



# **7 STRATEGIES TO MAKE SMARTER & FASTER DECISIONS**

# Introduction

*“It is often said that a wrong decision taken at the right time is better than a right decision taken at the wrong time.”* Pearl Zhu, Decision Master: The Art and Science of Decision Making

Reflect for a moment on this simple fact: every single decision you have ever made, good or bad, has shaped your present reality. Every decision you will subsequently make will shape your future reality. The career you are in, the friends you surround yourself with, whether you are happy or miserable in your marriage, everything about your life today boils down to the choices you have made.

***So, congratulations for deciding that you want to be a better decision-maker!***

From a very early age, every single one of us makes a wide range of decisions on a daily basis. Some of these decisions are life-changing, while others are so trivial and mundane that we make them almost subconsciously. When you think about it, your day

is a continuous cycle of choices and decisions. In fact, research tells us that the average person can make a mind-boggling 35,000 decisions every day!

Decisions can be as simple as choosing what to wear to work, what to order at a restaurant or whether or not to splurge on that pair of designer shoes - trivial choices that have no impact whatsoever on the bigger scheme of things.

Then, there are the bigger decisions related to our professional and personal lives; whether to move to a bigger house, take out a second mortgage, how to tackle a work project or whether to accept a job that pays less but offers more potential for self-expression and growth. These types of decisions are more serious as they can have significant short or long-term impacts on a number of people and areas.

Finally, there are the real biggies, the life-changing decisions that have a major impact on our future or can drastically affect the lives of others. An example of this would be the decision to immigrate to another country, deciding to quit the "rat race" and retire to a farm - or if you are a world leader, the ultimate decision of going go to war.

Important decisions in your life should not be made haphazardly or on a whim, trusting that everything will turn out right. On the other hand, taking forever to ponder, assess, rethink, reassess and hesitate can work you up into a frenzy of stress and overwhelm. You end up "deciding" to delay the decision. This kind of decision-making can actually do more harm than good. It is very rarely the case that the best decision is to make no decision at all.

### **Why this book?**

This book is for anybody who struggles with making timely and effective decisions regardless of who they are or what they do. There is actually a framework of strategies that you can adopt and apply to help you make decisions quickly and confidently, regardless of how minor or major they may be. And they are so simple that anybody can use them.

This book will guide you through seven unbelievably simple but powerful strategies that will enable you to boost and optimize your decision-making capabilities. More importantly, these strategies will help ensure that you make the best possible decisions given the situation and information that you have.

With very few exceptions, making a decision should take no longer than a couple of hours or even as little as a few minutes!

**Note:** This book does not promise to help you make the "right" decisions; no book or strategy in the world can guarantee that. It will, however, arm you with a powerful toolset that will enable you to take control of your decision-making and work with what you have to make the best possible choices.

# Chapter 1 - Understanding the Root Causes

Before we dive in, let's reflect on some of the reasons that cause indecision, procrastination, and delayed decision-making.

Understanding the causes is the first step to nipping them in the bud, conquering them and changing our mindset about how we approach decision-making.

As you read through this chapter, notice if you recognize one or more of the following issues in your own approach.

## **\* Lack of confidence:**

Negative self-talk is your biggest enemy when it comes to making decisions. It's that voice in your head that tells you, "Are you sure this is the right thing to do? What if everything goes horribly wrong? You've made some pretty bad decisions before... maybe you should sleep on it for a few days..."

Who hasn't made bad decisions? But it's also a solid bet that you've made some pretty brilliant ones as well. But that confidence-sapping voice in your subconscious never reminds you of that, does it?

Unfortunately, it's the negative thoughts that usually override the positive ones, eating away at your self-confidence and fueling your fears. This can become so debilitating that some people struggle with making the simplest decisions.

We all know that person who spends ages poring over a restaurant menu or takes an eternity trying to decide whether the blue or the green short looks better on them. Other than being a waste of time, this type of delayed decision-making is pretty harmless.

But when a person takes too long deciding whether to apply for a job, wondering if they are qualified enough, only to finally apply and find that the job has been filled... this is the type of decision delay that can be harmful.

This issue is easily remedied with positive affirmations that rewire the brain so that it thinks positively rather than negatively about decision-making. Yes, they really work and are tremendously powerful.

### **\* Conflict with personal values**

If you stop to think about it, is it really worth your time to even wrestle with these types of decisions? If you have to make a choice that directly conflicts with your morals, faith or personal ethics, ditch it or pass it on. The consequences of having to live with yourself afterward can be devastating.

