**How to Make Decisions**

**1.  *Before you begin try some deep breathing.*** It helps clear your mind so that you are calmly figuring out the solution, instead of frantically worrying about outcomes.

**2. *List your options.*** At first sight, 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. Refrain from evaluating at this point; brainstorm and 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. Ask them what they might do in your situation. Sometimes strangers can offer creative ideas because they do not share your assumptions or biases.

**3. *Weigh the possible outcomes.*** For every option, list every possible outcome and label it 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. Some people find it helpful to make a decision tree, which lays out every possibility in visual format.

* For every scenario, think about whether the best possible outcome is worth accepting the risk of the worst possible outcome. If the worst possible outcome is completely unacceptable to you, meaning that you could never forgive yourself if it happens, then you probably shouldn't make that decision.
* Make note of the likelihood of each outcome. Give each one a percentage (e.g. there's an 80% chance of this happening, and a 20% chance of that happening). Make sure your estimates are based on realistic experience or observations.
* Consider which option will encounter the most resistance and why. Significant difficulty in implementing a decision can sometimes outweigh the benefits of the outcome, depending on the situation. Other times, it's the most resisted decision that would make the biggest difference.

**4. *Consult your intuition.*** You must feel comfortable with the decision. On your list or tree, place markings next to or highlight those decisions that are backed up by your intuition. There are several ways to find out which those are:

* Imagine your ideal self. If you were already the person you're striving to be, what would you do? If this is difficult to grasp, then think of your role models and heroes--the people who inspire you. What would they do in your place, and why?
* Pray for guidance. Push analysis out of your head and trust the guidance of The Holy Spirit. Which decision feels right now? Which decision do you feel pulled toward?
* Fast forward. Imagine you've already made the decision; which one would you feel the proudest of? Which one makes you feel like a better person or as though you've made the world a better place? If you were on your deathbed, looking back on your entire life, which decision would you be most likely to regret?

**5. *Make a choice.*** 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, though, ask for advice from people you trust. This can be a good tiebreaker.

* No matter which decision you make, be prepared to accept responsibility for every outcome. If things don't work out, it's always better to have made a conscious decision than to have been careless. At least you can say that you did the best you could.
* If you can, make a backup plan in preparation for any negative outcome. Think ahead. The best decision makers aren't people who never make mistakes; they're people who hope for the best and prepare for the worst.

**6. *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.

**7. *Evaluate your decision.***This is an 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? By drawing insight and wisdom from every decision you make, you can ensure that every choice has at least one positive outcome.

## Other Tips:

* After your decision is made, new major information may come to light suggesting alterations to or the wholesale reversal of your original decision. Don't be afraid to go through the decision-making process again if this happens.
* Consider that all your options may be about equally good if you have thought about the decision for a very long time. In that case, all the options may have great advantages and great disadvantages. You would've already made the decision if one of the options could be proven to be significantly better than the previous ones.
* No scenario is perfect. Once you have made a decision, carry it out wholeheartedly as best as you can without regrets and without worrying about the other alternatives you did not pick.
* Give yourself a time limit if you have to make the decision soon or if the decision is relatively unimportant. There *is* the risk of "paralysis by analysis".
* Remember that you may not have enough information to make a good decision. Do more research if you're having trouble narrowing down your options. Also realize that the information you need may not be available to you. After reviewing all the information you have, you may have to go ahead and make a decision.
* If you've made a decision consulting a relationship, you can always break up with them later.
* Don't be too insistent on keeping your options open. Being afraid to let some doors close can result in poor decisions.m