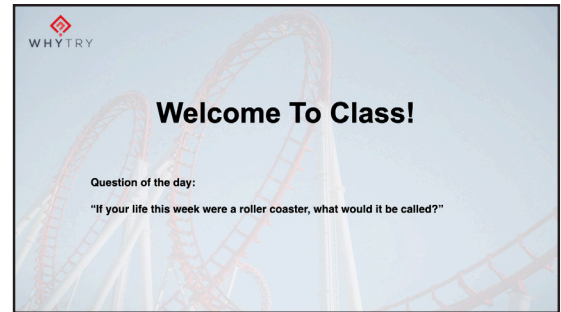
Choose one vocabulary word (Decision, Consequence, Possible Consequence, Loop, or Harder But Worth It Track). Write it where students can see it and briefly restate the definition. Ask students to connect the word to something real they've seen or experienced recently—at school, at home, online, or with friends. Keep it brief and focused. The power is in repeating this throughout the week.

Processing Prompts (choose one):

- "Where did you see this show up today?"
- "What's a possible consequence in that situation?"
- "Was that an Easy-Fast choice or a Harder But Worth It choice?"

Attention Getter- (Setting the tone for the class)

Before students enter, begin playing music to create an inviting atmosphere. As students walk in, intentionally greet them by name and engage in brief, authentic conversations. This is a key opportunity to Surrender the One Up. Ask about something happening in their life outside of school—a game, a job, family, or something they previously shared. Your tone should communicate that you are genuinely interested in them as people.



Once students are settled, transition to the Question of the Day. Display the question on the screen:

“If your life this week were a roller coaster, what would it be called?”

Give students a moment to think. Encourage creativity and humor. Allow volunteers to share their roller coaster names and short explanations. Keep the tone light and relational. This discussion should not feel heavy or overly personal—its purpose is to normalize that everyone experiences ups and downs.

Intro discussion - Rollercoasters

Prepare to show the video Emotional Rollercoaster from the Reality Ride Toolkit. To set the stage ask the questions: Who has ridden on a roller coaster? Who likes roller coasters? Why? Who doesn't like roller coasters? Why not? Facilitate a short discussion about what its like to ride roller coasters and then preface the video with a statement like this: We are going to watch a short video clip to see the emotions that a boy goes through as he rides a roller coaster for the very first time.



VIDEO (5 minutes)

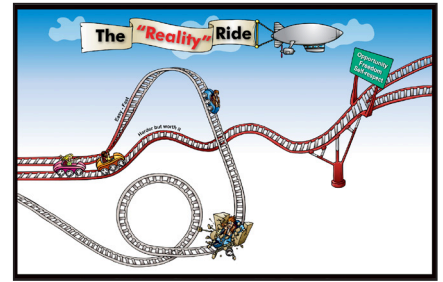
Show the video clip and pause it at a previously planned point before the boy goes over the top of the Roller Coaster. Ask What do you think the boy is feeling up until now? Show more of the clip. Pause the video a few seconds later at a previously planned point where the boy is on the downward side of the roller coaster and is showing obvious fear. Ask What do you think the boy is feeling now? Facilitate more answers and then show the rest of the clip. Transition to the next step of the lesson.



Facilitate a discussion how sometimes life can feel like a Roller Coaster filled with Highs and Lows. You can ask questions to students about the Highs and Lows that come in their lives or that they've seen in the lives of other people. Explain that today you will be talking about a specific Roller Coaster and discussing how it applies to life.

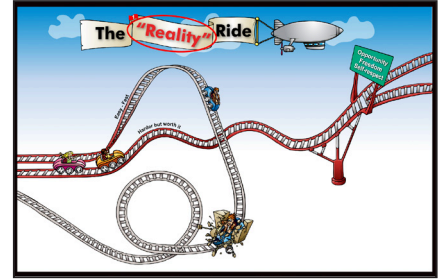
METAPHOR WALKTHROUGH (30 minutes including activity)

Note: Whether you are using the Powerpoint Tool, projecting the metaphor, or providing individual copies, follow the sequence annotated by the red flags on the metaphor. It will be a guide to help you walk the students through the Metaphor.