Let's illustrate this with an example. You are an author and have been offered a very lucrative contract to write a book promoting atheism. However, you are a devout Christian. You know that you possess the research and writing skills to produce an outstanding book, regardless of your own views. However, writing about a topic that is in total opposition to your core beliefs would be a major sell-out.

This thought process should really take no more than a minute of deliberation and the decision should be a resounding "no".

### **\* Lack of information**

Delaying a decision in the hope that more information will turn up is not a good idea. It's much better to learn from successful



businessmen and top executives who are often faced with this type of challenge.

They understand how harmful delayed action can be in a fast-paced market. They live by the motto "the sooner the better." They have learned that it's far better to be resourceful and to work with what they have to make the best possible decision.

**\* Too much information**

On the other end of the scale, too much information can leave you floundering in indecision. You will get pulled into a massive quagmire of minute details that are not really relevant to the outcome that you want to achieve. You will learn how to deal with information overload in the strategies chapter.

**\* The outcome of the decision is totally unknown.**

In many cases, it's easy to predict that making decision A will lead to outcome B. But when the outcome of the decision is unknown, it can cause delay and procrastination.

A case in point is the decision to start your own business. In this situation, the probabilities are known. It will either succeed or fail.

You may have some indicators from market analyses, feasibility studies, and other facts and figures but the bottom line is that the final outcome is unknown. In plain English, this means risk. But sometimes, success doesn't come with risk.

You will learn how to deal with this issue by embracing the unknown in the next chapter.

### **\* Making decisions in a lose-lose situation**

Sometimes, decisions have to be made where the outcome will be negative no matter how much you delay or reassess.

A good example is the decision to file for bankruptcy. In situations like these, the best option is to quickly make the unavoidable decision and follow it up with a series of actions to cut losses as much as possible.

In fact, it is always advisable to take immediate action in these types of situations before they get worse.

### **\* Fast-paced change**

In today's digital interconnected world, accelerated change is the norm. Products, innovations and solutions can pop up or disappear almost overnight. This may actually impede decision-making out of fear that once the decision is implemented a sudden change could nullify its outcome.

Again, developing a mindset that embraces the unknown can greatly help with these types of decisions.

### **\* Decision fatigue**

This is a problem common to people who are naturally indecisive. They spend too much time pondering over big and small decisions alike, overthinking and basically stressing out their brains with "decision fatigue".

Decision fatigue drains energy and focus and leaves you mired in trivial details throughout the day. When the time comes where you have to tackle a decision that really matters, you are just too stressed and overwhelmed to make it properly.

The seven decision-making strategies in this book will help significantly with all of these problems. The important thing is to be able to recognize which of the above obstacles or which combination of them is impeding your ability to make a certain

decision at any given time. You can then use the strategy required to overcome it.

## **Chapter 2 - Master Your Mindset**

Recognizing where your weak points lie when it comes to decision-making must be followed up with developing an efficient decision-making mindset. These basic "mindset ground rules" go hand in hand with the seven decision-making strategies.

Having the right mindset will make the strategies that much easier to implement because with the right frame of mind, they will make total sense to you.



### **\* Control what you can control**

Train yourself to never ask "what if..." because even highly predictable outcomes hold a degree of unpredictability. Unforeseen events are out of your control.

Instead, focus your thoughts and energy on what you can control such as the information you have, your previous experience, steps to implement the decision, people who will implement it and the tools that you have at your disposal. Work with what you have to make the decision.

### **\* Embrace the unknown**

We can learn a thing or two from entrepreneurs like Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg and Steve Jobs. What do they have in common? It is the mindset of an adventurer willing to brave the unknown to achieve his dream.

Some decisions simply require a mindset driven by passion and an adventurous spirit. For example, the decision to start your own business can be a daunting one to make. But by being willing to take the leap and embrace the unknown, you will experience the tremendous thrill of having had the courage to act on your dream or passion - whether you succeed or not.

### **\* Minimalism and simplicity**

Cultivating the habit of minimalist simplicity is key to effective decision-making. Actually, it's a good mindset to have for every aspect of your life. This means avoiding long to-do lists and overscheduling tasks, such as gathering every single bit of information under the sun or consulting dozens of experts. This is a recipe for information overwhelm and major decision fatigue.

A minimalist mindset means making trivial decisions quickly without sweating over the details. That way, when an important

decision does come up, you are ready to tackle it quickly and give it your full attention.

### **\* Mindfulness**

Mindfulness is a very powerful mindset to have in general; not just when it comes to decision-making. Mindfulness means being fully present and grounded in the moment.

