

Volume 5, Issue 5

MOTIVATED

THE MAGAZINE THAT MOVES YOU!

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I am at a point where I will soon have to make some major decisions. It got me thinking, and I ended up doing quite a bit of research on the decision-making process, which has never been easy for me.

While researching, I came across this short article:

Crossroads can be a wonderful place to be because there are so many options. You can go forward, return the way you came, or go in a new direction, either to the right or to the left.

Sometimes the crossroads of life can help you come to terms with mistakes or wrong turns you've made, and give you a chance to get going in the right direction. For those who haven't been off track, it's a chance to go in a new direction that will make you even happier and get you farther in the long run. For yet others, it's a time to confirm that you're going in the right direction, so you can continue with the vigor that renewed conviction brings.

Whatever the case, whenever you come to a crossroads, it's an opportunity. So instead of dreading crossroads, look forward to it with anticipation. The best for you might be just around the corner.

Reading this reminded me that one of the most important things to do when faced with making major, possibly life-changing decisions, is to have a positive attitude. It cast a new light on my situation, and I can say that I now even look forward with some excitement and expectancy to the crossroads up ahead.

I hope reading this, along with the other articles and stories I found on making decisions for this issue of *Motivated*, will have the same positive effect on you.

Christina Lane
For *Motivated*

Follow Your Heart

By Amir Khella, adapted



I hung up the phone and sat shaking on the floor. What have I just done? Blood rushed to my head, and I realized that I'd been holding my breath probably since the phone rang. I let a long exhale out, and glanced once more at the contract in my hand...

Everything I wanted was there: the salary I'd asked for, the relocation benefits, and the starting date. And the company logo was also there. It reminded me how it had been my childhood and teenage dream just to visit that company. The same company that I'd just turned down a dream offer to work at.

The phone rang again. It was my best friend, probably calling to ask about when I am starting the new job. I didn't answer; I wouldn't be able to tell him why I just said "thanks, but no" to the biggest special effects studio in the world. I didn't know if he'd understand that after more than two weeks of negotiation with them, I had a "gut feeling" that I shouldn't do it.

This morning, I drove by the studio on my way to get a cup of tea, and it made me wonder whether I made the right decision three years ago. I remembered reading that successful people don't always make the right decisions. Instead, they make decisions, then make them

right. I realized that there is probably no way for me to know if I made the right decision back then, because that path no longer exists. But I am grateful for one thing: that I made a decision, and I moved forward to make it the right one for me. I went on to work with over a dozen startups, two of which I already acquired, launched a successful product, and I am getting ready to launch a second one.

I strongly believe that there are very few "bad decisions" we make in life, and whatever they are, we can make them right by learning from the results and moving forward. I also believe that if we follow our heart, we'll seldom make bad decisions. We might stumble and fail from time to time, but those wrong turns are probably there to teach us things we need to learn. They direct us to meet people who will help us in the next turn, and grow us into the person we need to be for the next challenge.

So instead of standing at the starting line trying to figure out the race, take time to get in touch with your inner compass and take a leap forward. Chances are you'll never end up where you've originally planned to be, but most probably you'll end up in a much better place if you keep making decisions and making them right. ❖

Making Great Decisions



Author Unknown

We make decisions every day; everything we say and do is the result of a decision, whether we make it consciously or not. There's no easy formula for making the right decision. Perfect decisions are rare because life is messy. A great decision is always possible, however. Great decisions don't all have fairytale endings, but they do achieve the best possible outcome under the circumstances.

The most successful decision-makers don't act on impulse, intuition, or even experience alone; they have a system that they work through step by step. Here is one such system:

Take a deep breath. It helps clear your mind so that you can calmly figure out the solution, instead of frantically worry about outcomes.

Take a positive approach. Make a conscious effort to see the situation as an opportunity rather than a problem.

Define the issue. A problem well stated is a problem half solved. Employ the "who, what, when, why, and how" regimen of the journalist, although not necessarily in that order. Why is the decision necessary? What is the

objective? How can a great decision change things for the better? Whom will it affect? When does it need to be made?

