

EBOOK

MAKING BETTER DECISIONS

A Guide to Making Your Best
Decisions



Jeremy D. Nelson



MAKING BETTER DECISION

A Guide to Making Your Best Next Steps to Make Progress

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This is a work of non-fiction and includes fictional stories. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either the product of the author’s imagination or used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

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How to Read This Book:

This book can be read in different ways based on your needs. These are the various approaches to suit your needs:

Should I Read This Book?

This section sets the stage for understanding the importance of decision-making in our lives and introduces the reader to the book's purpose and structure.

Scope of This Book:

This book is helpful for readers who are curious about making better decisions. Better means faster, more accurate, and more impactful. By learning about its scope, the reader can decide if it is worth the time and money invested. This saves time and money.

A Reasonable Disclaimer:

This book makes specific claims about what it can and cannot do, so the reader will know how their decision-making will change.

Section 1: The Structure and Function of Decision-Making

In this section, readers will delve into the foundational aspects of decision-making, exploring the brain's mechanisms and systems that influence our decisions.

Chapter 1: Understanding the Foundations of Decision-Making

Establishes the fundamental principles of decision-making and its significance in our lives, building the foundation for improved decision-making.

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This chapter focuses on understanding the Anterior Cingulate Cortex (ACC) and its influence on our decision-making processes, given the reader's specific knowledge of their decision-making tendencies.

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Chapter 5: Down-regulation and the Return to Old Habits

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Review/Exercise

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Review/Exercise

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Section 3: Building Your Decision-Making Tool Belt

Building on the theme of humans learning better when using tools, this section introduces tools and approaches to enhance decision-making efficiency and effectiveness in various contexts.

Chapter 11: Assisted Decision-Making

Extending the idea that people learn better when they use tools, it explores different decision-making tools and how to select the most suitable ones for specific situations, helping the reader select the best tool for the job.

Chapter 12: Decisions, Tools, Learning and Plasticity

examines the use of decision-making tools to promote learning and cognitive flexibility and the elements of ideal learning to reduce learning time.

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Chapter 14: Using QuickSTEPS for Everyday Decisions

Follow the Smith family's journey in making better daily decisions tailored to different age groups.

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Explores how Deliberate decision-making can guide significant life direction decisions across different ages and the best tools for the job.

Summary of This Book

Concludes the section with a comprehensive review to consolidate learning and skills.

Should I Read This Book?

Learning decision-making is like improving your physical fitness. Both can lead to transformative changes in your life. Just as going to the gym trains your natural abilities and builds more capacity to handle physical demands, learning decision-making can improve your capacity to make more complex decisions and be more involved in life. Enhancing the effectiveness of your actions, mastering complexity, and making success more predictable will result in a more engaged and authentic way of being, helping you perform at your best. With routine practice, making decisions will get faster, easier, and with fewer errors. Like working out in the gym, improving decision-making takes time and consistent practice. And just like improving your physical abilities, you can minimize the time by following a structured plan and using the best tools.

So, learning decision-making is going to take some work. By reading this section, you can determine if the time is right for you to begin. By doing the work, you will overcome the inertia of struggling with decision-making and begin to make progress again. The following pages present common questions about decision-making to help you evaluate if this book is relevant to your current needs and if the time is right to do the work. If you connect with the content in this section and can relate to the examples, you will find the answers you are looking for in the rest of the book. If it doesn't capture your interest or the timing isn't right, you can move forward and focus your attention on something else. This book will be here for you, ready to guide and support you when you make those crucial decisions. Regardless of your decision, you've made one that is informed and based on your needs. And that is an excellent start to making better decisions.

Learn to Use the Right Decision-Making Tools To Make Progress

“How can I improve my decision-making, overcome my fears of making the wrong decision, and achieve meaningful results in life and work?”

If you struggle to make progress in life, repeat past mistakes, or need to enhance your decision-making abilities in a new role, this book can help. It offers fast,

efficient, and impactful ways to make crucial decisions and overcome fears that hold you back. Fear of making a catastrophic mistake is a common reason for avoiding decisions. This fear strongly impacts the brain's decision-making areas because the brain is hard-wired to react to uncertainty. However, any change, including desirable change, always includes the unknown. Therefore, the brain must be equipped to manage uncertainty and determine the consequences of actions before taking them. It is a challenging task, given the complexities of modern life. It is a task, though, that the decision-making areas of the brain are ready to do when provided with the correct information and resources.

This book offers practical strategies to streamline the process, empowering you to achieve meaningful outcomes. It presents comprehensive answers to the what, why, when, and where questions of decision-making, explaining the function and structures already present in the brain to make daily and complex decisions. Regarding the critical question of how to make better decisions, this book introduces helpful processes, worksheets, and examples to get started. However, decision-making is learned by doing, and the best way to learn is by making decisions that matter to you, supported by the online courses and tools that complement this book. With the knowledge from this book and real-world experience using web-based tools, you will be equipped to make your best decisions at any time and in any situation.

