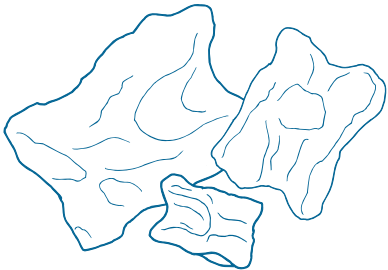
A decorative border with a repeating floral and vine pattern in a dark blue color, framing the central text. The border consists of a wide outer band and a narrower inner band, both containing stylized leaves and scrolls.

How
TO MAKE A
Decision

Casting Lots

Definition:

To throw instrument(s) in a random manner so that the resulting array may be analyzed according to predetermined rules. The most simple method of casting lots utilizes a single, two-sided object such as a coin; the most complex form is something like the *I Ching*, in which multiple objects with markings are thrown and then analyzed. Throughout history, the casting of lots has served three primary ends: as a conduit of divine communication; as a random and therefore impartial determination; and as a means for gambling and gaming.



Found among primitive remains all over the world, knucklebones are among the earliest lot objects found and are the direct ancestor of dice.

History:

The ancient progenitor of coin tossing, drawing straws, dice throwing, tops or dreidels, lotteries, and voting, casting lots is the oldest known method of impartial decision making (perhaps with the exception of procrastination). The Bible includes many mentions of casting lots, mostly in the Old Testament; the New Testament proverb "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord" suggested that casting lots was an aspect of the occult, diminishing the method's popularity. The Chinese practice of *I Ching* stemmed from a simpler form of casting lots; Native Americans, Aztecs, Maya, Africans, and early Europeans (Germanic Runes, for example) also originated their own methods.

JUST BEFORE JULIUS CAESAR led his army across the river Rubicon to invade Italy in 49 B.C., he cried, "Jacta alea est!" (the die is cast—meaning already thrown) to proclaim the irreversibility of his decision.

GOD DOES NOT PLAY DICE with the universe. —*Albert Einstein*

Traditional Lot Items:

Bones
Stones
Sticks
Wood
Nuts
Pottery
Ceramics
Dice
Cards
Coins

AFTER WANDERING ABOUT a number of days bewildered in the snow, their provisions gave out, and long hunger made it necessary to resort to that horrid recourse casting lots to see who should give up life, that their bodies might be used for food for the remainder. But at this time the weaker began to die which rendered it unnecessary to take life, and as they died the company went into camp and made meat of the dead bodies of their companions.

—*From the first letter to notify the outside world of the Donner Party's fate, 1847*

How to Make a Decision by Casting Lots:

- Roll dice, with the highest number determining the decision's outcome.
- Concoct your own method of lots, to any degree of complexity based on the number of items and the key for interpretation.
- Use the *I Ching Book of Changes* to cross reference a multiple-coin toss and analyze according to the *I Ching* hexagrams.
- Play jacks or pickup sticks (also known as jackstraws), descendants of lot casting.
- And then, as they say, "Let the pieces fall where they may."

Coin Tossing

History:

The first coins came into circulation around 600 B.C. in Lydia (modern western Turkey). Most early coins were metal and bore profiles of gods on one side and full-bodied images of sacred animals on the other, the origin of heads and tails. Alexander the Great (336–323 B.C.) was the first to put his likeness on a coin, though he deified himself as Hercules in keeping with the tradition of illustrating only gods; soon after,

most rulers put themselves on coins. Early coins were probably flipped immediately, a natural extension of two-sided lot casting (see previous page). Early Greeks, it seems, had no pockets, so carried their change in their mouths when they went shopping for both security and convenience. In *The Birds*, by Aristophanes, one character says, “I went down on the ground so damn hard I swallowed my money and two of my teeth.”

Coin Tossing and Math:

Modern probability theory (calculating the likelihood of outcomes) arose during the 17th century around such simple questions as how many times a coin might turn up heads. The bell-curve result? You’ve got a 50/50 chance on the coin flip, though if you spin a penny, there’s a 70 percent chance it’ll come up tails.



Applications of Coin Tossing:

The coin toss is a useful tool for binary dilemmas, meaning those that have no more than two solutions (such as yes and no). Coin tossing also yields a completely impartial decision. To customize coin tossing for your dilemma, place stickers bearing the two possible outcomes on either side of the coin. For example, a coin could read, “Marry him” and “Break up with him.” For dilemmas where a particular outcome is desired, the infamous two-headed coin can be employed.