List your options. At first glance, it may appear that there is only one course of action, but that is usually not true. Even if your situation seems limited, try to make a list of alternatives. Write down every idea that comes to mind, as crazy as it may seem. You can always cross it off the list later, but with those crazy ideas might come some creative solutions that you might not have considered otherwise. Then ask other people for suggestions. Sometimes strangers can offer the most creative ideas because they do not share your assumptions or biases. The more alternatives you consider, the more likely you will be to not overlook the best solution.

Gather information about your options. You will not only make better decisions if you have investigated thoroughly, but you will also have more peace of mind as you carry out your decision.

Be objective. If you already have an opinion on the matter, the natural tendency will be to look primarily for evidence to confirm that opinion. That works if you happen to be right, but if you're not... Welcome alternatives and opposing views. Remind yourself that the goal is not to prove yourself right, but to make the right decision.

Weigh the possible outcomes.

For every option, list every possible outcome, or even several outcomes, and label them as positive or negative. One way to do this is to put a plus sign (+) next to a positive outcome and a minus sign (-) next to each negative outcome; especially positive or negative outcomes can get two signs instead of one. Try to determine both best-case and worst-case scenarios for each option. See if there is some way to combine several promising solutions into one potent solution.

Be true to yourself. Do any of the alternatives compromise your values? If so, scratch them from the list.

Consult your intuition. You must feel comfortable with the decision. There are several ways to find out if you are. Focus your mind through meditation or prayer. Now visualize every outcome in detail. Imagine you've already made the decision; which one would you feel the

proudest of? Which one makes you feel more at peace, and in sync with your values and belief system?

Make a decision. This is, of course, the hardest step, but there will hopefully be a decision on your list that is backed up by both logic and intuition. It should have more plus signs than negative signs, and it should have your intuition's approval. If things don't match up clearly, ask for advice from people you trust. This can be a good tiebreaker. When you're convinced that you've found the best alternative, commit to it.

Implement your decision wholeheartedly and joyfully. Once you have made a decision, implement it totally. At this stage, don't be confused by thinking about the other potential alternatives that you did not pick.

Evaluate your decision. This is the most important step. If you don't evaluate your decision afterward, you won't learn anything from it. Ask yourself whether the outcome was what you expected. Would you do it again? What do you know now that you didn't know before? How would you turn this lesson learned into advice? By drawing insight and wisdom from every decision you make, you can ensure that every choice has at least one positive outcome. ❀

"Sir, What is the secret of your success?" a reporter asked a bank president.

"Two words." "And, sir, what are they?" **"Good decisions."**

"And how do you make good decisions?"

"One word." "And sir, what is that?" **"Experience."**

"And how do you get experience?"

"Two words." "And, sir, what are they?" **"Bad decisions."** —Author Unknown



Problem Solving with My Teen

By Petra Laila

Now that my oldest, Chris, is 13, I have found that I need to change in how I communicate with him. He is not the child he was a few years back. All of a sudden, he is taller than I am. How time has flown! It seems like just yesterday he was a constantly active two-year-old, getting into everything.

Like most parents, I suppose, my tendency has been to think that I instinctively know what's best for my children, and to take action accordingly. That worked well enough when Chris was small, but now that he's reached a stage where he wants to make more of his own decisions, I've found that I need to take a different approach and involve him more in the decision-making process—to treat him less like a child and more like a teammate.

When my children reached their teens, I tried to guide them through the decision-making process, but then I'd have them make their own decisions. They'd often try to get me or their mother to make the decision for them, so they wouldn't have to take the blame if things went wrong, but I would tell them, "Don't ask me. You know what's right and wrong. What do you think you should do?" Afterwards they were usually glad that we made them decide, because they knew that was the way it was supposed to be and it helped them feel trusted and respected, which is a very important thing at that age.

—Fontaine

When an issue comes up, it's more important than ever that I take time to listen to his ideas and understand both his viewpoint and his needs, as well as to explain mine. Then we try to come up with a solution together that will be good for both of us, as well as for anyone else involved.