Consistent practice with the content of this book and online tools will reduce anxiety, helping you to overcome the fear of making the wrong decision. You will learn how to improve orientation during decision-making so you no longer feel lost and confused. Making decisions that matter to you helps you build confidence, knowing you have a reliable, easy-to-use way to make the best decisions. With these tools, you can get the job done and meet your and your loved ones' needs faster, more efficiently, and more predictably. By learning to make better decisions, you can move forward and make progress towards the results that matter most to you.

Do you remember taking driver education to get your driving permit and license? Learning to use decision-making tools is like learning to drive a car. You must understand how to start, go forward, make it stop, what the controls are to change direction, and how to maintain safety. And like learning to drive, it is predominantly experiential learning. You can read about driving a car. But real learning won't happen until you get behind the steering wheel, turn the key, and

push the gas pedal. Just like learning to drive a car, decision-making is practiced step by step, with guidance, to minimize the risks of making a mistake. A reliable car is the best for learning to drive, just as using accurate and reliable tools will help you learn decision-making faster. Consistent practice will help you to make progressively more complex and consequential decisions. In this way, you will be well prepared to enter the fast lane of decision-making,

Using these tools in real-life, relevant situations will provide the best type of experiential learning. Like having a GPS for your thoughts, using decision-making tools helps guide you to the best plan of action, helps you avoid roadblocks and wrong turns, and ensures you reach your destination smoothly and quickly. The online tools, like the GPS, do not drive for you. They help to provide context so you know where you are in relation to where you want to be. By providing orientation, they help the brain limit confusion, focus on the change effort, and learn from the decisions made. This is essential for anyone looking to improve their life, one decision at a time. These tools provide valuable assistance, regardless of your challenges, including improving daily decisions, establishing successful habits, or contemplating significant life decisions. By making these tools available online and on-demand, you can access them anytime, anywhere, allowing you to make better decisions in the moment. This convenience enables you to improve decision-making, manage risks, conquer fears, and achieve predictable progress in your personal and professional life.

[Learn Decision-Making for Today and Tomorrow](#)

“I have some difficult decisions about my future, but it seems like the advice I have been given won't help. How does this book help me have more control of my life, overcome adversity, and build a life that matters to me?”

The reality of today's rapidly changing world is that traditional ways of reaching success may no longer be effective due to economic and societal transformations. While past generations could rely on handed-down knowledge and experience, structural shifts have rendered many traditional paths obsolete. This can lead to deep feelings of disorientation and provoke anxiety about the future. Consider Mark, a recent college graduate entering an unpredictable job market. His parents had followed a straightforward career path, but those options no longer seemed

available. As he explored the realities of the marketplace, he realized that the recommendations he received from parents, teachers, and guidance counselors may no longer be relevant, given recent economic changes. At first, he was disoriented, felt anxious, and his emotions ran high. He had demonstrated through college that he could make good decisions. However, the decisions he faced now were more complex, and the solutions were not found in a book. If he were going to build a life that mattered to him, he would need a new approach to making decisions.

Mark searched and found new technologies that now existed to enhance decision-making abilities, allowing individuals to forge their paths when the old ones vanished. By employing these strategies, he learned that our brains can adjust and thrive in today's fast-paced world. When considering his new career, instead of relying on outdated advice, John sought and found new approaches that helped him identify emerging opportunities in his field. He focused his mind and efforts by leveraging the approaches that supported his decision-making abilities. He worked on creating his unique path to success, reflecting his interests and values. In a short time, he landed a role that hadn't even existed a decade ago. With the new understanding of how his brain made decisions and using tools that helped that process, Mark managed his anxiety about the future, knowing he could still make the best decision even when life was stressful and not what he initially expected. He stayed calm and collected in his new job, impressing his supervisors, who could see he could adapt to a rapidly changing marketplace.

Learning about decision-making requires learning about the brain. Understanding some of its structures and functions is essential, but don't worry - this book won't delve deep into neuroanatomy or neuroscience. Instead, it introduces the most critical parts of the brain when necessary, focusing on practical knowledge. Given the constant stream of new research on the brain, this book can only cover some of the latest information. Therefore, it presents an overview of the brain's structure and function based on widely accepted general understandings. The good news is that you don't need in-depth knowledge of the brain to become a better decision-maker. The most important thing is to be motivated to learn and take action.

The Brain, Struggling to Keep Up and Stuck in a Rut

“I don’t do well with change. I tend to stick to old habits even when they don’t work. I get stressed out when making decisions and tend to avoid them. Why can’t I overcome the pressures of life, avoid bad habits, and make better decisions?”

Do you feel overwhelmed at times? Although we have natural abilities to adapt to change, it is a challenge for most of us. Our brains sometimes seem mismatched to the demands we encounter daily. The challenges of the past shaped our brains. These forces of surviving and thriving in those past environments helped our brains function in similar environments. However, for most of humanity, those past environments no longer exist, replaced with the challenges of urban life in the modern world. Our brains' decision-making systems adapted to slow change in the past, which allowed for more thoughtful, analytic thinking. But in today's fast-paced world, we cannot thoroughly consider our decisions due to limited time, mental fatigue, and information overload. Due to the pace of change, decision-making needs to be faster, more accurate, and more impactful now than ever.