Coin Tossing Variations:

When a coin is tossed to resolve a dilemma, variation can occur in three areas:

- **The calling:** Whether heads or tails is called before the coin is tossed, while the coin is in the air, or after the coin has landed but before its orientation has been revealed.
- **The landing:** The coin can be caught with one hand clamped securely to prevent the orientation from being revealed, or it can fall to the ground before being read.
- **The coin itself:** Whether quarter, dime, nickel, or penny, or even a coin from another country, the odds are the same.

Coin Tossing and Airplanes:

On December 14, 1903, Orville and Wilbur Wright tossed a coin to determine who would pilot the launch of the first successful flying machine in human history. Whether he called heads or tails is unknown, but the winner was Wilbur.

In 1959, rock star Ritchie Valens won a coin toss with guitarist Tommy Allsup. The stakes? A seat on a small plane rather than a ride in the unheated tour bus. Valens won the toss, but tragically the plane crashed and he was killed.

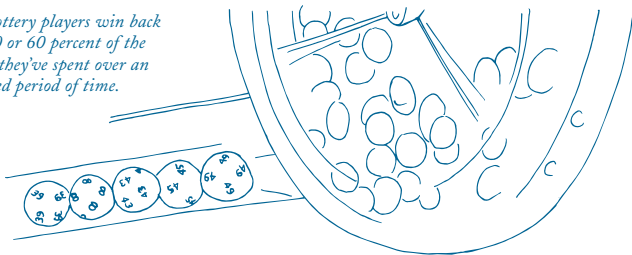
Lottery

The Basics:

Lotteries at their most basic are drawn lots, which, with cast lots, are the oldest form of random, impartial decision making. While casting lots involves the interpretation of elements at rest after a throw, with drawn lots the decider blindly pulls one of two or more elements out of a group. The earliest recorded instance of drawing lots is the Urim and Thummin. High priests of Israel wore breastplates with pouches that held the Urim and Thummin, stones or gems that signified yes or no. To resolve a dilemma, the priests reached into their pouches; whichever stone the priest pulled

determined the answer. Contemporary forms of drawing lots include actual lotteries (pulling the winning number), drawing names from a hat or bowl, as well as most public life-or-death selections such as military drafts and sacrificial offerings. In the Old Testament, Moses used a lottery to award land west of the River Jordan. In 100 B.C. keno was invented in China to raise funds for defense, primarily construction of the Great Wall. In medical studies, lots are anonymously drawn to decide between subjects, such as whether one receives real drugs or placebos.

Most lottery players win back only 50 or 60 percent of the money they've spent over an extended period of time.



How to Pick from a Bowl:

The lottery method has obvious applications for two types of decisions: first, for a group to select one person from among the group; and second, for an individual to dispassionately choose one element from among many. For example, a high school senior could place in a hat slips of paper representing the colleges to which he or she has been accepted, and then choose one. While woodchips or pottery shards were once used for lots, paper is now the most common material, followed by number-adorned ping-pong balls.

THE MORNING OF JUNE 27TH WAS CLEAR AND SUNNY, with the fresh warmth of a full-summer day; the flowers were blossoming profusely and the grass was richly green. The people of the village began to gather in the square, between the post office and the bank, around ten o'clock; in some towns there were so many people that the lottery took two days and had to be started on June 26th, but in this village, where there were only about three hundred people, the whole lottery took less than two hours, so it could begin at ten o'clock in the morning and still be through in time to allow the villagers to get home for noon dinner.

—Opening paragraph of Shirley Jackson's classic short story "The Lottery" (1948), in which one towns person is selected by annual lottery to be stoned to death by fellow residents

Decide to Play the Best Parlor Game Ever:

Celebrity is a game that uses simple lottery techniques to provide all its fun. A group of six or more divides into at least two teams. Before the game begins, all players write at least five names of famous people, dead or alive, on slips of paper to be folded then placed into a bowl. To play, one team member "gives" while the others collectively receive—shouting their guesses as the giver tries to describe the celebrity without using his or her name. Points are given for the number of answers one team can get within one timed, sixty-second turn.

Voting

The Basics:

While variations on casting lots (see previous pages) can be used for random collective decision-making, voting should be employed when a deliberate, democratic decision must be made within a group. Voting is conducted in a variety of ways—with raised hands, trusty slips of paper, punchcards and levers, and via electronic means. Applause-o-meters allow us to vote with our enthusiasm. As most of us learned in school, the ancient Greeks

provide the earliest recorded instance of formal state voting. While voting for class president is easy to comprehend, the Electoral College leaves many Americans scratching their heads. Within small groups, it is helpful if the number of voters is odd rather than even. In the vein of being decisive, however, one must still decide how one wants to vote; in this manner voting can foster indecision, or in the best instances, debate.