When I fall into my old habit of trying to tell him what to do without considering his side, he feels squelched, pulls away, and misses a learning opportunity—and I lose his full cooperation. But when I remember to consult rather than give orders, things go well, he takes another step toward learning to make wise, responsible, loving decisions, and our bonds of love and mutual respect are strengthened. ❀

Are You **Doing** Things for the **Right Reason?**

By Madison Sonnier, adapted

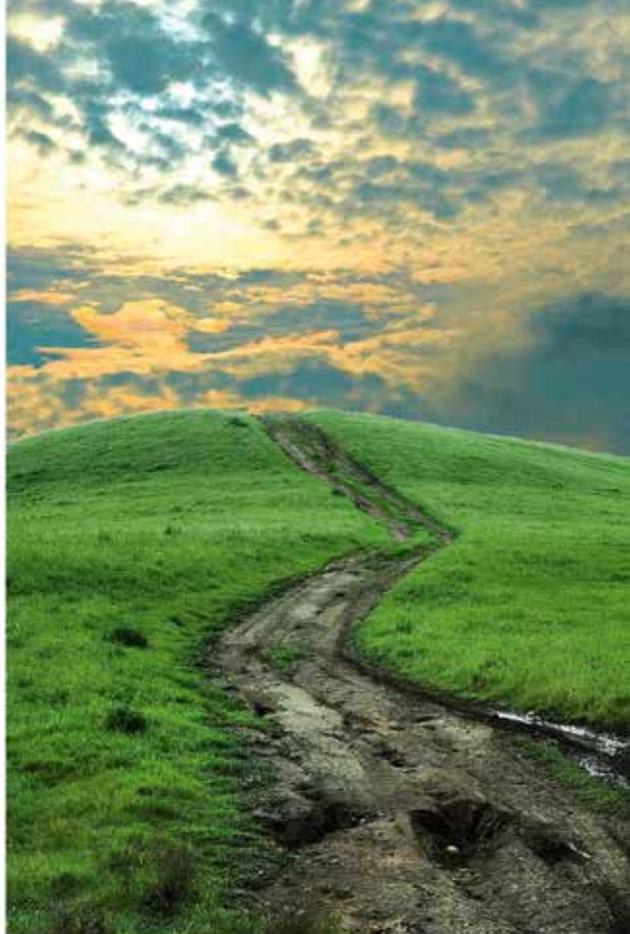
Have you ever put pressure on yourself to accomplish or do certain things because of your age? You probably have at some point in your life.

For instance, if you're a young adult, you might feel pressure to figure out exactly what you're going to do with your life. If you're in your twenties, you might feel pressure to make your living or working arrangements more permanent and official. If you're in your thirties, you might feel pressure to settle down and get married or have kids.

The list goes on and on.

It's tempting to live our lives by a set of societal expectations, especially when we see our friends or other people our age doing things we think we should be doing. We start comparing our lives to theirs, and it makes us feel inferior or left behind. We feel obligated to be at the same level as them and are sometimes willing to settle for just about anything for the sole purpose of potential social acceptance and validation. That is where the problem lies.

If you're doing something or trying to do something because you want to feel accepted or validated, you're doing it for the wrong reasons.



Before making a certain decision or taking a certain path in life, you need to ask yourself why you're doing it. Are you doing it because you want to, or are you doing it because you feel pressured to? It's easy to confuse the two because subconsciously, we all want social acceptance. We all want to feel like we're doing something right and that we're on the right path.

But be honest with yourself. If you're not ready for, don't want, or feel pressured to make a certain decision, then you simply shouldn't be making it.

The most important person in charge of the choices you make is you.

Make sure you are taking responsibility for your own decisions, and that you are doing what you're doing for the right reasons. ❖

Why Not? Web reprint

The benefits of trying new things

Think about your favorite pastime. Chances are you didn't know you enjoyed it until the first time you tried it. In fact, entire career paths have been created by those who've tried something new only to discover their newfound passions.

Opening ourselves up to new things or new ways of thinking can often be intimidating. That's mostly because we're treading into unfamiliar territory, which in turn makes us anxious. But when you make it a habit to frequently try new things, you'll reap some very satisfying benefits.

