

# Supporting Choice

Helping Others Make Important Decisions

*A Step-by-Step Approach*



**T** — Think about problems, pressures, people, and priorities

**R** — Research facts and possible solutions

**I** — Identify options

**P** — Weigh the Pluses and

**M** — Minuses for each option

**A** — Action planning

**P** — Ponder the results of the decision

Use a **TRIP MAP** for decision making

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## Acknowledgements

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This publication can be accessed electronically through the following Internet World Wide Web connection: <http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov>. For additional free copies of this document, please contact SAMHSA's National Mental Health Information Center at 1-800-789-2647.

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### *Originating Office*

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This workbook is part of a set of materials designed to promote and support shared decision making in mental health. These materials include printed descriptive and informational materials, step-by-step decision making workbooks, videos and user guides, worksheets and tools, tip sheets, podcasts and archived webinars, and an interactive decision aid on using antipsychotic medications as part of a recovery plan.

All of these materials are available to download at no cost from <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/consumersurvivor>. Print copies, DVDs and CD-ROMs of the material are available from SAMHSA National Mental Health Information Center at 1-800-789-2647.

## Notes

## Resources

The material in the workbook is derived from many sources. We especially wish to acknowledge the inspiration provided by the Personal Decision Support Guides created by Ottawa Health Research Institute and available at <http://decisionaid.ohri.ca>.

Explore more about decision making skills and different ways to approach decisions through the links below. The views, policies, and opinions expressed on the featured Web sites are those of the organizations maintaining the Web site and/or the Web site authors and do not necessarily reflect those of SAMHSA.

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Robert Harris, Introduction to Decision Making  
<http://www.virtualsalt.com/crebook5.htm>

eHow Careers & Work Editor, How to Make Decisions  
[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_3838\\_make-decisions.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_3838_make-decisions.html)

University of Florida, Making-Up Your Mind—Improving Your Decision Making Skills  
<http://http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/HE691>

WebMD, Making Wise Health Decisions  
<http://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides>

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## About This Workbook

*This workbook is part of the Federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) project on Shared Decision Making in Mental Health. This project provides tools to help people who use mental health services and people who provide services to have more collaborative and productive conversations about all aspects of a person's mental health recovery plan.*

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Often, people want or need support to make a difficult decision. This workbook is designed to help you support someone in making a decision they find difficult, not just decisions about treatment or services.

*You can use this workbook in several ways:*

- To prepare yourself to hold a decision making conversation with someone;
- As a guide to help someone work through the steps of decision making on paper or using the worksheet included at the back of the workbook;
- As an aid for making a shared decision together with someone;
- As a way to help someone prepare for a planning or decision making meeting about their physical or mental health treatment and services.

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The workbook parallels, and can be used as a companion to, the SAMHSA workbook for people who use mental health services called *“What Is Right for Me? How to Make Important Decisions in Everyday Life.”*

Additional copies of these workbooks, worksheets, and other materials in SAMHSA's Shared Decision Making in Mental Health series can be downloaded from:  
<http://www.mentalhealth.samsha.gov/consumersurvivor>.

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## Introduction

People make decisions every day about their lives, relationships, health care, and services. Some decisions are easy to make, but others may feel difficult and stressful. These feelings are natural, but no one makes good decisions if the feelings become overwhelming. You can help people reduce stress and make better choices by supporting their use of steps to think through their situation and options.

This workbook is designed to assist you in helping someone make a decision that they find difficult. It presents a way of simultaneously providing support and helping people learn how to make decisions independently. It uses a simple tool called **TRIP MAP** to walk through the steps of making a decision.

*The steps are:*



- T** — Think about the problems, pressures, people, and priorities
- R** — Research facts and possible solutions
- I** — Identify options
- P** — Weigh the Pluses and Minuses for each option
- M** — Minuses for each option
- A** — Action planning
- P** — Ponder the results of the decision

Like a road map, the **TRIP MAP** tool helps at each turn, for example, by identifying the most important priorities or weighing the pluses and minuses of each option.