A mindset of mindfulness will prevent you from becoming overwhelmed with the big picture and the future consequences of your decision. It prevents you from ruminating about bad decisions you have made in the past in similar situations. This can be very mentally draining and cause major decision fatigue.

By being mindful, you simply focus on the task at hand and try to make the best decision you can based on the present situation – because the past and the future are out of your control.

Mindfulness is easy to cultivate if you practice it often. Over time, it will become second nature to you and significantly improve your decision-making.



### **\* Accept the possibility of failure**

Many experts encourage us to "embrace" the possibility of failure but really, we're only human after all! How realistic is it to tell someone to welcome failure with open arms?

However, it is possible - and more realistic to develop a mindset of accepting failure as an inevitable part of our life journey. We can train our minds to see failure as a learning process where we gain experience from our mistakes, pick ourselves up and keep moving forward.

This is a crucial mindset for quick, bold and efficient decision-making.

Finally... Take a few weeks to start developing the mindset of an efficient decision-maker. The more your mind starts learning to think differently, the more successful your approach to tackling decisions will become - and you will notice the amazing difference.

Combining this mindset with the seven strategies in the following chapter will supercharge your decision making so much that it could possibly change your life.

## Chapter 3 - Applying the Seven Strategies

These seven strategies are surprisingly simple and straightforward. So much so that you may find yourself thinking that they're too simple to be really effective - but don't be fooled; they are super-powerful. All you need to do is start putting them into action over and over until you have mastered them.

### **1. Learning recognition patterns**

Most of the decisions we make every day are similar to other decisions we have made in the past. Of course, no two situations are exactly the same, but you can draw on your past experience as a basic guideline for making a certain decision. This is known as pattern recognition.

The first question you must ask yourself before tackling any decision is, "What similar past situation can I draw on to make this decision?"

Let's say that you have a huge project to submit within a very short deadline. Your gut feeling is that the deadline is too short, but it can't be extended, and you can't risk missing it. You remember a previous scenario where you outsourced part of the work in order to meet a short deadline. You can therefore quickly decide to do the same with this project and what tasks can be outsourced to get the job done on time.

In a different scenario, let's say that you are considering outsourcing certain tasks. You recall a past situation where doing so ended in disaster and a missed deadline. This is your reference for deciding not to go that route.

Recognizing patterns allows you to create a map of similar experiences, refer to them, and leverage them to make the best possible decision in a current situation. As you continue to use this method and grow your cache of patterns, your effectiveness and speed at making decisions will increase dramatically.

## **2. Setting a time limit**

Setting a time limit puts you under the pressure of getting to the heart of the matter, weighing the most relevant pros and cons and deciding what you will do. Be firm with yourself and stick to the time you have set for yourself to avoid distraction and

overthinking. You may find this technique difficult at first but when you get the hang of it, you will see it as a lifesaver for all the mental stress and frustration it saves you.

Let's say you are a recruitment manager and have been tasked to hire a junior developer to join the company team. You have a shortlist of six candidates to choose from. Realistically, the decision should take not more than 30 minutes.

Set a timer for that time limit and put all your concentration into the task. Quickly revise the candidates' qualifications and pare down the list further to three candidates.

Use whatever criteria you need, such as stronger skills in a particular area, a good fit with the company culture, and so on. Choose the person you will hire before the timer goes off.

Even if all the candidates are outstanding and a perfect fit, this is not a decision you should waste too much time on. If you have to, put the last three names in a hat and pull one out randomly.

Sometimes, when expected outcomes or benefits are very similar, it's not wrong to make a random choice or just go with your gut feeling.

**Note:** The time limit you set should be proportionate to the weight of the decision. Knowing how long to give yourself will come with practice as well. Only you can decide how much time you need, just remember that once you have set yourself a timeframe, the rule is not to exceed it or extend it.

For example, you might give yourself 10 or 15 minutes to decide if it's time to remodel your kitchen. That's really all the time you need to assess. Can you afford it on your current budget? Do you have outstanding expenses that you should settle first? Will you use money from your savings? Does the current condition of your kitchen urgently require an overhaul?

Making a list of simple "yes"/ "no" questions that address the core issues is the fastest way to make these types of decisions.

On the other hand, deciding to quit your job and go into business on your own or accept an offer to work abroad for three years definitely requires some time for deliberation. Give yourself a few days or even a week to weigh up the options carefully but really, no longer than that.

### **3. Make a daily quota**

The best way to avoid decision fatigue is to commit to making a certain number of decisions per day. These decisions can range from the small ("Should I buy this new software?") or they can be big ("Should I buy that property?")