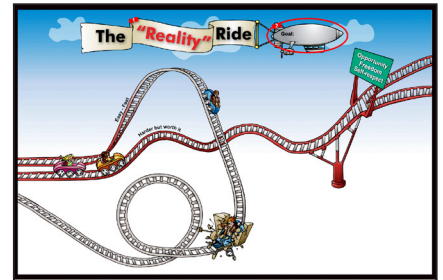
Discussion Point #1: Ask the question: What does the word “reality” mean to you?

Facilitate a discussion and emphasize that reality is what is real or what is actually happening in our lives. You could have students write down their definition of “reality” underneath the word “Reality” on their copy of the picture. To help increase understanding, you can also compare and contrast the difference between reality and what is not reality.



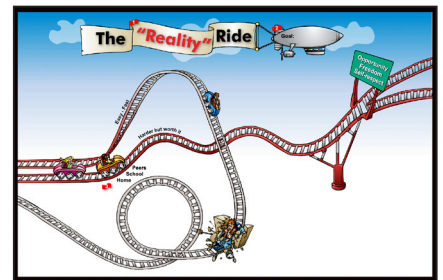
Discussion Point #2: Say: To better understand the point of this Roller Coaster, I need you to think of a goal. Ask: What is a goal that you have for your life?

Let students know that to get on this reality ride, they need to identify one goal or dream for their life. Discuss that they can have any goal, as long as it doesn't break the following rule: The goal can't hurt themselves or others. It must be a positive goal. (**Note:** You may not like the goal that they choose, but as long as it doesn't hurt them or others, just “go with it” for now. Often students have unrealistic goals or dreams, but it's best not to get hung up on those. We use the goal to inspire them to take the harder but worth it track later in our discussion)

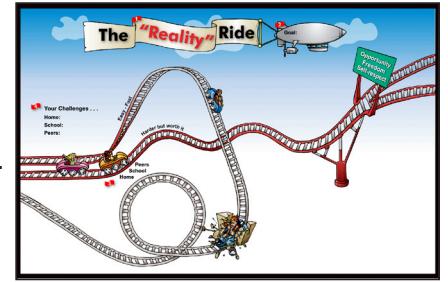


Discussion Point #3: Ask the question: What are the three main environments where you spend most of your time?

Quickly discuss that the three wheels have the letters H, S, and P on them. These represent the three main places where they spend their time: at home, at school, and with peers. Ask the students, “What do the wheels do for the roller coaster?” (They take the roller coaster down the track.) Say just like the wheels take the cars down the track, we make a lot of decisions in our lives in those three places. We also have a lot of challenges come up in those three places)



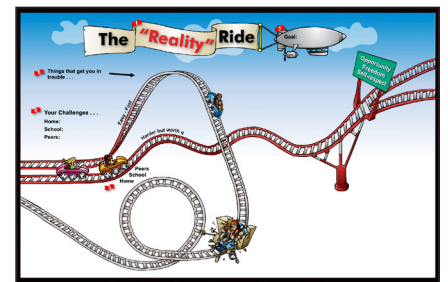
Discussion Point #4: Ask the questions one at a time: What are some of your challenges at home? at school? and with peers? Note: If you are teaching this one-on-one, you may ask personal questions about some of their challenges at home, at school, and with peers. (If you are working with a group, it's best to keep your questions general. For example, "What are some of the challenges that kids your age have at home?" Students can feel very uncomfortable answering personal questions about their home life in front of a group.)



As you go through each question, list answers for all to see or have them write on their own copy. Examples of student responses may include the following: **At home:** Too many rules, bored, parents too strict, divorce, fighting, no money, can't communicate with parents, etc. **At school:** Too hard, boring, "My teacher doesn't like me," failing. **With peers:** Peer pressure to fit in, don't have any friends, bullying or being bullied.

Discussion Point #5: Ask the question: sometimes, as a result of challenges, we do things that get us into trouble. What are the things that are getting you or kids your age into trouble at home, at school, and with peers?

Examples of student responses may include not doing homework, talking back to the teacher, getting in fights, stealing/shoplifting, doing drugs, drinking alcohol, staying out past curfew, partying, sexually acting out, etc. Based on the age and group of students you are working with it is important to make this discussion simple and to the point, but not spend a lot of time highlighting or digging deep into any of the answers. You are basically making a list.

