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# NF97-331 Using Values and Resources as Criteria for Decision Making

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# Using Values and Resources as Criteria for Decision Making

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Learning to develop criteria to use when making decisions is a lifelong skill. Often, one's personal values and the resources they have determine how they use decision making.

As a part of the Team Problem Solving portion of the Family and Consumer Science Contest, 4-H'ers analyze values and determine available resources in order to select the best alternative to a specific problem.

The following information clearly explains both values and resources and gives examples of how to use this information when preparing for the team decision-making portion of the contest.

## Resources

What are resources? You might ask, "What do you have to work with?" instead. Resources are the things you have (or can get) to do what needs to be done. Some resources are material, like computers; others are human, such as someone to help you type or learn a program.

### *Material Resources*

Material resources are things you can put your hands on to complete a task or solve a problem. Examples of material resources include: a car, money, equipment, your home, tools, a computer and so on.

### *Human Resources*

Human resources are the attributes or traits of people that can be used. Knowledge, skills, interests and talents are all examples of human resources.

Typically, we use both material and human resources to solve problems. A computer (material resource) is not really useful unless we also have the skill to use the computer (human resource). In many cases, we can rely on the resources of others to help solve problems. For example, we might be able to borrow someone's computer or someone might be willing to drive us where we need to go. Although some people have more resources than others, everyone has some resources. Part of the challenge of problem solving is thinking about all of the potential resources available.

As an example, consider the following situation. What resources does Jennifer have that can help her solve the problem?

> Jennifer has found she is having more and more difficulty getting her homework done in the evening. She has always had good grades, but this year she is a cheerleader, she plays in the orchestra and she sings in the swing choir. She would like to try out for the school play, but is really concerned her grades might slip if she takes on any more activities. How can Jennifer decide what is best for her?

Make a list of the resources available to Jennifer.

For the 4-H'er who has been assigned the task of examining Jennifer's resources, the response might go something like this:

> Jennifer has one resource available to everyone - *24 hours in a day*. How she chooses to use that 24 hours can have a big influence on her success. Jennifer also has the resource of *intelligence*, as she as gotten good grades in the past. We can also assume that Jennifer has *musical talent* as she participates in the orchestra and swing choir. Jennifer also has several other resources at her disposal. For example, there are probably people she could talk to about the problem - her *parents, friends,* the *sponsor of school activities* or her *guidance counselor*.

In order to examine how she should make best use of her resources, Jennifer will need to look at her values.

## Values

Values are ideas, qualities and things prized and cherished by an individual. Values help provide direction and meaning to life. They influence behavior by providing a basis on which to make decisions and to choose goals. Values also can help provide a sense of inner security and integrity.

Examples of values include: freedom, education, justice, spirituality, beauty, knowledge, work, caring for others and achievement. In most situations, several values need to be considered. Often we must decide which value is the most important to us and make our decisions based on that value.

What values are reflected in Jennifer's activities and choices?

A 4-H'er discussing the relationship between values and the decision Jennifer would make might respond like this:

Jennifer has several values influencing her. Since she is concerned about her grades and has gotten good grades in the past, she obviously values *education*. She also values *being involved in extra-curricular activities* and probably gets a sense of success and pleasure from these activities. Jennifer must also be thinking about her *plans for the future*, as she is considering how the various things she wants to do will influence her decisions. If she has college in mind, she might consider the *importance of good grades* as being a value. We might also assume she values her *friends*, who participate with her. We might also assume that she values her *family*. Jennifer needs to decide which of these many important things is the very most important to her as an individual.

At this point, the 4-H'ers on the team would consider which alternative would be most feasible for Jennifer. In explaining their choice, team members should justify their decision based on the resources and values discussed.

## References


- Michigan State University Extension Bulletin #647
- Michigan State 4-H Bulletin 182 B4


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