As the Chad Dangles:

The punchcard, so elemental in the development of computers and modern data gathering, was borne of textiles. In 1904–05 Joseph-Marie Jacquard developed punchcards for his textile loom, which followed the patterns “stored” on the cards. Two decades later, Charles Babbage invented the first computer (never built), using Jacquard’s card-reading technology. Today, despite almost three decades of formal objection, punchcards are in mass use for nothing other than voting; in 2000, the year of the Bush–Gore presidential election debacle, one-third of the polling places in the United States still used punchcard ballots.

Spotlight

Barriers to Effective Decision-Making:

Indecision: Avoiding decisions to escape the unpleasant aspects of risk, fear, and anxiety

Stalling: Refusing to face the issue; obsessive gathering of endless facts

Overreacting: Letting a situation spin out of control; letting emotions take control

Vacillating: Reversing decisions; half-heartedly committing to a course of action

Half-Measures: Muddling through; making the safest decision to avoid controversy but not dealing with the whole problem

—According to the Adaptive Technique

UNTIL ONE IS COMMITTED, THERE IS HESITANCY, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative and creation, there is one elementary truth the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents, meetings and material assistance which no man could have dreamed would have come his way. Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Begin it now.

—Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

ONCE YOU MAKE A DECISION, the universe conspires to make it happen.

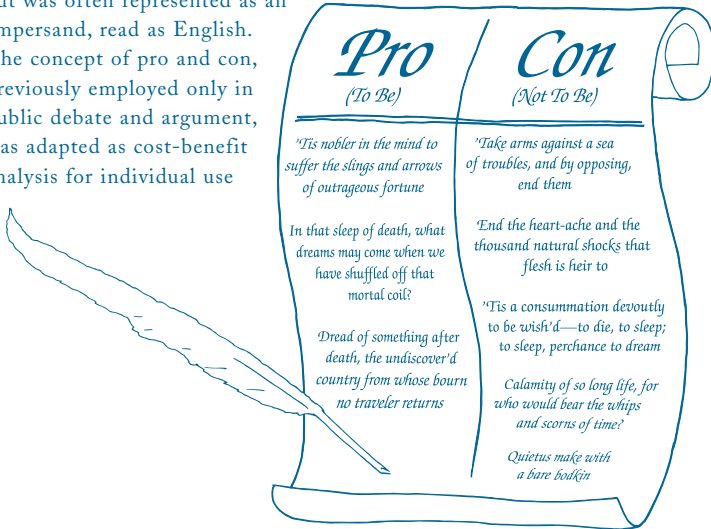
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Pro & Con

History:

“Pro and con” comes from the Latin *pro et contra* (for and against). Its first instances in written English date to the early fifteenth century; the *et* would have been carried into English as Latin (like the phrase “Et tu, Brutus?”) but was often represented as an ampersand, read as English. The concept of pro and con, previously employed only in public debate and argument, was adapted as cost-benefit analysis for individual use

by none other than Benjamin Franklin. Studies show that cons carry significantly more weight than pros, injecting yet another level of subjectivity into this time-tested method.



Dear Sir,

In the affair of so much importance to you, wherein you ask my advice, I cannot for want of sufficient premises, advise you what to determine, but if you please I will tell you how. When those difficult cases occur, they are difficult, chiefly because while we have them under consideration, all the reasons pro and con are not present to the mind at the same time, but sometimes one set present themselves, and at other times another, the first being out of sight. Hence the various purposes or inclinations that alternately prevail, and the uncertainty that perplexes us.

To get over this, my way is to divide half a sheet of paper by a line into two columns; writing over the one Pro, and over the other Con. Then, during three or four days of consideration, I put down under the different heads short hints of the different motives, that at different times occur to me, for or against the measure. When I have thus got them all together in one view, I endeavor to estimate their respective weights; and where I find two, one on each side, that seem equal, I strike them both out. If I find a reason pro equal to some two reasons con, I strike out the three. If I judge some two reasons con equal to three reasons pro, I strike out the five; and thus proceeding I find at length where the balance lies; and if, after a day or two of further consideration, nothing new that is of importance occurs on either side, I come to a determination accordingly.