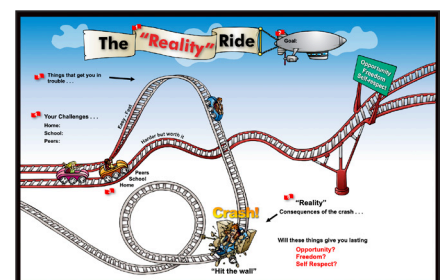


Ask students: "When you do these things, is it fun?" and "What are some other things you feel while doing these things" You will find that in most cases, students will recognize that there is a thrill associated with each one of those examples. Discuss just like the high part of the roller coaster, doing those things is a thrill and is fun.

Discuss with the students: "When you have difficult problems in life, life can be hard."

Point to the uphill part of the track, and explain that life's problems are like this part of the track. It's important to emphasize students' challenges in these environments. Be careful here not to discuss what they are doing wrong. (Step 5 will focus on what they are doing that is getting them into trouble in these three areas.) During the discussion, be empathetic with students, showing that you understand that dealing with challenges can be tough. This part of the discussion is all about listening.

Discussion Point #6: Say and ask: This ride is called the 'reality ride.' I want you to be real and honest with me about how you really see things. What have been the consequences of doing the things you listed in Point 5 that get you into trouble? What are the possible consequences of these situations?" (It's important to use the word "possible consequence" here to point out that even though they may not get caught each time, we want them to recognize what the possible consequences are.)



For example: Out past curfew: Upset parents, loss of freedom, anger, and frustration. Fighting: Legal and court problems (charged with assault), you could get hurt, you could hurt someone else, suspended from school. Stealing: Legal and court problems (arrested for shoplifting), probation, have to pay back. Drugs: Legal and court problems, addiction, loss of freedom, hangovers, loss of self-respect, and death (possible consequence). Not attending or trying in school: Suspension, failing grades, less opportunity and money, more time spent in school.

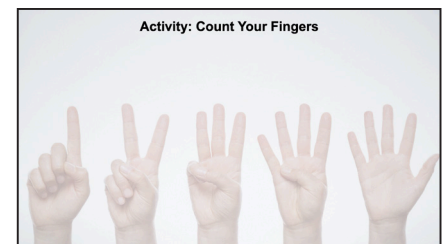
Point to the list of consequences that you identified and ask students: Will any of these give you lasting opportunity, freedom, and self-respect? Note: Most of us recognize the answer to that question is “no.” However, you will find that many students will think of an exception and challenge you on this. For example, they might say, “I know this guy who sells drugs and makes lots of money, gets lots of respect, has a sweet car, and has a hot girlfriend. This isn’t true.” In situations like this, be very careful how you respond. If you tell a student they are wrong, you are basically telling them that what they think doesn’t matter. The reality is, in their life, what they think is all that matters. You may want to respond by saying, “You know, you’re right. Sometimes you do see people who are doing those things but not yet experiencing the negative consequences.

Say: Everything we have discussed so far describes the Easy-Fast track of the Reality Ride. Challenges come and we respond by doing things that get us in trouble, but the thrill from this part of the roller coaster can go away when we hit the bottom and run into this wall. This wall represents the consequences and potential consequences we just described. A lot of times when we make decisions that put us on the fast and easy path we don’t realize the wall we are about to crash into or we hope it isn’t going to happen, but then we have to face the reality of those choices.

LEARNING ACTIVITY: Count Your Fingers

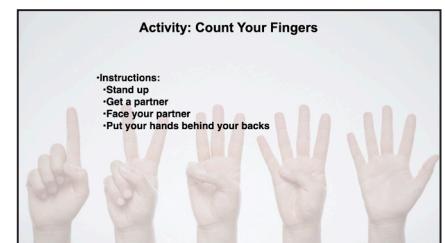
This activity will help students see the level of control they have over the choices they make, and the consequences that follow when they make certain choices.

