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How to Make Good Decisions

Before you can "go for your goals," "do it now," or "make it happen," it is important to determine what it is you really want. As our world becomes more progressive, and people become more educated and more sophisticated, we have many more choices than ever before.

First, you have to decide on a goal. That being said, you need to know that you have the right to change your mind at any time, modify your goal, or decide on a completely different goal. Changing goals and directions often has consequences however. Usually change requires a temporary setback. However, most people do change over time, and as we get to know more about who we really are, our goals often change as well. This is a part of growing and evolving.

Many of us have what is called goal conflict. You may not even realize you have goal conflict – you are either trying to achieve too much at once, or you want too many different things and cannot start any one thing due to your confusion. Procrastinators usually have goal conflict. Sometimes goal conflict arises out of our need for perfection. Many people have a need to do all things well, and complete lots of lofty goals in a short period of time. This is known as the “Type E” personality. This is a person who feels they need to be “Everything” to “Everybody.” The Type E personality is very similar to co-dependency. When you are trying to be too perfect, life will be a constant disappointment, because no one can ever be perfect. Trying to do too much is also known as “over-functioning.” When you are over-doing you will eventually get burned out. This will not serve you or anyone else.

Next, you have to *take action* on your goals. If you state that you have a goal, but have not yet taken any action toward it, you need to figure out why. Either you don't really desire this goal enough or you have obstacles that are getting in your way. Choose your goals wisely.

---Some of the biggest problems arise when we begin to believe that we are perfect, or that the world should be perfect.

---Leo Buscaglia

Why Choosing the Right Goal is Your “Power Button”

It is important *first* to “sift through the muck” and determine what it is you really want, and what it is you can actually do at this time toward attaining it. Goals are values-based. The best way to resolve goal conflict is to take time to study your personal value system. It is extremely important to choose the right goals for you, as the goal itself will serve as a “power button” to motivate you and propel you forward. When obstacles and challenges try to bring you down, focusing on your goal and seeing yourself at the finish line will carry you through.

Ask yourself these six questions: 1) How IMPORTANT is achieving this goal to me? 2) Will my goal, once achieved, contribute to the world in a meaningful way? 3) How will achieving my goal improve the quality of my life? 4) Will my pursuit of my goal cause distress to others? 5) Will my pursuit of my goal alienate me from friends and family? 6) How will I feel once I've achieved my goals?

----- *Don't settle for second best when choosing your road to success; make sure it's the path that you believe in, and then give it your full attention.*

-----Barbara J. Hall

The Simple 5-Step Decision Making Process

When making decisions, it is generally more important to have *clarity* than it is to have *certainty*. Having to have certainty involves having to be *right*. However, typically with difficult decisions there is no right answer, otherwise it would be a simple decision. Having to have certainty involves having to be *perfect* (or at least looking perfect in the eyes of others). Clarity on the other hand, means following the steps below and making a decision based on information, knowledge, desire and instinct.

When you are making difficult decisions, there are often two sides to the anguish. One is your "passion or emotion." The other is your "rational thinking." Both are important considerations. Here is a strategy for making difficult decisions quicker and with less anguish. It is a simple, five step process:

1. Know what you value. Where you spend your resources: time, money and energy shows what you CURRENTLY value. Then look at what you want more of. Brainstorm a list of all the things you value, i.e., health, safety, financial security, children, animals, husband, home, fitness, etc. Then prioritize your values as best you can, and make a list of your top 10 values, numbering them one to ten, one being your most prized value. This list may change over time, but do the best you can based on who you are right now. Be VERY HONEST with yourself here. Don't just say you value "church" when you hardly ever attend church. Don't just say you value things you think others would want you to value, or what others would approve of. Remember, this is about YOU, not in relation to others, but in relation to your core self.
2. State the problem in the form of an either/or. "Should I go to school full time or part time?" "Would I be happiest taking lessons in golf, tennis, or guitar?"
3. Then list the pros and cons for each.
4. Next to each "pro" and "con" write the number of the value it correlates with (if it does) from your previous list of top 10 values. Make a decision based on your highest value score.
5. If the scores in each choice are basically the same, ask yourself, "What do I really, really, want?" Still not sure? Ask yourself which choice brings more fire to your belly. Which one feels most right according to your inner instincts, your highest self?

Now remember, looking at opposites can stop you in your tracks. This is the danger of looking at the pros and cons of a situation. You're basically looking at opposites, which makes it very difficult to make decisions. Sometimes however, one

“con” can overpower numerous “pros.” For example, if you are trying to decide whether to replace your carpet with new carpet, hardwood or tile, and “not being in debt” is high on your values list, and the “con” of hardwood and tile is that it will put you into debt, then that’s a no-brainer. Hardwood and tile are out. New carpet might even be out, for now. But at least you have an answer, and you are not stuck in indecision.

At some point you will need to make a decision one way or the other. Remember, there is no perfect decision. Every decision has different outcomes. Unfortunately, we can never know the outcome ahead of time. Sometimes you just have to take a risk. Life is like a game, with challenges, risks and rules. It wouldn’t be fun if there were no challenges. In fact, the more challenges, the better it feels to have accomplished your goal. The game of life is worth playing because when you do win, it feels so good!

A young man gets a new job at a bank. He is eager to learn how to be successful, one day he gets up the nerve to ask the bank President who is much older:

Young man: *How did you become successful, Sir?*

President: *Good decisions.*

Young man: *And how did you learn to make good decisions, Sir?*

President: *Bad decisions.*

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