- **Confidence Builder.** The more new things you try, the more self-confident you become. Get in the practice of trying things you never thought you would. It can be as simple as eating a new food you never tried before, or as daring as zip lining across a canyon. Just like exercise, when you regularly test your limits, you build up your "confidence muscles."

- **Courage Booster.** When trying something entirely outside your comfort zone, you may have to work up the nerve first. Mustering up the courage to act is a practice that, when repeated, can deepen your courage well across other aspects of your life.

- **Boredom Buster.** Do you eat at the same restaurants or take the same daily commute? Doing the same things day in and day out can lead to boredom. You may not even realize you're stuck in a rut until that one day you try a new restaurant or take a different route to work and feel that small sense of wonder, surprise, and self-satisfaction. Remember, you'll never risk boredom if you continually challenge yourself to try new things.

- **Growth Promoter.** In every person there is a strong impulse to grow. Trying new things satisfies that impulse. We first grow by adopting a new mindset in preparation for a new experience. Having had the experience, our mindsets are again altered. Facing any new situation is always a gratifying growth opportunity.

- **Brain Strengthener.** Trying and learning new things stimulates your brain and challenges it to create new pathways. When you experience something new, you give your brain a chance to exercise on a completely new level.

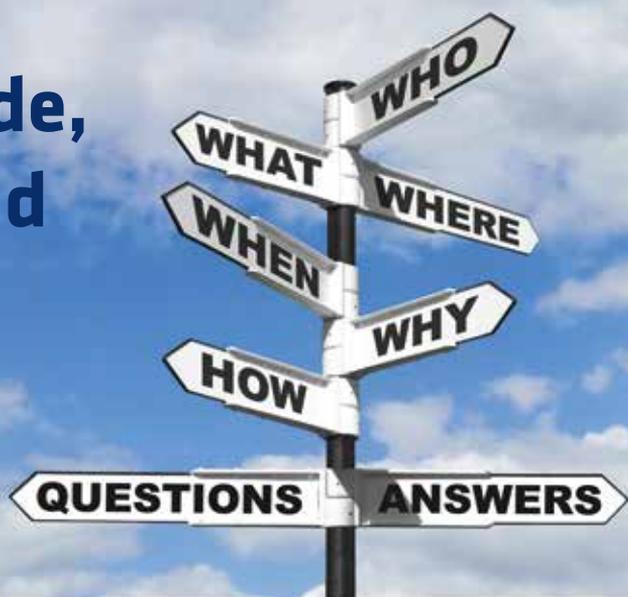
Step out, and try something new today!



You Can't Decide, So What Should You Do?

Sometimes stalling, or doing nothing, is your best option

By Maria Baratta, Ph.D., L.C.S.W.



Decisions, decisions—we make them all the time. Deciding to have pasta or salad may not be as difficult as whether to take a job, end a relationship, or buy the purple boots (though sometimes the pasta choice is hard). Making a good decision might require some help.

The following are two simple tools that might help when you're really stuck:

When you feel pressured and a decision is impossible, when in doubt, stall. Stalling is the basic task of securing more time to think, feel, or process information relevant to a solution or choice. We make many of our decisions from the gut—an intuitive reaction that honors an internal truth. Yet decisions made in haste might lack the necessary time to get in touch with that internal truth. In those situations, allow yourself more time.—“Let me get back to you, I need to sleep on it. Can I let you know next week? Can you put that on hold for me? May I have a few more minutes to decide?” Buy yourself more time. Giving yourself permission

to stall might just take the pressure off making a hasty and bad decision.

Then there are the times that you just don't know what to do and stalling won't help. For those situations consider doing nothing—decide not to decide. Sometimes it means just saying aloud, “I can't decide,” rather than choosing something that doesn't feel right.

This may sound simplistic, but giving yourself permission to do nothing is huge. It helps decrease the stress of having to make a decision and allows you a more peaceful platform to think. Deciding not to decide frees you up to seek the necessary internal or external validation.

