

# OVERCOMING INDECISION

The goal of decision-making is not to make the right decision, but to make the best decision given the time & information available.

## Reasons Why We Have Difficulty Making Decisions & How to Overcome Them

- **Lack of Practice** - Many of us feel we have limited experience in decision-making. While any unfamiliar task is difficult at first, what we need is practice making little decisions. Research has shown that people who make little decisions easily, make the hard decisions with less stress. Learning to trust ourselves to make good decisions on the little issues will help us not second-guess ourselves on the larger issues.
- **Past History of Bad Decisions** - Many individuals are afraid of making decisions because they have not made the best decisions in the past. We need to let go of our past mistakes and focus on the decisions we need to make today. Most of the time, if we make a bad decision, there will be an opportunity in the future to correct it.
- **Need for More Information** - Many individuals struggle with decision-making because they do not feel like they have enough information. We should always try to collect as much information as we can before making our choices. This is called *walking around the issue*. But remember all decisions are made on partial information.
- **Failure to Keep Your Own Counsel** - Once we have all the information we can gather, and have talked to those whose input we value, we need to keep our own counsel. We should not continue to solicit the advice of everyone we know. After all, it is us who have to live with the consequences of our decision-making.
- **Too Many Choices** - Many of us feel that a major obstacle in our decision-making is the number of choices available. We assume it was much easier in the past, when the number of choices was limited.

In fact, there are those who argue that too many choices is not only a major factor in decision-making but also in unhappiness. They view excessive number of choices as partly responsible for the epidemic of mood disorders (including anxiety disorders and depression).

- **Need For a Break** - Another reason for procrastinating in making a decision is the sheer number of choices available (think Starbucks!). We never get a break from having to make decisions. Once we have made a decision, we have to move on to another. We feel we need a *timeout*.

Before a making a decision, take a deep breath. Relax. We exercise clearer judgement and make better decisions when calm and relaxed. We need to avoid decision-making when feeling distressed or anxious.



- **Difficulty Making Trade-Offs** - Many of us hate to make trade-offs, which makes decision-making difficult especially in terms of time. How good we expect a decision to be is based not on the number of choices, but our expectations.

When we put more effort into decision-making and choosing is difficult, we expect that the decision will result in a better outcome and the good will last longer. Unfortunately, because of the effect of adaptation, the outcome is not better and our satisfaction does not last longer.

- **Lack of a Future Plan** - We should not be panicked into making a choice that conflicts with the directions we have already planned. We need to evaluate your decisions against our long-range goals. This is especially important if a quick decision is required.
- **Inability to Predict the Future** - Part of what paralyzes many of us in making a decision is the inability to predict what will happen. Remember, refusing to make a decision is making a choice or decision. There will also be unknown consequences if we do not make a decision.
- **Lack of Commitment to Your Decision** - Many of us constantly play the *what if* game. We must avoid beating ourselves up. As when things do not turn out, we will be faced with making new decisions based on new circumstances and with new knowledge.
- **Obsessing and Second-Guessing Yourself** - Once we have made a decision, many of us obsess about it and try to second-guess ourselves. Relax and forget about it. Re-hashing a decision, especially if there is little or no option of changing it, does not serve any purpose unless it is to drive ourselves crazy.
- **Failure to Learn From the Process** - When a decision does not work out, and we feel a different choice would have been better for us, we should not view this as a failure.



We can replace self-talk that says *should have* with *next time...* or *it would have been nice...* And appreciate what we have learned about ourselves through having made the choice and evaluated the outcome. This is new information that we can use in future decision-making.

### Remember

Decision-making always rests on partial understanding.  
 Decision-making is always limited by time & space.  
 Mistakes are inevitable.

If you are having trouble with decision-making, contact your EFAP.

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 Brown Crawshaw 1.800.668.2055  
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