- Spatial Requirements: little or no space required
- Activity Type: movement/group
- Group Size: 2 or more
- Time: 5 minutes
- Materials: none



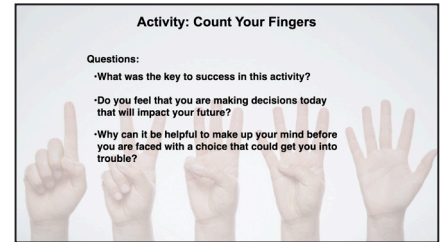
Activity:

Ask the members of the group to pair off. Tell the group that they will put their hands behind their back and, on the count of three, show their fingers to their partner. Each partner in the group will hold up from 0 to 10 fingers. The first person that can count the total number of fingers on their partner’s hands and their own hands is the winner. Call up a partner to demonstrate, then begin. Tell the group that there will be three chances to determine the overall winner. Once everyone is ready, count to three and ask all partners to show their hands. Repeat this process two more times to determine the overall winners.



Processing the Experience:

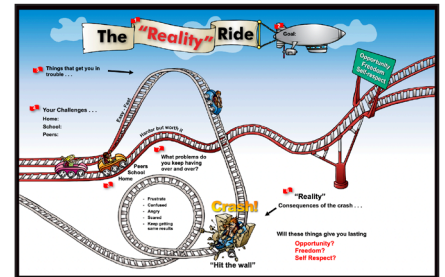
- Tell the group, “A few of you counted your partner’s fingers and then counted your own.” Should you have known how many fingers you had behind your back?
- Who were the people that usually won the activity? (The ones that knew how many fingers they were going to show their partner)
- Why is it so important to make up your mind before you are faced with a choice that will get you into trouble?
- Listen to the following statement and explain what it means:
- “When you choose the beginning of the road you also choose your destination.” OR “You are free to choose, but you are not free to alter the consequence of your choice.”



METAPHOR WALKTHROUGH (continued)

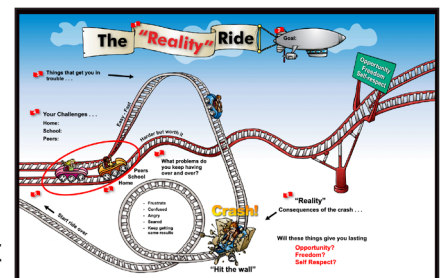
Discussion Point 7: Ask the question: In your head answer this question: Is there a problem or behavior from Point 5 you keep repeating?

Discuss when we keep repeating choices, we will likely get the same results. We may also feel like we are stuck in a loop and we’ve lost control. Ask: What do you think it means to be stuck in a loop? Point out to students that they can tell if they’re in the loop if they regularly feel the following emotions: frustration, confusion, anger, or fear, or if they lack options to deal with challenges. The fastest way to get out of the loop is to stop the behavior that is hurting them the most. It is often easiest to stay in the loop because it is the most familiar and comfortable. The reality is that to get out of the loop, they may have to work harder, sacrifice, and take a risk by leaving their comfort zone.



Discussion Point 8: Ask What differences do you see on the picture between the Easy-Fast track and the Harder But Worth It Track? How are these two tracks visually different?

Students may give the following responses: Easy-fast track: It goes way up and comes down and crashes, it’s a big loop, it’s faster at first, more exciting at first, the color fades towards the end. Harder but worth it track: It goes up and down, but isn’t as extreme, It continues forward, there are options at the end, it leads towards your goal, it has a support, the color stays the same. It is possible students will see other differences as well. Take a moment to help them realize how these differences metaphorically relate to life.

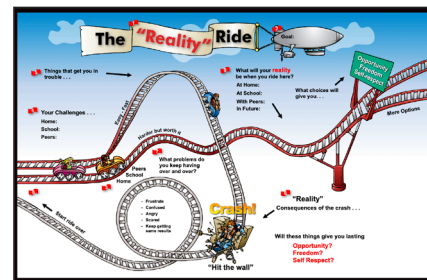


Say I am going to teach you how to achieve opportunity, freedom, and self-respect through these two steps: 1. Get out of the loop. 2. Use your goals as motivation to get on this ride (track). I can help you learn how to take the Harder But Worth It track if you choose to do so. In fact everything we discuss in WhyTry is going to help you learn how to choose this track as well as stay on this track. Although

getting and staying on this ride can be difficult, it is worth it. That's why it has that name. But it ultimately is your choice. But I'd love to help you at least learn how to do it.

Discussion Point 9: Say and ask So why take the harder but worth it track? What could be your reality if you avoided the crash?