Sometimes, decisions are just plain impossible. Only time will help with those decisions that are impossible. Have patience with your own process of discernment—the thoughtful process that taps into your intellectual and spiritual self. Prayer can be particularly helpful when patience and courage are what you need. And most importantly, learn to be kind to yourself, no matter the outcome. ❀



Making Wrong Choices

5 steps for recovering
from a bad decision

By Dani, www.positivelypresent.com, adapted

Sometimes we find ourselves faced with difficult choices. We can be staring at two options and almost literally feel torn between which one to choose. Life is full of moments in which we feel as if we are standing in a fork in the road, looking down two potential paths, and wondering which way we should go.

Sometimes we find ourselves lost, uncertain of which path will lead us home. Other times we know which path will lead us further away from home, and, yet, we might be so curious that we want to take that path. The wonderful thing about life is that we often have the option to travel down many different paths. However, that ability to make choices can also be one of the most terrifying things about life.

In a life filled with choice after choice

after choice, we're bound to make a few mistakes. Life can sometimes feel like a big game of trial and error, and often we don't have any idea what the best choice might be.

At other times, you know the right choice but choose the wrong one, and these situations are some of the most difficult to overcome. Coping with the aftermath of a bad decision with the knowledge that we knew from the word go we were making the wrong choice is

one of the hardest things to deal with.

Having (unfortunately) had some experience with this myself, I've come up with some ways to deal with the effects of having made a bad decision, whether knowingly or unintentionally. By focusing on the present and on being positive it's possible to overcome, well, pretty much anything.

1. Take full responsibility.

The first step you must take when having made a poor choice is to recognize the part you played in a situation. It does no good at all to make excuses, rationalize, or pretend that, for whatever reason, you aren't to blame. If you want to move forward, you have to take responsibility for your choices and actions.

2. Understand your choices.

It's essential that you understand why you made the decision you made. Keep in mind that this is not a time to think of excuses for why it happened; this is a time to understand why it happened so you can avoid making similar decisions in the future. Take some time to think about why you did what you did so you can begin to move on.

3. Apologize and explain.

If your decision hurt anyone, the best thing you can do is apologize and explain. Be honest and open with those you have hurt. Once you've done that, it's also important to forgive yourself

and do what you can to come to terms with your decision.

4. Focus on the present.

It can be tempting to dwell on your bad decision, but that's a waste of time. The most productive thing you can do is to focus on what's happening now. Cut yourself some slack and begin to focus on the positive things you're currently doing instead of the negative things you have done.

5. Be proactive in the future.

Find ways to be proactive after the fact. Ask yourself what can be fixed or changed, and then think about what you can do in the future to make sure you don't find yourself making similar decisions. Don't downplay the importance of taking future action.

It can be tempting to feel down on yourself and to start thinking negatively, but **DON'T!** No matter what we've done or what choices we've made, there is always hope for the present moment. The past, unfortunate as it might be sometimes, is gone.

The only thing we can do is move forward with a positive attitude and a focus on the here and now. That's not to say that things that happened in the past aren't important; they are. But we must realize that the only moment that is real is the moment that is right now—and it's up to us to start making choices that will leave us feeling positive and happy to be living every moment of every day. ❖



Choices

NOTABLE
QUOTES



Life is the sum of all your choices.

—Albert Camus

Choices are the hinges of destiny.

—Pythagoras

Greatness is not a function of circumstance. Greatness, it turns out, is largely a matter of conscious choice, and discipline.—Jim Collins

Using the power of decision gives you the capacity to get past any excuse to change any and every part of your life in an instant.—Anthony Robbins

Once you make a decision, the universe conspires to make it happen.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Why do we have to listen to our hearts? Because, wherever your heart is, that is where you'll find your treasure.

—Paulo Coelho

If you don't design your own life plan, chances are you'll fall into someone else's plan. And guess what they have planned for you? Not much.—Jim Rohn

When you cannot make up your mind which of two evenly balanced courses of action you should take—choose the bolder.—William Joseph Slim

A problem clearly stated is a problem half solved.—Dorothea Brande

We must make the choices that enable us to fulfill the deepest capacities of our real selves.—Thomas Merton

When your values are clear to you, making decisions becomes easier.

—Roy E. Disney

Whenever you see a successful business, someone once made a courageous decision.—Peter F. Drucker

The greatest accomplishment began as a decision once made, and often a difficult one.—Michael Rawls