The brain's decision-making systems are activated by change. The pace of change in our modern world results in a higher frequency of decision-making. When things change, our needs may go unmet, prompting the brain to take action. The number of decisions to be made is directly linked to the amount of change and how many needs go unmet. Research indicates that we make hundreds to thousands of decisions daily, some based on past experiences and others about new solutions. This demonstrates how our brain is hard-wired for decision-making and usually successfully meets our needs. However, the stressors of modern life can disrupt, inhibit, and overwhelm these decision-making systems, leading to difficulties in decision-making. These challenges result from the brain's structure, and as a result, everyone will experience them when facing change.

Do you ever react impulsively to daily stressors and wonder how much better your decisions could be if you could control those instincts? With all of this change around us, our decision-making systems can be overwhelmed, and as a result, we will stick with what we know and are familiar with: our habits. Factors such as climate change, advertising, stress, and social media negatively impact the parts of our brain responsible for making thoughtful decisions. Television and social media

messages often create a sense of urgency, leading us to react impulsively to negative news. Likewise, our phones bombard us with messages that drive emotional decision-making rather than thoughtful considerations. These factors overload the brain with stress, social media, and urgent messages, so making snap decisions you might regret later is easy. Without a structured approach to managing these pressures, you risk reacting impulsively instead of thinking things through. Impulsive decisions include our habits because they do not require conscious thought. The brain will usually revert to habits to get the job done, even when the habits are no longer working. This result is a regrettable decision that leads to failure and unmet needs. By adopting a thoughtful decision-making process, you can avoid falling into this trap and make better decisions, even when your world feels chaotic.

Do you have any bad habits you have struggled to break? It's no wonder – our brains are hardwired to stick to habits, especially those related to survival, like eating. Overcoming these patterns can be incredibly tough. Being trapped in unproductive habits can lead to mental health struggles, such as anxiety about the future and depression about the past. This can make decision-making even more challenging. But here's the good news: we all have the power to start anew. By learning how our brains work, we can tackle challenges and enhance our ability to make the best decisions, replacing old habits with new ones that will drive us forward. With the ongoing use of decision-making tools that support the brain to use the best systems for the job, you can improve your impact on your life and meet more of your needs with less stress.

Coping with the Challenges of the Modern World

“When I think about making decisions, I get overwhelmed; I don't know where to start or what information sources to trust. How can I decide without falling prey to information overload or manipulation?”

We cannot return time to an era when the brain was less stressed. It won't help to deny the challenges of the modern world. The ongoing changes are fundamental and raise concerns as they create more uncertainty about the way forward. This is significant because the brain responds to uncertainty as real and perceived threats, often resorting to old habits and patterns in times of increased uncertainty, even

when these habits are no longer effective. This tendency to stick to old habits can lead to repeating the same actions and obtaining undesirable outcomes. You may have heard that repeating the same action and expecting different results is a sign of insanity. Can we do anything to prevent our brains from succumbing to this cycle?

We need a way to help the brain make decisions faster and learn while controlling the innate systems that seek to protect us. What we need are tools that can assist in adapting to the changes that are happening. Using tools allows the brain to be supported, improving the likelihood of making better decisions. Throughout history, humans have demonstrated an ability to use tools to improve their situations when faced with challenges. As decisions become more complex, uncertainty also increases. During the first decades of the 21st century, the average complexity of decisions has increased, meaning we must process more information and consider more factors. This complexity can overwhelm the brain's innate capacity to process information, leading to challenges such as decision fatigue, which reduces our ability to make effective decisions when our brains are already struggling.

Ask yourself: Am I overwhelmed by too much information? How much more effective would my decisions be if I only focused on what truly matters? Our brains do not need more information. It needs to understand what the information means, its significance, and why it is relevant to the decision-maker. Defined areas and networks in the brain require this contextual information to function. Solutions that limit the information to what is relevant to the decision-maker will minimize fatigue and overwhelm, making those critical brain areas available for more complex decisions. This book can help increase processing capacity with tools that assist the brain in understanding the significance of the information provided.

The quality of the information we consume is vital to our decision-making effectiveness. The information we consume shapes our perception and understanding of reality. It is crucial to assess the validity and reliability of information sources. In today's fast-paced world, finding sources that provide context to information is crucial. However, in this digital age, we must be wary of AI and other tools that may manipulate us into making decisions that are not in our best interest. Consider the story of David. He noticed that his relationship with his partner was becoming increasingly strained. They often argued about things they

saw online, each convinced they had the correct perspective. What they read online felt very personal and scary. David sometimes said, “If only everyone could see the truth that I know.” Those who disagreed with David he considered lost or confused at best and, at worst, a threat. He didn’t like how he felt but didn’t know his best next step.

There is a legitimate concern about AI-based computer networks influencing our decisions, purchasing habits, actions, and political power. A conflict between what's real and what's presented as accurate can lead to strained relationships and negatively affect our mental and physical well-being. After learning more about how technology can distort reality, David began questioning the information he consumed and became more mindful of its effects on his thoughts and decisions. This shift helped him approach conversations more openly, become more curious, and improve decision-making with his partner and others. The tools and information we use shape our understanding of the world, potentially impacting our decision-making processes. Understanding how the brain makes decisions, especially in the context of technology, is crucial for navigating the complex demands of the modern world. By gaining insight into decision-making processes, we can approach technology more thoughtfully and ensure that the tools we use continue to serve us well.

