

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Tips and Tools for Great Decision Making

Life involves all kinds of choices. Good decision making skills will help you make sound choices in all areas of your life. But don't expect to become a brilliant decision-maker overnight. Like all skills, decision making takes time and practice. Here are a few tips to get you pointed in the right direction:

Isolate the problem. Often things aren't exactly what they seem. Look at an issue or problem from all angles. Avoid looking at the symptoms and try to get to the heart of the matter itself. You might find yourself redefining the problem a number of different ways before you settle on what really feels right.

Once you have isolated the problem, write it down. This will help keep you focused as you go through the decision-making process.

Decide to take action. Once you've identified the problem, ask yourself if you need to take action right now. You are already making a decision by answering "Yes" or "No" to this first question. Although sometimes the best answer is to do nothing, don't kid yourself into believing that delay or avoidance of an uncomfortable situation is a decision. You know which is which.

Gather resources. In an ideal world, you will be able to get all the facts or consult with someone knowledgeable before you take action. In reality, this is sometimes not possible. Gather as many resources as you can. Avoid delaying a decision solely because you don't have time to track down every single fact. This comes dangerously close to procrastination!

Make a plan. This is another way of saying, "make a decision." Now that you have analyzed your problem and have looked at it from many different sides, decide how you will carry out your decision and write down your plan in bullet form.

Test the plan and take action. It's often impossible to accurately anticipate the outcome of a decision, so decision making involves a certain degree of risk. Test your plan by visualizing the potential outcome of the decision. Don't be afraid to count on your intuition—if your decision doesn't feel quite right to you, it probably isn't. If your decision still feels right, take the required action to make your plan happen.

And lastly, enjoy the confidence that comes from knowing how to make good choices—not to mention the positive consequences!
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