In each section, you will find both suggestions for the person who is facing the decision and for you in your role as helper. For example, you will find ideas for starting conversations about these steps, as well as tips on how to support a person to think carefully about each step.

At the end is a blank 2-page worksheet—also found in the companion workbook—that follows the **TRIP MAP** process. You can photocopy this worksheet to use any time you help someone make a difficult decision.

I have decided to \_\_\_\_\_

### Action Plan to:

Step	What	Who	When	Completed
1.				<input type="checkbox"/>
2.				<input type="checkbox"/>
3.				<input type="checkbox"/>
4.				<input type="checkbox"/>
5.				<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Resources:</b>				

### Plus-Minus Chart: *Weigh Your Options*

	Pluses (good things)	How Important?	Minuses (bad things)	How Important?
Option 1 Do nothing/ Make no change				
Option 2				
Option 3				
Option 4				

## Your Role as a Helper

Making decisions independently is an important part of mental health recovery. People have the right to make and take responsibility for personal decisions in their lives. But people make their best decisions when they have good information, consider the input of others, and take time to think through what is most important to them.

As a peer, family member, friend, or mental health provider, there are many ways you can help others make informed and thoughtful decisions.

*Here are some examples:*

- **Support emotions.** Recognize that decision making is not always logical and rational, but can be messy, complicated, and emotional. Provide support for emotions, not just the process. Affirm that it is natural to feel stressed, uncertain, or confused when faced with a difficult decision. Sometimes people are afraid to even begin the process of decision making. Ask people about their concerns about making a decision and offer ways to address them. Suggest that people talk with others who have faced similar decisions.
- **Match your support to the person's preferences.** Recognize that people might not want your help. Offer help with the recognition that your offer might not be accepted. Ask people what type of help would be useful, such as emotional support or practical information.
- **Help only when needed.** Not everyone needs help with the whole decision making process. A person may be stuck on only one or two steps. Help with the troubling steps only. They may want your ideas about options, not help with a full **TRIP MAP**.
- **Be flexible with pace.** Respect the pace at which people want to make decisions, while helping them focus on deadlines. **TRIP MAP** is a step process. It is okay to stop and restart as needed. Some steps, like "Research" (page 9), may require considerable time.
- **Simplify.** Present **TRIP MAP** or any structured decision making approach as helpful tools rather than as a process that must be followed to the letter. Break complicated decisions into smaller decisions. The goal is to make informed decisions that fit.
- **Avoid taking over.** Focus on the person's thoughts and feelings and do not impose your own. This can be challenging, especially if you have a strong opinion or feel you have a stake in the decision the person makes. Avoid leading questions such as "Wouldn't you prefer to..."

By helping the person examine options objectively, you show your respect for them. You also help them develop their decision making skills. It is important to keep the dialogue open, because, in the end, people make their own decisions, either actively or passively (by avoiding or not following through on a decision).

People generally make choices that they believe are right for them at the time. You may not necessarily agree with their choice. Sometimes people make a decision and then find that it did not work out the way they expected. Part of the **TRIP MAP** process is to revisit a decision and see how it is working.

**TIP**

*To Avoid Taking Over*

Use open-ended questions about a person's priorities.

*What do you think is the best way to...*

Reflect what the person says.

*So what is important to you is...*

Ask for permission before presenting your opinions.

*Do you want to know what I think?*

Present your opinions as opinions, not as facts or advice.

*In my opinion, your best option is...*

Acknowledge any conflict of interest.