The Best Time to Learn Decision Making

“How can learning and improving my decision-making skills help me manage stress, care for my brain, and enhance my mental and physical well-being?”

Developing our decision-making skills is crucial to keep pace with technological advancements. Recent studies highlighting the impact of modern life on brain health emphasize the need to prioritize caring for our brains. A well-cared-for brain performs better and makes better decisions. The ever-increasing demands of modern life significantly strain the brain, leading to fatigue and decreased performance. Chronic strain has been found to affect the brain's decision-making functions adversely. Comparing life today with a generation or two ago, it's clear that our brains are now constantly overstimulated and overworked, with minimal time for rest and repair. Understanding the state of our brain, its fatigue levels, and

readiness to make decisions is an integral part of learning effective decision-making.

Developing the skill of recognizing when our brains need a break is crucial in our fast-paced, always-connected lives. Decision fatigue and stress can significantly impact our brain chemistry and performance. Taking proactive steps, such as identifying the best times for complex decision-making and optimizing brain performance through proper nutrition, is essential. Just like a high-performance car requires regular maintenance, our brains also need attention and care to maintain performance.

Do you feel overwhelmed by uncertainty and wonder how to regain control? In today's fast-paced world, we face both complexity and an abundance of uncertainty. When our brains encounter uncertainty, they go into protective mode, triggering the fight or flight response and releasing stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline. This constant state of alertness can affect our physical and mental well-being. However, our brains are adaptable and capable of learning. With the proper guidance, we can equip ourselves with strategies to effectively manage uncertainty, regain control over our decision-making, and safeguard our overall health and well-being.

Engaging in the process of learning to make better decisions empowers you to take better care of your physical and mental wellness. It's important to remember that it's never too late to make a new beginning. Every effort invested in honing your decision-making skills can significantly transform your own life and the lives of those around you. Embracing a mindset of continuous learning paves the way for steady progress. By making minor, consistent adjustments over time, you can adapt positively to an ever-changing world. Consistency is the ultimate key to success.

Preparing for the Future at Home

“We want to give our children the advantages of making good life decisions. What can parents and caregivers do to teach their children decision-making skills to prepare them for future challenges?”

Understanding the art and science of decision-making starts at home, with parents and caregivers playing a critical role. Their demonstration of essential decision-making skills significantly influences their children's future. Children closely

observe and emulate their parents' examples while young, and later, as teenagers, they draw upon the decision-making strategies they learned at home. It is a crucial responsibility for parents, as their children observe and learn from their parents' challenges. Parents strive to impart invaluable life lessons, hoping to equip their children with essential skills for the future. Leveraging their wisdom and experiences, parents naturally aspire to be their children's guides, drawing upon their own encounters to provide a blueprint for life's success for their children.

Parents' life lessons to their children are often tailored to specific situations, offering advice such as "Do this to achieve that" or "Try this if that happens." However, in today's fast-evolving world, these recommendations may need to be adjusted to remain relevant. Specific parental guidance may have become outdated due to societal changes, necessitating a fresh perspective. Parents want to instill confidence in their children that they have the skills and knowledge to handle whatever challenges life brings them. In reality, parents cannot equip their children to handle every conceivable circumstance with detailed recommendations. Ultimately, children must learn to make their own decisions. Rather than passing down specific advice based on past experiences, children will be better prepared to confront future trials by understanding their own decision-making capabilities and how to utilize them.

Parents and caregivers must support their ability to make increasingly complex decisions to foster optimal development of decision-making in their children. Renowned author, composer, and consultant Robert Fritz rightly emphasizes, "The job of a parent is to care for their children, as they learn to care for themselves." The crucial point is the "learning to care for themselves." Throughout childhood and adolescence, the development of the brain mirrors the journey of learning to fulfill one's own needs. This is evident in the maturation of the brain's decision-making areas as the child transitions from being cared for to becoming self-reliant. Making decisions rooted in fulfilling one's needs, which result in positive changes, is a powerful catalyst for brain development. Such decisions trigger neural plasticity and growth within the learning areas of the brain. Conversely, when the fulfillment of needs doesn't drive decisions, the learning stimulus is weakened, as essential factors like relevance and motivation may be absent.

When learning is centered around decision-making experiences, it engages the entire brain and enhances the learning process. Children thrive when actively involved in decision-making, as it is akin to hands-on construction rather than

passively being lectured. Equipping children with the necessary tools and experiences to make decisions will promote their independence and allow them to practice essential self-care skills. With the guidance of parents and caregivers, collaborative learning provides a supportive environment for children to learn while mitigating the risks associated with inexperience.

It's crucial to utilize tools that ignite the interest of learners of all ages and encourage them to take charge of their learning. As Galileo famously said, "You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself." This rings true for children, adolescents, and adults alike. No matter how enthusiastic the teacher may be about a subject, the student must find intrinsic motivation to learn. Tools that allow children to connect with information personally, making it relevant to their own lives, are more likely to foster profound, meaningful learning experiences. When the material being studied aligns with the child and parent's real-life decisions, it naturally captures their interest and makes the learning process relatable and engaging.

