

Topic 1

The Decision-Making Process

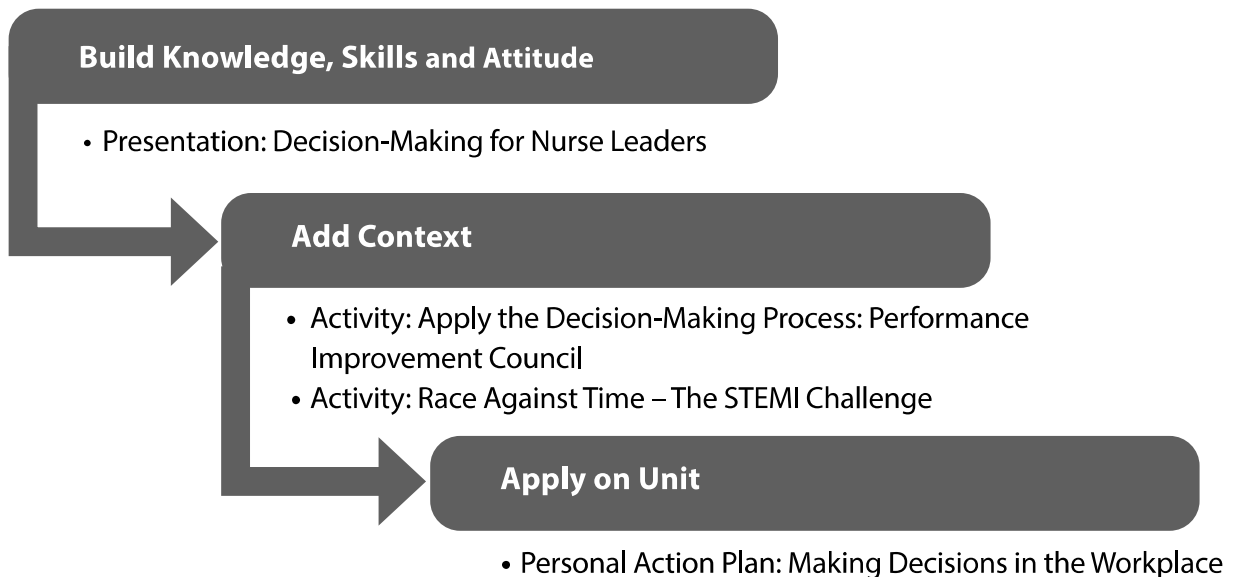
In this topic, participants will explore the decision-making process and practice using an evidence-based approach to making difficult or complex decisions.

Learning Objectives

- Use a decision-making process to make informed decisions when faced with complex situations or challenges.

Purpose and Flow

In this topic, you'll walk your participants through some basic concepts to help them connect their existing knowledge to the content of this course. Participants will apply their knowledge using real-world scenarios. To help transfer this new knowledge to their work, an action plan to address a current workplace decision will be completed.



TIPS

Timesaver Tips

- Shorten presentations by allowing participants to review the concepts in their workbook for 1-2 minutes.
- Review all of the discussion questions in advance and determine which ones you will cover if timing is short. For the remaining questions, ask participants to briefly reflect on the question before moving forward.

Presentation: Topic 1 Introduction

Slide 9; Workbook page 6

I hope the warm-up activity got you thinking about the decisions you are called upon daily to make as a nurse leader. Unlike the decisions you often make in your clinical role, leadership decisions frequently lack hard evidence and can be complicated by the biases and opinions of the different individuals involved. Let's talk now about using an evidence-based approach to decision-making.

Presentation: Decision-Making for Nurse Leaders

Time: 9 minutes

Description: Present an overview of decision-making concepts, particularly as related to complex situations, and review an evidence-based process for improving the quality of decisions.

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As a nurse leader, you encounter many situations that can be solved with relatively quick or straightforward decisions. Examples of simple decisions include scheduling staff for lunch or dinner breaks, ordering unit supplies, and determining who should perform quality control procedures on hospital equipment. These situations do not typically require a formal process or approach to lead you to the best decision.

The decision-making process, however, can be an effective tool for determining solutions when faced with complex situations. Let's take a look at some types of situations that call for a structured approach to decision-making.

- **Insufficient information.** *Are you ever faced with making a decision, but you lack the information needed to make an informed decision? In the absence of crucial information, decisions may be arbitrary and difficult to defend.*
- **Consequences may be high-risk.** *Let's face it; we work in a high-risk environment where the consequences of our decisions may be life or death.*
- **Some of the alternatives may have undesirable consequences.** *When potential consequences of decisions are not explored, an unfavorable trickle-down effect can occur. During the decision-making process, the potential for undesirable consequences is considered and addressed.*
- **Stakeholders may have biases and opinions.** *Your stakeholders are individuals with a direct interest, involvement, or investment in the work that you do.*




Discussion

Ask: *Who are the stakeholders affected by the decisions you make as a nursing leader?*

Sample responses: Managers, hospital leadership, team members, and other co-workers, and patients and their families.

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Slide 10

The Decision-Making Process: Utility for Complex Situations

Features of Complex Situations:

- Insufficient information is available—the facts may not be known.
- Consequences may be high-risk.
- Some of the alternatives may have undesirable consequences.
- Stakeholders may have biases and opinions.

Discussion
Who are the stakeholders affected by the decisions you make as a nursing leader?

PARTICIPANT
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6

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Page 6 in Participant Workbook

Topic 1 The Decision-Making Process

Decision-Making for Nurse Leaders

As a nurse leader, decision-making is a major component of your work. You encounter many situations that can be solved with relatively quick or straightforward decisions. Examples of simple decisions include scheduling staff for lunch or dinner breaks, ordering unit supplies, and determining who should perform quality control procedures on hospital equipment. These situations do not typically require a formal process or approach to lead you to the best decision.

