

Decisions, Decisions, Decisions...

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That fork in the road!

We've all been there....

We've all been there before, faced with what can feel like a paralyzing indecisiveness & self-questioning fear over making a big decision and needing direction and an answer; or to hurry up and decide on something and hope that it is the right decision and instead procrastinating so long that we now have missed the opportunity to have a choice in the matter at all. We've all also been there before, realizing after it is too late that we were unprepared for the decision we made and are now left feeling unhappy with the results of our good-intended haste and wishing for a do-over and a chance to choose the other path.

Whether you believe any of these scenarios to be possible in your world or see them as just over-exaggerations, what is certain is that being faced with any decision of importance to us can lead us to lose quality sleep, distract our focus throughout the day and create feelings of uncomfortable distress.



Making any type of decision can potentially be a scary thing for us to do when we do not have a guarantee of how things we decide upon will turn out. Life is full of these moments and it is easy to rush into decisions just as it is easy to try to avoid making decisions all together. Unfortunately, neither of these scenarios result in getting what we want. So, what can we do about it?

Stop! Think! Act!

The first thing to remember, ideally before making a decision, is to first STOP. Stop what you are doing and slow down for a moment or two or three. Now, THINK it through. Take as long as you have and need to take. We'll talk more about what this can look like in a moment. After you have thought it through, then ACT by making your decision and taking steps associated with your decided upon path. More on that later too. Stop. Think. Act. Seems simple enough. But, what does it really mean to think something through?



Thinking it Through...

Thinking it through is a process in which we examine the decision before us, explore what we want the end result to be and what the best path to getting there is. It involves as clear a picture as we can create of what the actual decision to be made is about, its purpose and meaning in our world and why it is something we need to decide about. Thinking it through means you are asking yourself specific questions about the decision at hand and coming up with the answers to these. For starters: What

exactly do I need to decide upon? What does this decision mean to me and those close to me? Why is it important that I make this decision versus passing it over? And, most importantly, what do I expect to gain in the end from making this decision?

What are your options?

What options do you have regarding this particular decision? Are there different avenues you can choose from in making this decision? Think them through thoroughly by identifying what they are and the specifics of what each option entails and what the possible outcomes are of each option. What are the pros and cons of each option? List these for each option you have. Everything has a good side and a less appealing side. Know these about each option you have regarding the decision you are faced with making. Identify as many possible options and scenarios as you can with as many possible pros and cons as you can.

Weigh your Pros & Cons...



List your pros and cons for each option next to each other on paper if this helps. Which items, be them pros or cons, carry the most importance to you regarding this decision? Which do not matter to you as much as others on your list? Scratch these off and focus on the ones more important to you. Ask yourself and others involved or who are in your support system these same questions. Don't be timid about asking the opinion of others, especially those who are also impacted by this decision in the end. Getting another opinion can shed light on something that wasn't previously thought of. It can also lead to feelings of validation and support as you venture into making a big decision. Now, think about or reread all that you have collected about the in's and out's of your decision options. Think it through. Which option looks like the better option for you based on its pros and cons and the likelihood of leading to a satisfying

outcome? Which makes more sense to you and fits your overall goal, resources and abilities? Remember that the best path is not necessarily the easiest path. Often, the paths most rewarding are those that require some work.

Set your Path

Now that you have thought it through, it is time to ACT and make that decision. Whether a smaller or bigger decision, you have thought it through and explored all angles allowing you to act as informed as you can. This is called making an "informed decision." From here, you are ready to take steps associated with your decision. What does it look like to take these steps once your decision has been made? Set your goals accordingly with what you need to do moving forward with this decision. Be specific by outlining what exactly needs to be done, by what date and how you will specifically go about doing it. Be sure to include who you need help from and exactly in what way you need that support. Being specific also means outlining all the smaller steps too!





Stop-Think-Act

Stop-Think-Act can be useful with decisions of all magnitudes, from deciding upon life paths to take, to figuring out how to best approach a relationship issue, or problem solving a day-to-day stressor. Remember to slow down long enough to think about the issue, taking the time you and the issue at hand needs, be it a few moments or a few days or weeks, and then feel comfortable acting. Have confidence in yourself and you are well on your way to Embracing Your Path!

Disclaimer

The information contained herein is not therapeutic advice nor a substitute for therapy. It should not be used to diagnose or treat any mental health problem. If you are located within the United States and you need emergency assistance please call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room. If you are located within Colorado you may also call the Colorado Crisis Line at 844-493-TALK (8255).