Buckminster Fuller, a celebrated inventor and futurist, said, "If you want to teach people a new way of thinking, don't bother trying to teach them. Instead, give them a tool, leading to new ways of thinking." Repeated use of such tools over time helps form essential pathways in the brain, making the new way of thinking more accessible. Regular use of a tool designed to align with the brain's natural decision-making process leads to more consistent decision-making. Integrating tools into daily decisions can enhance the efficiency of our habits and routines.

Journaling is a tool used to improve learning throughout history. It involves one's own life so that it will be self-motivating. As a tool, it promotes reflection on the decisions and actions taken that day, as well as their impact. Recording our daily actions can enhance our learning by allowing us to reflect on the results. Setting aside time for reflection, making thoughtful decisions, and seeking support to improve our decision-making skills is crucial. This is where the home environment and parents play a role as role models. Using a tool that assists in tracking actions taken and their impact and making it easy to share with others can facilitate collaborative learning. Parents can use these decision-making tools daily to make decisions that include the family. They can witness decision-making in action by sharing the process and outcomes. These experiences serve as vital building blocks for the brain's development, paving the way for more complex decision-making in the future.

Anna, a mother of two, decided to use a decision-tracking tool to help her family make better decisions. They would discuss their weekly decisions, reflect on the outcomes, and plan for improvements. By involving her children in this process, Anna improved her decision-making and gave her children valuable lessons in thinking critically and making informed decisions. This approach strengthened their family bond and prepared her children for more complex decisions in the future.

Why I am a Decision-Making Resource

“What is the foundation of this book? How do I know it's valid?”

Decision-making has been a lifelong interest for me. As a young athlete, I learned how important it is to train optimally for top performance. This involved making strategic decisions about actions, products, and systems to improve physical conditioning, highlighting the significance of deliberate decision-making. Whether it was a game or a race, the strategy involved a series of decisions. Making good decisions in training and during the competition could increase the likelihood of being competitive and winning that day.

Decision-making has been a critical part of my extensive career as a Physical Therapist. Through the years, I have gained invaluable insights into the intricacies of decision-making. The role of a PT is to select the best plan of care to enhance patients' functionality and help them address their diverse challenges. The development of tailored care plans necessitates deliberate decision-making to achieve sustained improvement over time. In this realm, clinical decision-making presents continuous challenges due to the diverse learning styles and unique goals of each individual, as well as the array of impairments and resulting needs they present. Each decision contributes to progressive changes while working within the context of the patient's situation and medical condition constraints.

My career started around the same time insurance companies began using Managed Care processes to control costs and encourage value production in healthcare. As the focus was on doing more with less, my interest in decision-making and change management found a new subject to explore: clinical decision-

making. As knowledge workers, we would use what we know and other information resources to select the best approach to improve the likelihood of recovery and restoration of function. In a managed care environment, we would need to do it better, which meant improved speed, effectiveness, and efficiency of clinical decision-making to minimize the time and cost of the change effort. However, much of the literature about decision-making at the time was from psychological studies and theoretical papers about game theory that were not about decision-making but instead about guessing. I began to wonder if I was training to be a better guesser. Should the practice of clinical decision-making be renamed clinical guess-making?

The answer was no. Clinicians were not simply guessing. The difference was found in the tools used to construct clinical decisions. They produced measurements that resulted from a process to organize and learn from change. A clinician could take their observations, conclusions, and data and walk them over to a colleague, and they can work together to answer the question, "Are you seeing what I am seeing?" They could look at the parts of the clinical decision, the evaluations of motion, strength measurements, and function assessment. The clinician's thought process could be presented and evaluated, and the best solution to cause the desired change in function could be developed. This collaboration would be impossible if the measurements and conclusions were not componentized, allowing for better analysis. I wondered why this notion of constructing clinical decisions also did not apply to life decisions.

At that same time, I became interested in functional MRI (fMRI) and cutting-edge brain research. This innovative technology allowed researchers to observe real-time brain activity. What intrigued me most was the process itself - when subjects were asked to perform a task, specific brain areas would light up on the screen, indicating increased blood flow and neural activity in those regions. Surprisingly, these areas were not just isolated; they were also functionally interconnected. For instance, the act of smelling roses would activate areas associated with both emotion and memory. Similarly, listening to a familiar human voice would trigger the brain's language centers, preparing it for a response.

At that time, the potential of fMRI research to revolutionize neurological rehabilitation was a source of great hope and optimism. The images produced by fMRI research became a cornerstone in our understanding of enhancing human function after illness or injury. The revelation that performing specific tasks could

influence the targeted area and benefit the related areas suggested a promising future. It hinted that related movements could aid injured areas. Integrating specific movements within a movement pattern could make learning more impactful, and recovery could be achieved faster and more comprehensively. In combination with other fields of research, a fuller picture of the function of the brain and its role in recovery of function was available.

It sparked a realization about the pivotal role of clinicians as knowledge and information workers. They are entrusted with making the best decisions to restore physical capacity and function safely. The fMRI research suggested that specific tasks could enhance the decision-making areas of the brain. Could tools be developed to assist clinicians in making better strategic decisions? And if it helped clinicians, could it also benefit other business, government, and industry decision-makers? This line of thinking propelled me to delve into the development of Clinical Decision Support Systems (CDSS). These are processes, paperwork, or computer programs designed to aid health professionals in decision-making tasks. By creating tools to assist clinicians in making better decisions, I explored the structure and function of the decision-making systems of the brain.