*Of course, I would be better off if you...*

Stay open to any idea the person suggests

*That is an interesting idea! Add it to your brainstorm list.*

## TRIP MAP Decision Making Worksheet

### Think

Problems you want to address

Pressures such as deadlines or people who want you to do something

People who can help and who will be affected by the decision

Priorities for what is important to YOU in the decision

**RESEARCH:** What facts and information do you need? Where can you get it?

**IDENTIFY YOUR OPTIONS** by brainstorming. Include "make no change" as an option. Narrow your brainstorm list to what is practical and doable. Circle your three or four best options and then write them on the Plus and Minus Chart on the next page.

- Make no change/do nothing
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

### Talking about a Decision

#### Conversation Starters

- Do you have time to talk? I have some news I would like to share with you.
- I have been thinking about something for a long time. I would like to talk to you about it.
- You know I have been struggling with a difficult decision for some time. I would like to tell you what I decided .

### Talking about a Decision

#### Dealing with Disagreement

- I know you hoped I would decide [mention their choice here]. Instead, I chose [insert your choice here]. I would like to tell you why.
- Your support is important to me. I would like to share with you a difficult decision I just made. It is important for me to tell you about it, even if you disagree with me.

## TIPS

### For Talking About the Decision

Often, a person will need to tell others about the decision they made, particularly people who are affected by the decision. For example, if a person decides to move to a new living arrangement, they will need to talk to the people they live with now.

#### TIP

Cut out a wallet card from the back cover and give it to the person to help them remember the TRIP MAP steps.

*Below are a few tips you can share to help a person talk about their decision with others.*

- Think about how people will react and address concerns you think they will have.
- Pick a good time. Avoid talking about a big decision when you or others are busy, tired, hungry, or angry.
- Remember that people sometimes need time to accept news, and their initial reaction might change over time.
- Stress your priorities in positive terms. For example, "It's really important to me that I have more privacy, so I have decided to look for my own apartment."

The text boxes on the next page offer some ways to start conversations about a decision. Sometimes, role playing or rehearsing these conversations with the person can be helpful. You can help the person anticipate others' reactions and practice a response.

You or others may not like the person's decision or agree with it. It can be especially stressful if the decision goes against what is important to the person's family or community. The person does not necessarily need to defend their decision, but do encourage them to explain to others how they arrived at it. What is important is that the person weighed options and made a thoughtful, informed choice that is best for them.

*If you disagree with the decision:*

- Explain your concerns using "I" not "you." For example, say, "I am concerned about..." not "You should..."
- Separate your concerns for yourself and what is important to you from your concerns for the person.
- Recognize that the person may have different values and goals than you do.
- Encourage the person to create a "back-up" plan.

## T

### TRIP MAP

## Think About a Decision

Good decision making involves more than choosing an option. The first step is to stop and think about the situation. There are many things that will affect the decision: people, pressures, the person's priorities, as well as the pluses and minuses of the options.

Some people become overwhelmed by the stress of a situation and need help to see their circumstances in terms of decisions they can make. Framing problems as decisions can be empowering.

Other people see situations and their options narrowly or jump to a quick solution. For example, Dori sees quitting as the only solution to her problem. Helpers can encourage people to think more broadly about their problems and options.

Some situations are complicated and involve more than one decision. You can help people see these multiple decisions, prioritize them, and tackle them one at a time.

You can help a person get off to a good start by encouraging them to think about the **problems, pressures, people, and priorities** discussed on the next two pages.

Encourage the person to write down their ideas on a sheet of paper or use the decision making worksheet found on **page 21** and in the companion workbook.

To help illustrate how the **TRIP MAP** process works, read Dori's Story in the white box on the right. The blue box suggests ways a helper could support Dori in her decision making. As you go through the workbook, you will see more white boxes showing how Dori uses the **TRIP MAP** steps and blue boxes with ideas for ways you can support her along the way.

### *Dori's Story*

Dori just started working at a restaurant where her friend works, about a mile and a half from her home. She likes the job but has to work late some nights. There is no night bus service, so she worries about her safety walking at night and dealing with bad weather.