When faced with complex situations, however, a structured decision-making process will help you solve problems, improve performance, and manage the tempo of your unit.

Features of Complex Situations

- Insufficient information is available—the facts may not be known.
- Consequences may be high-risk.
- Some of the alternatives may have undesirable consequences.
- Stakeholders may have biases and opinions.

Think About It!
A stakeholder is someone who has direct interest, involvement, or investment in the situation or issue at hand. In the context of nurse leaders, stakeholders may include patients and their families, teammates, supervisors, ancillary departments, and hospital administration. Can you identify additional stakeholders affected by the decisions you make as a nursing leader?

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Presentation: Decision-Making for Nurse Leaders (continued)

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Now that we've discussed the features of complex situations and your various stakeholders, let's define the decision-making process.

A decision-making process is a systematic, evidence-based approach for making thoughtful, deliberate decisions when faced with complex situations. In these situations, if you do not use a structured approach, your decisions may be disjointed and have the potential of causing confusion and unrest among your teammates.

Discussion

Ask: *In your nurse leader role, what are some examples of complex situations you face that require you to make decisions?*



Sample responses:

- Staffing concerns such as patient assignments, adjusting workload based on available team members, etc.
- Communication challenges and conflict situations. These might include disagreements among your team or conflicts with patients or family members.
- Resource management issues, such as allocating resources and inventory management.
- Ensuring team compliance with policies, protocols and regulations.

Slide 12; Workbook page 7

We've established that as a nurse leader, you are frequently responsible for making decisions, and many of those decisions relate to complex situations.

Let's look at why using a decision-making process is important in your role.

- *A decision-making process provides a structured approach to thoughtfully and systematically make decisions. This structured approach also leads to more potential options, which increases your ability to come to an effective decision.*
- *When you use a process, you will examine problems using a comprehensive analysis to understand their core cause and impacts.*
- *A decision-making process always involves the team, which promotes collaboration and the inclusion of diverse perspectives.*
- *A decision-making process provides transparency and accountability. It allows you to build trust among your team by being clear and open in decision-making.*
- *Finally, a decision-making process involves evaluating the risks and benefits of the potential solutions or alternatives. This information allows us to choose the alternative that has the highest probability of solving the problem with the lowest probability of having an unsatisfactory outcome.*

Presentation: Decision-Making for Nurse Leaders (continued)

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Now let's look at the steps of the decision-making process we will use in this course.

The first step of the decision-making process involves clearly determining what the problem is.

What is the issue or decision that needs to be made? What is the root cause?

Next, consider all alternatives. *What are the possible options for solving the problem? In this step, you will gather information to ensure you have all the data you need. You cannot make a decision without having all of the key information. Get perspectives from others. It's possible that you may even identify too many alternatives, leading you to analysis paralysis. That's okay – the next step will help you manage this.*

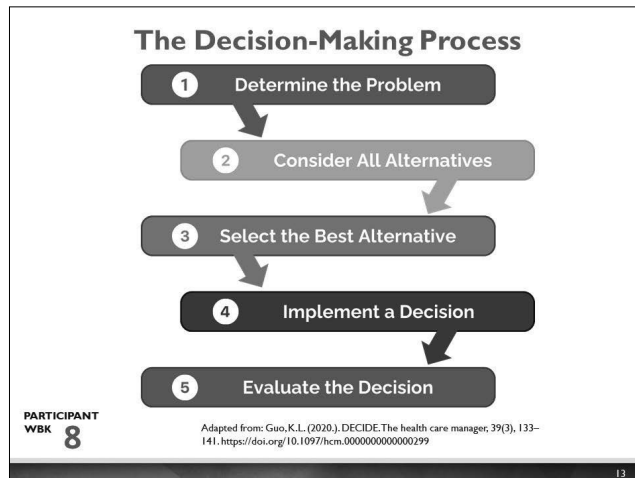
In the third step, you will select the best alternative. *In this step, gather any additional information needed about your options so that you can narrow them down. Ask your peers and your managers for advice or validation. Review all relevant information and then make a pros and cons list to determine which option will best address the issue. In this step, be flexible and adaptive. Flexibility and adaptability allow you to navigate changes and challenges that you may face when making decisions.*

The next step of the decision-making process is implementing a solution. *What are the necessary steps, resources, and timelines? Here, it is also important to explain your decision, or solution, to those affected by it. Share the risks and anticipated benefits. The more information you share, the more likely it is that your decision will be supported and have the results you hope for.*

The final step of the decision-making process is evaluation of the solution. *What steps will you take to evaluate the decision, or solution, after it is made? Some decisions may be evaluated by reviewing data. An effective leader will also regularly seek feedback from stakeholders as a way of evaluating decisions.*

Now, let's work through an example together.

Slide 13



Page 8 in Participant Workbook

Decision-Making Process

Making good decisions takes practice. By consciously applying the decision-making process to solve difficult or complex situations, you improve the probability that your decisions will result in positive outcomes.

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graph TD; 1[1 Determine the Problem] --> 2[2 Consider All Alternatives]; 2 --> 3[3 Select the Best Alternative]; 3 --> 4[4 Implement a Decision]; 4 --> 5[5 Evaluate the Decision];
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Source: Adapted from Guo, K.L. (2020). DECIDE. The health care manager, 39(3), 133–141. <https://doi.org/10.1097/hcm.0000000000000299>

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