The key takeaway was that decision-making helps the brain learn. The brain learns from experiencing and observing change. Decision-making is about selecting solutions that cause change. Decision-making supports the learning areas of the brain, as the relationships of related parts and cause and effect are part of it. The brain also requires repetition, variety, and specificity to acquire skills and apply knowledge. With this better understanding of the brain, new processes of treatment intervention could be developed. With improved clinical decision-making, the best solutions for exercises and movements could be developed to minimize the time needed to improve functional movement.

Motor learning, the process by which the brain acquires movement skills, and decision-making are both systems-based. In systems, nodes have the most influence on an outcome. The concept of intensification allowed me to see therapeutic exercises and other interventions as impacting a node in the neuromuscular system, which would affect other related systems. Decision-making systems also have nodes that improve performance through their intensification. Identifying the nodes in the system with the most connections and significant influence would yield the best results. Exploring this approach showed that it could be shared with others and that decision-making performance could be improved.

And by componentizing the system, the process of causing change could be better managed, risk mitigated, and results enhanced.

The foundational ideas that shaped this book are from diverse areas of study and reflect my journey of learning about decision-making from different perspectives. In shaping my approach to decision-making, I have been influenced by a diverse range of experts. Robert Fritz's work on structural dynamics and digital decision-making complemented my early studies of Peter Senge and his work on systems theory, which offered valuable insights into systems dynamics and causation. More recently, the works of Daniel Kahneman and Bob Moesta separately delved into how customers make purchasing decisions. And countless research publications are listed on the associated website. Without their work, it's unlikely that my interest in decision-making would have culminated in the writing of this book.

Meet the Smith Family

This is the story of John and his family's commitment to improving their decision-making skills. The family's progress is summarized in each chapter as they work through this book. Each member of the Smith family faces unique challenges and opportunities regarding decision-making.

John (45)

As a 45-year-old father, John balances the complexities of family and professional life. He supports his two teenage daughters and young son while managing the business's responsibilities. He also supports his 70-year-old mother, Agnes, as she navigates her senior years. John is determined to teach his children how to make better decisions and is interested in learning how to maintain his decision-making skills as he ages.

Susan (46)

John's wife, Susan, plays a crucial role in decision-making within the family and their professional life. She shares the responsibilities of raising the family and managing the business, providing essential insights and support.

Ellen (19)

As the oldest child, Ellen is a first-year college student facing decisions about her college major, career path, and relationships. She looks to her parents for guidance and support during this critical time.

Jane (16)

Jane, the middle child, is 16 years old and focused on high school and college preparation. She seeks her parents' help in making decisions about extracurricular activities and friendships as she prepares for the challenges of adulthood.

Alex (11)

The youngest child, Alex, is 11 years old and relies on his parents for help with his daily decisions, including homework, chores, and extracurricular activities. John mentors him and models decision-making behaviors to guide him through this transformative stage of life.

Agnes (70)

Agnes, John's mother, is 70 years old and facing challenges related to aging. As decision-making becomes more difficult for her, John and Susan provide support and guidance to help her navigate this stage of life.

The Scope of This Book

The Book's Promises

After finishing this book and actively participating in its exercises, you will develop a deeper understanding of making well-informed decisions. You will acquire valuable insights and tools to facilitate your decision-making. With ongoing practice, you will find that your decision-making is:

- Faster – Time making the decision is reduced
- More accurate – Errors during decision-making are minimized
- More reliable – Wasted resources are better controlled
- More impactful – The cost of causing change is improved

This newfound knowledge may empower you to embrace fresh challenges, pursue loftier aspirations, and adeptly learn from experiences. Ultimately, applying the lessons in this book will catalyze an all-encompassing enhancement of your decision-making skills across various domains of your life – personal, professional, familial, or social.

Critically, this book will help you answer the following question:

“Why is today the day I will start making better decisions?”

As explained later in the book, this is a question of context. This book helps the reader understand what causes decision-making and how to control the innate decision-making systems of the brain better. It does this in specific ways, including:

- 1) Helping the reader understand their desire to make a change and make things better in their life
- 2) Match potential solutions with their value structures

3) Identify and understand that the old ways are no longer working and that a change in habits and living patterns is needed.

4) Manage the anxiety that is part of the uncertainty of change.

Another powerful benefit of learning to make better decisions is the realization that you are fine the way you are and have the necessary capacity to build your life. The work to be done is to be better at what you naturally do: make decisions. This book is prepared to help you learn about decision-making, use tools that help you make real-world decisions, and make better decision-making a daily habit.

What It Won't Cover

Tom sought ways to enhance his decision-making without diving into complex theories, going back to college, or seeking therapy. He wanted something that provided him with practical tools and exercises to apply immediately. However, many of the tools he found were guessing tools or too complex to understand. He found a lot of technical topic-specific decision-making for business or philosophical self-help books without straightforward strategies. Tom noticed he continued to struggle in his daily decisions and felt more doubt in his decisions with lengthy academic study or resources based on psychological intervention.