### *Supporting Dori*

Dori tells you she has to quit her job because she is scared to walk at night. She likes the job and is very sad to leave it. You suggest that before she makes a decision to quit, she should spend some time seeing if she has other options.

### Supporting Dori

You and Dori and talk together about her perspective on her situation and the pressures she is feeling.

With winter coming, she is concerned about walking to and from work—not just at night, but in cold, icy weather.

She feels pressured by her family to get a job closer to home.

She is leaning toward quitting the job but is willing to explore other ideas.

### ◆ Problems

The first step in effective decision making is defining the decision that needs to be made. Most difficult decisions relate to some form of problem or challenge.

#### QUESTIONS | PROBLEMS

*To help a person identify and explore the problems and decisions to be made:*

- What do you see as the problem or situation?
- What do you want to change?
- What do you want to stay the same? To change?
- What decision do you feel you have to make?
- What will this decision help you achieve?
- What decisions come before this one? After this one?
- What decision would you like to work on first?
- Are you leaning toward an option now?

### ◆ Pressures

It is important for both the helper and the person making the decision to recognize the pressures the person is facing. Time may be a factor. For example, sometimes a quick decision is needed so the person does not miss out on an opportunity.

Other times, there are deadlines such as a class enrollment date or an eviction notice. In some cases, pressure comes from the realization that if the person does not make a decision, someone else will make the decision for them.

#### TIP

Common pressures include time, money, health, relationships, community or cultural expectations, and feeling forced to choose among limited or undesirable options.



## CONGRATULATIONS!

You have helped the person to complete the **TRIP MAP** steps.

*They have:*

- Thought about the decision,
- Researched and identified options,
- Weighed the pluses and minuses of the options,
- Selected the best option for him or her, and
- Made an action plan.

The next section of this workbook contains resources you can copy and use as often as needed.

*These are:*

- Tips for Talking about the Decision
- Decision Making Worksheet
- Plus-Minus Chart
- Action Plan



# P

## TRIP MAP

### Dori's Decision

If her friend decides to quit her job, Dori would no longer have a ride to work. She would need to revisit her options for getting to work and make another decision: walk, find another person to ride with, or buy a used car.

Or maybe Dori gets a raise at work, so buying a used car will not be so hard on her budget.

### Ponder: Is It Working?

People make decisions with the information they have available at the time. But decision making is often an ongoing process, and circumstances can change. Sometimes decisions do not work out as hoped. In most cases, the person can make another decision to try something else.

If the decision did not turn out as expected, it does not mean that the person failed or necessarily made a bad choice. This is often part of the process.

People may revisit decisions many times as they learn new information, better understand what is important to them, or as the situation changes. Sometimes people make the same choice each time they face the decision, but other times they choose a different option.

Pondering is different than second-guessing. It means helping a person think about what they learned from the process of making and acting on a decision. It is an opportunity to celebrate what worked out, as well as to consider new information or any problems that popped up.

### TIP

People often learn something by looking at how their past decisions turned out—good and bad.

When a person does not like how a decision turned out, it provides an opportunity to talk about what does not work. This information is helpful for future decisions.

### QUESTIONS | PONDER: IS IT WORKING

To help a person ponder how the decision worked out:

- How did your decision turn out?
- In what ways did it help you achieve what was most important to you?
- What happened when you tried your action plan?
- How do you think things could have been different?
- What could you do differently the next time you have to make this decision?

# T

### QUESTIONS | PRESSURES

To help a person identify the pressures they face in this decision:

- When do you need to make this decision?
- Why are you making this decision now?
- What would happen if you did not make a decision?
- Is anyone pressuring you to make this decision? If so, who?
- What do they want you to do? What concerns do you have about this?

### ◆ People

Most important decisions affect not just the person making the decision, but also friends, family members, and others.

Sometimes others need or want to be involved in making this decision. The person may welcome involvement by others—or not. Help the person think about how much and in what way they want others involved—for example, not at all, as a source of information, as an advisor or supporter, or as a partner in making a shared decision.