Choose the most appropriate question strategy for discussing this point and realize that you will continually be adding to the answer to this question throughout the WhyTry program. Painting a picture of what their reality 'could be' if they take the Harder But Worth It track is one of overall outcomes and motivating factors we are trying to build throughout the entire course. Discuss possible realities at home, such as parents worrying less, arguing with family less, more freedom given by parents (or caregiver). Discuss possible realities at school, such as getting better grades. Discuss possible realities with peers, such as standing up to peer pressure, helping other friends, and so forth. Discuss future realities, such as reaching goals, having self-respect, and becoming something.



Optional Activity: Birthday Cards

Introduction:

This activity will help youth recognize the difference between the easy-fast track and the harder but worth it track. They will see that the easy-fast track is only out to deceive them, while the harder track will lead to opportunities, freedom, and self-respect.

	16	24	
	17	25	
	18	26	
	19	27	
	20	28	
	21	29	
	22	30	
	23	31	

Materials:

- 5 birthday cards (printed from the pdf)
or
- birthday cards in the presentation deck

Activity Instructions:

Print out the five birthday cards provided on this activity's webpage - or use the birthday cards slides in the presentation deck

Tell the group or class that you have a special gift or ability to predict birthdays. Randomly select someone to predict their birthday. You can do this by asking if anyone has a birthday in a given month. If more than one person has a birthday in that month, have them pick a number between 1 and 10. The student closest to the number is the winner and you will guess their birthday. Either turn your back to the group or step out of the room, then have that person tell their birthday or write it on the board. Now announce that you will come up with the actual birthday. Start by showing the numbers on card "A" and ask if their date is on that card. If it isn't, go on to the next card. If it is, remember the number in the upper left-hand corner of that card and go on to the next card.

Every time they say their birthday is on the card shown, add the number in the upper left-hand corner to all the other numbers in the same location on the cards they've said "yes" to. If they answer "no" to any card, you do nothing.

For example, if the person's birthday was November 19th, you would add 1 because 19 is on card A. 19 is also on card B, with two being the first number, so you would add 2 to 1 for a running total of 3 so far. 19 is not on card C or D, so you would add nothing and still have a total of three. Card E does have a 19 on it, so you would add the first number, which is 16, to 3. The students will be amazed at your special gift to predict birthdays. If you have time, you can

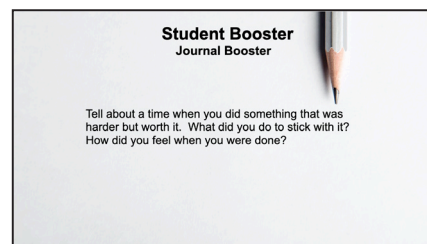
Processing the Experience:

If you can remember sample responses from your students to the question from discussion point #5, use those answers as examples to demonstrate why those choices are deceiving or misleading as a part of the processing.

- Ask the group or class, 'Do you really think I have the ability to predict birthdays?'
- After their response, tell them that you really don't have the power to predict birthdays; that you were in a sense trying to deceive or trick them into believing that you did.
- In what ways can we be deceived on the fast-easy track?
- What does life look like for a person that never makes it off the fast-easy track?
- Why do you think this track is called the Easy Fast track? What is misleading about the name itself?
- Why is the other track called the "Harder But Worth It" track?

STUDENT BOOSTER: Journal Booster (5-10 minutes)

Provide access to their journal prompt. This can be done by either printing out the PDF from the online toolkit, writing the prompt on the board or projecting it, or using WhyTry journals you have purchased. Use Reality Ride Journal Booster #4 with your students (recommended for both secondary and elementary students) or choose a prompt you feel would work better for your students. Play relaxing music in the background as they reflect on the lesson and answer your journal prompt. Depending on time, your class, and situation you may even invite a few students to share now or at the beginning of your next WhyTry session.



AFTER THE LESSON

Say goodbye to students as they leave your class. Thank them for participating and tell them you are excited for next time! You may even want to have music from the suggested playlist or other music playing as they exit your room or transition to new content.

Reflect on your lesson: Ask yourself what went well? What didn't go as planned? Did any of your students respond in surprising ways? If you were to do the same lesson again, what would you consider doing differently?