This book offers valuable insights into decision-making, providing specific information about its structure, function, and impact. While not focused on changing personal beliefs, it provides practical tools and exercises for exploring one's value system and prompts reflection about the type of life you want. It does not delve into complex subjects of philosophy or promise quick fixes but offers practical resources for making better decisions starting today. It can complement learning about oneself, but it is not psychological treatment or therapy. It also does not suggest care for mental conditions, although common conditions are mentioned as they are often involved in decision-making.

It is not an academic book or seeks to describe the complexity of the brain. In reality, multiple, complimentary, sometimes contradictory systems are involved in the decision-making. The presentation of highly controlled functional MRI (fMRI) research helps provide context to the frameworks and tools and is not meant to represent what is going on in the brain during the real-world work of living. Instead, the framework presented helps the learner think about decision-making. The tools and frameworks create engagement points for learning to influence the

natural decision-making processes and are designed to be usable and relatable for learners.

Reader Profile and Essential Considerations

Readers who relate to the following scenarios are likely to gain from this book significantly:

- Individuals wrestling with daily decision-making challenges seek a structured approach to simplify and orient their decision-making process. If you are more interested in an intuitive, gut-feeling approach to decision-making, this book argues for a more structured approach.
- Those who have grappled with past poor decisions and aspire to sharpen their decision-making acumen to evade recurring pitfalls. If you are uncomfortable looking at the causes of past failures, this book can help you use them as valuable learning material.
- Accomplished individuals hungry for more significant challenges, aware of the crucial role of robust decision-making skills in scaling new heights of success. If you have already mastered decision-making in one realm, you must consider that a new form of decision-making is required to progress in new endeavors.
- Parents looking to establish a solid foundation in effective decision-making for themselves and their children, given the intricacies of child development. If you have already committed to a parenting philosophy, this book can provide complementary tools relevant to a child's maturation phases.
- Seniors aiming to retain their independence and actively engage in their care and that of others. If you think it's too late to learn, give this book a chance. It may surprise you that the brain continues to have the capacity to learn and make better decisions.

It is crucial to emphasize that this book is not a passive resource but a tool for active learning. If you embark on this journey, approach the content with curiosity and a readiness to apply the concepts. This active engagement will significantly enhance your decision-making skills.

Responsibility in Decision-Making:

Remember, you are the ultimate decision-maker. This book provides valuable tools and frameworks; ultimately, the decisions are yours. The information and resources here are meant to help you think more clearly and critically about your decisions. It's not just about making a decision; it's about taking action to see if it brings the desired change. Each decision is deeply tied to your values, so remember that advice or recommendations for one person might not work for another. Approach advice from others with caution, and use your values as your compass.

Decision-making is both a learned and natural behavior. It takes time, practice, and patience. However, you can reduce the time and cost of learning through the content presented in this book and the accompanying online-based resources. By using the resources provided, you can enhance your decision-making skills and take more control over the direction of your life. Let this journey inspire you to make confident, well-informed decisions that lead to meaningful change and progress, fostering personal growth and development.

Understanding the Limitations

Decision-making is imperfect because it's a human behavior. We must recognize our limits and accept that we can't predict the future entirely or understand everything happening around us. Despite our best efforts, there will always be unknown factors that can affect the outcomes of a decision. Many people want to overcome these limits and take on more, but this can make decisions more complex in our modern world, leading to feeling overwhelmed and triggering defensive reactions in the brain.

While constraints are often seen as restrictions, they are crucial for improving decision-making. This book argues that embracing tools that constrain the brain's decision-making process can significantly enhance our ability to make effective

decisions. Making a decision involves setting boundaries by selecting "this over that." Every time we decide on one option, we are necessarily rejecting others. We can focus on the actions leading to meaningful change by narrowing down our decisions. As water's ability to cut and carve is channeled by its boundaries, the force of actions can be significantly improved by constraining the context and limiting information to only what is needed to make progress.

When deciding, we need to constrain information and focus our efforts. Tools limit us by concentrating on specific tasks. Frameworks offer organized approaches to grasp complex concepts and refine and contextualize information for decision-making. These limitations resulting from tools and frameworks help us concentrate on selecting solutions, implementing changes, and learning, ultimately enabling decision-makers to navigate their decisions more effectively and confidently. Recognizing that tools and frameworks only partially represent the entire decision-making process is crucial. They highlight specific areas of the brain, potentially overlooking other crucial factors. However, they still act as valuable guides to assist us in making superior decisions. Understanding and acknowledging these limitations is not a sign of weakness but a source of empowerment. Knowing that we control our decisions can empower us to make more informed and confident decisions.

Conclusion

By the end of this book, you will have acquired valuable skills to help you make quicker, more precise, and impactful decisions. This will allow you to fulfill your needs more efficiently and empower you to pursue your goals confidently. With the knowledge and tools in this book, you can understand how your brain functions, how to optimize its function, and when the best time is to make your most effective decisions. This understanding will enable you to make more Deliberate decisions, giving you a sense of control over your life. The practicality of the content in this book will equip you with the necessary tools to make informed decisions in various aspects of your life.