### QUESTIONS | PEOPLE

To help a person think about how others are—or could be—involved in this decision:

- Is the decision completely up to you or are others involved?
- Who is affected by your decision? Do they need to be involved in making this decision?
- How do you want to make use of others' opinions?
- Who can you talk to about your decision?
- How do you want to involve others in your decision making?

### Supporting Dori

Dori says the decision is hers to make – although her choice would affect her boss, her friend, and maybe her family. Her brother knows about cars and could talk to her about them. She thinks her personal safety and protection from the weather are more important than getting to and from work quickly. She does not want to spend a lot of money on transportation because she wants to save for her own apartment.

Looking at her list, Dori feels that safety is the most important.

# T

## ◆ *Priorities*

People are more likely to be satisfied with and follow through on a decision that addresses what matters to them. People may never have all the information they need or want about their options. There may not be one clear “best” choice among the options. Therefore, feelings and personal values play an important role in the decision.

Encourage the person to make a list of things that are important to them in this decision. It is useful to rate which priorities are the most important to the person in case they have to make tradeoffs.

### QUESTIONS | PRIORITIES

*To help a person think about what is most important to them:*

- If there were a “perfect” answer, what would it look like?
- What are the two most important things on your list?
- What are the two least important things on your list?
- If you cannot have all the things you want, what would you give up and what would you keep?

### TIP

One way to help a person rate priorities is to directly compare two important things. For example: “If you could have an apartment near a grocery store or one that allows pets, which would you prefer?”

# A TRIP MAP

## Action Planning

Making a decision involves more than just choosing the best option. People must act on a decision to make a specific change in their lives.

Creating an action plan helps people follow through, especially if it identifies what needs to be done, who does it, when it needs to be done, and what resources are needed to do it. Steps may include informing others, gathering more facts, or doing activities.

Encourage the person to keep the action plan simple and doable. Action steps are most helpful when listed in the order they need to be done.

Below is Dori’s Action Plan as an example. There is a blank action plan on the worksheets at the end of this workbook and in the companion workbook.

### Dori’s Action Plan to: *Ride to work with a friend*

Step	What	Who	When	Completed
1.	Talk to friend about the decision. Make sure it is still OK with friend.	Dori & friend	As soon as possible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2.	Agree on Dori’s share of gas.	Dori & friend	As soon as possible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3.	Agree on a schedule and a start date.	Dori & friend	As soon as possible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4.	Make a backup plan for times when friend cannot drive.	Dori	After agreements are made	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	Meet at agreed place and time.	Dori & friend	After agreements are made	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Resources:** Home phone number or e-mail for friend; money to pay for gas; convenient place to meet; another way to get to work if friend is not available

### *Supporting Dori*

You help Dori figure out the steps for putting her decision into action. You ask if she needs a backup plan for times when her friend cannot drive. She thinks it was a good idea. She writes an action plan and then checks off items as she does them.



## QUESTIONS | CHOOSE THE BEST OPTION

*To help a person choose the option they feel is best for them:*

- Which option best addresses why you are making this decision?
- Which option best matches what is most important to you?
- What are you willing to trade to get what you really want?
- What might happen if you make this choice? How likely is that to happen? How would you feel about that?

### TIP

Not ready to make a decision? Help the person explore the consequences of not making a decision at this time. Must this decision be made soon or can it be made later?

Choosing to not make a decision is a decision itself. It has pluses and minus like any other option.



## TRIP MAP

## Research Information

Does the person know the facts of the situation and what the options are? Do they understand the pros and cons of each of these options? If not, you can help them get more information.

One way to help is to suggest some ways to get needed information.