Minor decisions such as what to have for lunch or whether to order in for dinner don't - and shouldn't count, unless you are a very indecisive person. In this case, you should include them in your daily quota and practice handling them quickly until you can eliminate them.

This method will help you make decisions faster and more effectively because you will only have a limited number to tackle per day.

### **4. Recognize whether the decision can be reversed**

There are some decisions that can be reversed or "taken back", while others, once taken, are irreversible. The decision to hire an employee for a trial period is of course reversible because after the trial period, you have the option of offering or not offering the person a permanent contract.

On the other hand, the decision to have a baby and actually getting pregnant is irreversible if you are pro-life.

If a decision can be reversed or taken back, don't waste time. Make the decision, assess the outcomes after it's made and if necessary, simply reverse it.

Irreversible decisions should be handled with more caution depending on their gravity but again, they need to be made in a timely manner to the best of your ability.

## **5. Know your ultimate objective**

The biggest hurdle to effective and timely decision-making is outcome overload. This means you get bogged down in analyzing and weighing all the possible outcomes, or worse, trying to achieve them all.

Before you even start thinking about the decision, define your ultimate objective; the top primary goal that you want to achieve. Focus only on that one goal and make the decision that will make it a reality - any additional positive outcomes will be an added bonus.

## **6. Put it into perspective**

This strategy helps you decide the priority of a decision and how much of your time it deserves. You do this by asking the simple question, "How much will this matter in a week's time?" Or "How much will this matter in a month's time? How much will it matter two years from now?"

This simple "perspective regulator" will help you gauge the importance and priority of the decision based on its consequences. A decision that will lose its impact in a few days or even a few hours (such as what to wear to a party) needs to be made instantly and forgotten. On the other hand, deciding to have a baby will probably matter in 20- or 30-years' time - actually, for the rest of your life!

This is the type of decision that would require sleeping on for a few nights and weighing all the options with your partner.

## **7. Think in black and white**

This is a great strategy for when you have too many choices and just can't make up your mind. Simply label each option as "great" or "Less great." Narrow down the "great" options further into



"perfect" and "not so perfect." Make a choice, even if it means doing it randomly.

By thinking in black and white you can narrow down a bunch of more or less similar options to just two or three that you can then choose from.

There you have it - how simple is that? The best way to apply these strategies is one at a time. For instance, you can choose to start with the time limit strategy and practice it for a week or until you feel ready to move on. Incorporate the next strategy and so on until you have mastered them all.

The key is to make these strategies a lifelong habit that you apply to all of your decision-making. It won't take long but the effects will be amazing and long-lasting.

## Chapter 4 – Additional Brain Hacks for Better Focus and Clear Thinking

To further enhance your decision-making ability, it's important to keep your brain in top form. The clearer and more focused you are, the more quickly and efficiently you can make decisions.

Here is a list of super simple hacks that are easy to incorporate into your day. Over time, you will begin to notice that you are less likely to get distracted, and that your focus, logical deduction and analytical capabilities will improve. Brain fog and an over-stressed mind are the major cause of bad decisions.

### **1. Drink two glasses of water first thing in the morning**

Simple but awesomely effective! Considering that your body has gone for seven or eight hours without water during the night, this hack is a no-brainer. It's an instant hydrating hack that just makes total sense.

Drinking two big glasses of water as soon as you wake up will give you an instant surge of energy and vitality that will last throughout the day. Naturally, more energy and vitality mean more focus and clarity.

Don't forget to drink plenty of water during the day as well to stay hydrated and keep that energy "high" going.

## **2. Get out into the sun**

15 to 20 minutes of sunlight a day is the secret to balancing your circadian rhythm, or your sleep/wake cycle. Needless to say, better quality sleep means a more alert and clear mind.

## **3. Eat plenty of fish**

The Omega-3 fatty acids contained in fish are simply the best nutrition you can give your brain. Try eating fish two or three times a week and you will notice an improvement in your overall cognitive functions. Some studies also suggest that eating fish on a regular basis also makes you smarter!

#### **4. Take a short nap during the day**

Studies have shown that a short nap during the day, somewhere between 15 to 30 minutes, will refresh and energize you as if you have just awakened from a full night's rest. Not all of us have the luxury to do this but if you do, go for it! It's not termed a "power nap" for nothing.

#### **5. Solve logic puzzles**

Develop your logical reasoning while having fun by solving logic puzzles. They will also help speed up your decision-making process.

Brain teasers and other types of brain games are a great way to spend some spare time to exercise your brain. These games also help develop quick thinking and logical analysis. Check out the App Store for some great games that you can access on your phone at the press of a button.