How to Read This Book

This book is meant to be revisited as you improve your decision-making skills over time. Revisiting the material will help you gain deeper insights and better

understand the content as your experience grows. It is structured to help you choose the best way to read and learn by using categories to help focus the information most likely to be helpful to the reader at the time. As a result of having different starting and ending points for each category, there is a purposeful repetition of essential information throughout the book. Chapters summarize vital points and reiterate the overall lessons up to that point to allow the different reader categories to receive the key points. This is more obvious when you have read the book cover to cover.

To select your reader category, consider the following questions:

- What is happening in your situation?
- How much time do you have to learn?

Use your answers to help inform your selection of the following descriptions. Choose the one that best fits your current situation. Start with the recommended reading and return to the book to continue progressing. Regardless of your chosen category, you can begin making better decisions today.

'Daily Challenged'

"I can't seem to meet my needs. Doing the most basic things daily is hard, and I'm overwhelmed. I have decisions to make today."

- If you find it hard to meet your needs, struggle with daily decisions, and feel overwhelmed, consider the option that requires a 45-minute read. This option will help you make significant decisions more affordably, saving time and money. It also offers a fast read that allows you to understand various possibilities and gain knowledge of web application tools available to help today.

The suggestions below will help you choose the best tool.

- Read Chapter 1 for an overall understanding of decision-making.
- Read Chapter 2 for an understanding of daily decision-making
- Read Chapter 3 about the ACC, upregulation, and downregulation.
- Read Chapter 14 to be introduced to QuicSTEPS for daily decisions.

- Skip the Smith family stories and Review Exercises

Go to **Deliberateddecisionmaking.com** and begin your free membership. To improve your daily decision-making, you will start by taking these three surveys:

- Need Fulfillment Survey
- QuickSTEPS
- Automatic Behavior Survey

These tools will help you improve your daily decision-making and provide structure. They will help you build an organized, focused daily decision-making style that can become the foundation of more complex and consequential decisions about life direction.

'Daily Decider'

"It's hard to break old habits, improve my daily life, and finally move towards what I want. I do not have much time, so give me an overview."

- Select this option, which requires a 90-minute read, to help you understand two types of decision-making and when to use each set of web-based tools. The recommended chapters will guide you, and with your free membership at **Deliberateddecisionmaking.com**, you can improve your daily decision-making today.

The suggestions below will help you choose the best tool.

- Read all of Section 1, Chapters 1- 5
- Read Chapter 6, which explains what the ACC needs to succeed.
- Read Chapter 7 details the steps of the Deliberate Pathway
- Read Chapter 8 details the steps of the DDMP and tools
- Read Chapter 11 to know where to start.
- Read Chapter 13 to see the ways the tools work together
- Read Chapter 15 for the DIY DDM for more complex decisions.
- Skip the Smith family or answer the questions about consolidation.

Go to **Deliberateddecisionmaking.com** and begin your free membership. To improve your daily decision-making, you will take these surveys.

- Need Fulfillment Survey
- QuickSTEPS
- Automatic Behavior Survey
- Struggling Moment Worksheet
- DIY DDM

These tools will help you improve your daily decisions and the more complex decisions that require organizing change. When you experience a Struggling Moment, you will know what to do next. These skills help you progress from frustration to knowing what to do next when you can't seem to make the progress you want.

'Daily Decider +'

"I want to change and reach my goals, but I keep falling back into old habits. I feel like I have mastered the daily decisions, but deciding on the next steps is tough. I have the time and want to dive deeper into decision-making."

If you want to take the next steps towards life goals but find it challenging to decide on them, consider the 150-minute full read and skip the Smith Family stories and exercises to save time. This option allows you to make a strong start in learning better decision-making and provides further learning opportunities on the website to maximize your learning.

Go to **Deliberateddecisionmaking.com** and begin your free membership. To improve your daily decision-making, you will start with the

- Need Fulfillment Survey
- QuickSTEPS
- Automatic Behavior Survey
- Struggling Moment Worksheet
- DIY DDM

The available tools and courses will provide a durable foundation for making significant changes in your life and improving your likelihood of success when managing complex projects. With a comprehensive understanding of the types of

decisions and the systems available, you will have powerful support to work towards what you can envision.

'Specific Learner'

"I'm happy with most things in my life, but I'm having a hard time in a few key areas that I just can't get past."

- If you are content with most aspects of your life but face difficulties in a few key areas, the option requiring 180 minutes (about two and a half hours) is the best fit. This option will help you make better daily decisions, have well-thought-out plans, and better understand how to make decisions in various situations. This type of reading is also recommended for a reader involved in the development and leadership of others, whether at work or home. The in-depth information includes the impact of age on decisions, making it a valuable resource for parents to help their children learn how to make Deliberate decisions.

Go to **Deliberateddecisionmaking.com** and begin your free membership. To improve your daily decision-making, you will start with the

- Need Fulfillment Survey
- QuickSTEPS
- Automatic Behavior Survey
- Struggling Moment Worksheet
- DIY DDM
- 20 Minute decision
- My Patterns

To receive a specific learning plan encompassing this book, courses, and other available content, complete an assessment at Deliberateddecisionmaking.com/MyLearningPlan. The results and recommendations are available under the Account tab by clicking on My Learning Plan.