*For example:*

- **Visit a library.** There may be books and other resources to help. Librarians can help people find the most useful information.
- **Use the Internet.** You can help the person identify trustworthy Web sites. Encourage the person to look for Web sites that include reviews from others who have used a product or service.
- **Talk to others.** Peers, family, friends, spiritual advisors, and providers might have more information about this particular decision. Also, suggest speaking to people who have special knowledge about the topic. For example, a person who is thinking about buying a used car might want to talk to an auto mechanic about which ones have the fewest repairs.

## QUESTIONS | RESEARCH INFORMATION

*To help a person identify information needs:*

- Do you have all the facts about this situation?
- Do you know what all of your options are?
- Do you know all the pros and cons of your options?
- What kind of information do you need?
- Where can you go to get the information you need?

### Supporting Dori

You encourage Dori to make sure she has all the facts about her situation correct. She double checks the bus schedule to verify how late the bus runs. It stops at 7 p.m.

She jokes that maybe she should get a car. You suggest that she research the idea and ask her who she knows who understands cars. Pleased that you did not shoot down the idea, she agrees to talk to her brother.

You show her some Internet sites that have used car information and suggest she visit a library to look at a book that rates reliability and cost of specific models.

You ask if her friend could help with transportation at nights or in bad weather. Dori says she'll talk to her friend about the idea.



# TRIP MAP



### Dori's Brainstorm

- Quit the new job
- Do nothing: keep walking
- Ask to work only when the bus runs
- Ride with friend
- Buy a used car
- Try to find an apartment closer to work

## Identify Options

### ◆ *Brainstorm*

After gathering facts and information, help the person make a list of options. Any idea is a good idea at this point. Encourage creativity and do not worry about how realistic or effective the options might be. During brainstorming, listing an option does not mean it is practical or doable or that you approve or condone it. You are helping the person think broadly and generate ideas.

The worksheet in the back of this workbook may be helpful for this step.

### QUESTIONS | IDENTIFY OPTIONS

To help a person create a list of options:

- What could be done to solve the problem?
- What do other people do in situations like this?
- What kinds of things are you considering?
- What have you already tried?
- What do you want to do?
- Those are great ideas. Have you also considered \_\_\_\_\_?
- Can you stick with this option?

Encourage the person to consider "No change" as an option. They may find that what they are already doing is their best choice.

### TIP

### ◆ *Choose the best option*

What does the completed table reveal? Does one option seem to fit the person's goals and priorities? Is the person leaning toward one option over others? If so, what else do they need to make a decision?

When the person is comfortable they have made a good choice, ask them to write it on the worksheet.

### *Still not sure?*

If the person is still having trouble deciding, here are some things that might help:

1. **Review with the person why they are making this decision.** Encourage them to look again at how they defined the problem in the "Think" (page 5) step and then review the options. Does one best help them meet their original goal?
2. **Revisit priorities.** Encourage the person to look again at their list of priorities from the "Think" step. Help them consider which option is most likely to achieve what they said was most important to them. Ask the person whether they have discovered priorities they did not list earlier.
3. **Consider tradeoffs.** Decisions are especially difficult when a person has to select one priority at the expense of another, or when none of the options are good. Help the person consider what they are willing to give up in order to get something they value more.
4. **Get more information.** Sometimes talking about a set of options uncovers the need for more information. Help the person think about what new information is needed and where to get it.
5. **Get more ideas.** When a person cannot decide among options, it can be helpful to go back to the brainstorm list. Is there something on the list that should be considered? Could ideas be combined to make a fresh idea? Encourage the person to talk with others—they may have fresh ideas or another way of thinking about the options.
6. **Make a "backup" plan.** If the person is concerned about a preferred option not working out, it can be helpful to create in advance a backup plan of what to do instead. This can help create confidence for making a choice.