#### **6. Cut down on sugar**

Your sweet tooth may actually be the cause of your indecision. Sugar-packed foods will give you an instant "sugar high" but it's very short-lived. Very soon afterward, you will experience major brain fog, lethargy and an inability to concentrate. So, avoid

eating that chocolate bar right before you plan to sit down and think out a major decision - or any decision, for that matter!

## **7. Enjoy time in nature**

Contemplating the beauty and wonder of nature will teach you an invaluable lesson: life is too short to waste on nit-picking over trivial decisions that are neither here nor there. This is not to say that every decision you make is trivial and should be taken lightly. However, communing with nature will help you see things from a more balanced perspective.

Apply these hacks as often as you can to supercharge your focus in every area of your life. The great thing about them is that they can very quickly become good habits that stay with you forever.

# Conclusion

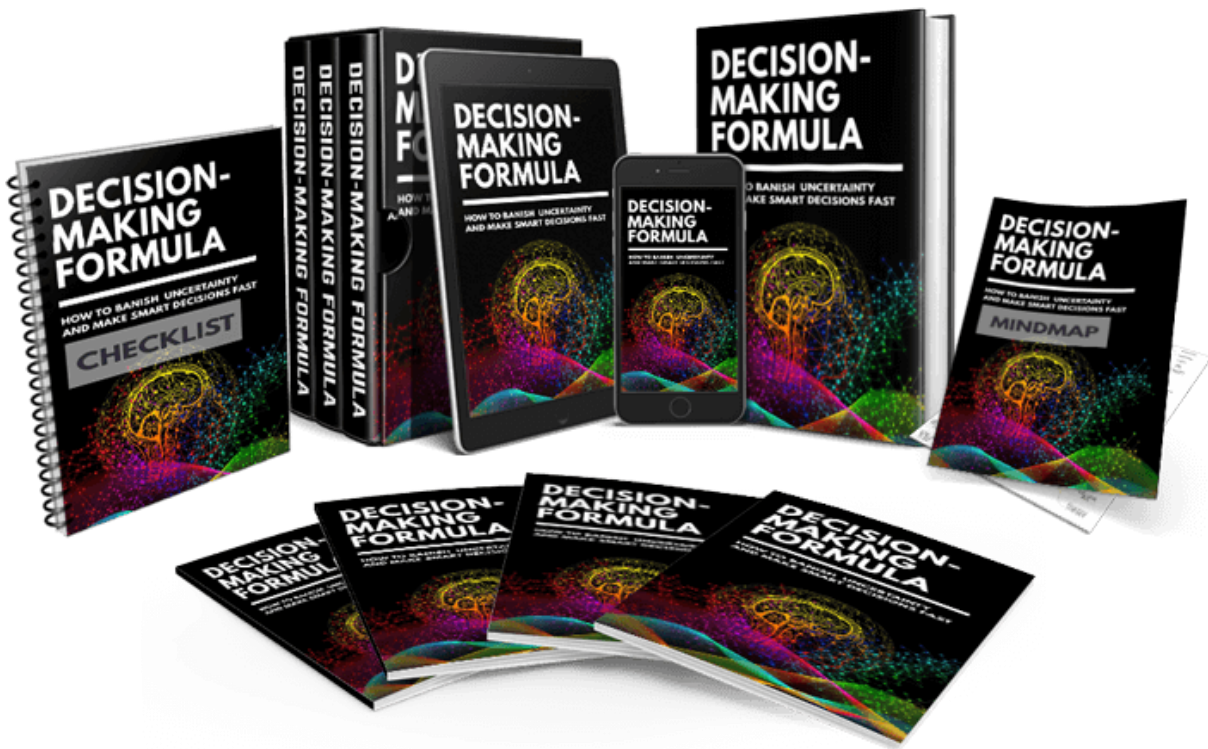
Aren't you glad you made the decision to read this book? As you can see, decision making doesn't have to be a long-drawn-out process that saps your energy and challenges your sanity.

Taking control of your decision making rather than letting it control you makes for smoother sailing on all levels. Backing off from making decisions should never be an option.

Hopefully, the information in this book will help transform the way you approach decision-making by helping you recognize the problem, changing your mindset and providing you with the tools to tackle different decisions.

All of the tips here will come together to dramatically improve your ability to make confident, effective and most importantly, timely decisions. There is no cost involved, no difficult training or complex preparations. Simply jump right in and begin making the change!

# Do You Want To Learn The Most Powerful Decision-Making Formula?



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