Dori's Plus-Minus Chart: *Weigh Your Options*

	Pluses (good things)	How Important?	Minuses (bad things)	How Important?
Option 1 No change: <b>Continue to walk</b>	No cost	***	Takes a long time	*
	Get exercise	*	Weather gets bad	***
			Does not feel safe	***
Option 2 <b>Quit job</b>	Opportunity to find something better	*	Lose income and job I like	***
Option 3 <b>Buy used car</b>	Reliable	**	Expensive to buy	***
	Saves time	***	Costs of gas, insurance	***
	Feels safer	***	Could break down	**
Option 4 <b>Ride with friend</b>	Feels safer	***	Do not like feeling dependent on friend	**
	Inexpensive	***	May not be reliable	**
	Saves time	*	Friend's car is old and could break down	*
	Friendly conversation	**	Mother does not like friend	*



### ◆ *Narrow the List*

After brainstorming, help the person consider each brainstorm idea and circle the ideas that seem most practical and doable. The more options the person has, the more confusing the decision can be. Three to four options is a manageable number. Be certain to consider the option of making no change.

Encourage the person to transfer their circled options to the Plus-Minus Chart on the worksheet in the back of the workbook.

### QUESTIONS | NARROW OPTIONS

*To help a person narrow a list of options:*

- Do you have all the information you need about this option? If not, where can you learn more?
- Do you have the money or resources you need to make this work?
- Does this option depend on someone else?
- Does this option help achieve what is most important to you?
- How would this option affect others who are important to you?



# TRIP MAP

## Pluses and Minuses: Weigh the Options

Now that the person has a set of practical and doable options, it is time to list and rate the pluses (good points) and minuses (bad points) of each option. The worksheets at the back of this workbook and in the companion workbook include a Plus-Minus Chart that can aid in this step. On page 14 is Dori's example.

### TIPS

Do not try to influence the decision by emphasizing the pluses of options you like or the minuses of options you dislike.

Share your perspective by offering ideas and suggestions, but present them fairly and as your opinion. For example, "I have some concerns about...." or "Have you considered...."

### List Pluses and Minuses

Encourage the person to identify, from their perspective, the pluses and minuses of each option. Help them think about any kinds of pluses and minuses for the option, such as:

- Potential outcomes
- Feelings
- Impact on others
- Availability of resources

### QUESTIONS | LIST PLUSES AND MINUSES

To help a person identify the pluses and minuses of each option:

- What is good about this option?
- What worries you about this option?
- If you did nothing, what would happen? Is that OK with you?
- How might people who care about you (such as friends, family, and others) be affected by this choice?



### Weigh the Rate Importance

Some of the pluses and minuses will be more important to the person than others. Reviewing the list of priorities from the "Think" step may help the person weigh what matters most. In the column labeled "how important?" encourage the person to use stars to rate how important each plus and minus is to them.

- \* One star means it matters very little.
- \*\* Two stars means it matters somewhat.
- \*\*\* Three stars means it matters a lot.

### QUESTIONS | WEIGH THE RATE IMPORTANCE

To help a person think about what matters most to them:

- How important is this pro to you?
- How important is this con to you?
- How does this pro or con relate to what is most important to you?

### Supporting Dori

You acknowledge all the thinking and research Dori has done so far. She is doing a great job and sticking with the process.

As she uses the Plus-Minus Chart to think about the good and bad things about each option, you ask questions to help her to think broadly. For example, how would she feel if she quit her job? Does she have a place to park a car at home? How might riding with a friend affect their friendship?

You explain the star rating system and help Dori weigh how important each plus and minus is to HER. You ask her if she wants to hear your thoughts on these. She looks at the completed chart to see if one option seems to fit her priorities better. The one that does—Option 4—is not what she expected. You talk with her about her surprise.

### Dori Weighs Her Options

Dori realizes she has options other than quitting her job. She can continue to walk to work. She can buy a used car. She can ride to work with a friend.

She wrote her options on the Plus-Minus Chart. She listed what she likes and does not like about each option. She used stars to rate how important these things are to her.

Option 4, riding with a friend, has more of what is important to Dori and less of what is not important to her. This process helps Dori conclude that riding to work with a friend may be her best option at this time.