And, though the weight of reasons cannot be taken with the precision of algebraic quantities, yet when each is thus considered, separately and comparatively, and the whole lies before me, I think I can judge better, and am less liable to make a rash step, and in fact I have found great advantage from this kind of equation, in what may be called moral or prudential algebra.

Wishing sincerely that you may determine for the best, I am ever, my dear friend, yours affectionately,

B. Franklin

— In 1772, statesman-of-all-trades Benjamin Franklin wrote the above letter to British scientist Joseph Priestley, the discoverer of oxygen. With this letter and with his Poor Richard's Almanac, one might also credit Franklin with the invention of the advice column.

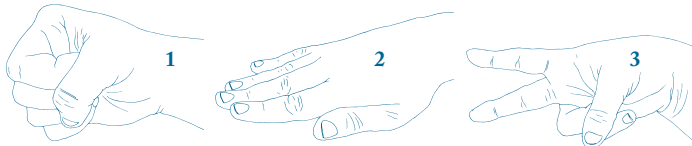
Roshambo

Rules:

1. The question at stake must be binary and unambiguous.
2. The number of “primes” (the count before the throw, i.e. one, two, three, throw) must be agreed upon.
3. An odd number of rounds must be determined (i.e. best out of three, five, or seven). Primes are counted with a closed fist, with the thumb under the fingers to distinguish from rock.
4. Players must throw their choices in synch.
5. Hierarchy of pairs: rock crushes scissors, paper smothers rock, and scissors cut paper (see grid).

Regulation Form:

1. **Rock:** Closed fist, thumb outside fingers.
2. **Paper:** All digits fully extended; palm parallel with ground.
3. **Scissors:** Index and middle fingers fully extended; thumb and remaining fingers form a fist. Middle finger points downward.



		PLAYER 1			
		R	P	S	
PLAYER 2	R	T	L	W	
	P	W	T	L	
	S	L	W	T	
	T	TIE	R	ROCK	
	L	LOSS	P	PAPER	
	W	WIN	S	SCISSORS	

Applications:

Rock Paper Scissors works best in situations where a decision must be made between two people. RPS is not definitive within larger groups.

History:

While RPS has long been played in various forms all over the world, its origins are unclear. RPS may have originated around 200 B.C. in Japan with a game called Jan-Ken, or in Africa or Scandinavia. Current research holds that RPS originated with Celts in northern Portugal around 500 B.C.; spread through the Iberian peninsula by 200 B.C.; and left Spain with the first-century Roman invasion. The game was withheld from the British Isles by the Romans because it was believed that RPS would prompt a rebellion against the Roman Empire. The game finally traveled to Britain with the Portuguese Armada of 350 A.D.

Alternative Name:

RPS is also called Roshambo, from Jean Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur, Comte de Rochambeau, a general in George Washington’s army. His connection to RPS is unclear, as is the game’s role in the American Revolution.

Strategies:

“Chaos play” entails throwing moves as randomly as possible. “Gambits” are special sequences of three throws determined before the game begins. They include Avalanche (RRR), Bureaucrat (PPP), Crescendo (PSR), Dénouement (RSP), Fistful o’ Dollars (RPP), Paper Dolls (PSS), Scissor Sandwich (PSP), and Toolbox (SSS). “Exclusion strategies” involve repeatedly playing only two of the signs so that the opponent will become obsessed with the appearance of the third sign. “Reactive play” is basing one’s moves on the opponent’s most recent throws. “Cloaking” is waiting until the last second to reveal one’s play (easily crossing the line into cheating). With “Shadowing,” one attempts to fool one’s opponent by pretending to throw one move but changing into another at the last second.

Eenie Meenie

The Basics:

The children's rhyme "Eenie Meenie Minie Moe" belongs to a class of nursery rhymes called counting-out rhymes. In addition to serving as a decision-making method, counting-out rhymes help children with numbers and language skills and serve as mnemonic devices. The words of "Eenie" can be traced to ancient numerals of uncertain origin which are still spoken by British shepherds and fishermen, and some scholars link counting-out rhymes to the recitations Druid priests

used for choosing human sacrifices. Another example of a counting-rhyme—"One potato, two potato, three potato, four." Counting-out rhymes attempt to reproduce a random process, such as now seen in the random number generation of computers, but because the result can be predicted with syllable counting, they actually constitute a deterministic process that only appears random. In selecting one person from a group, counting-out rhymes also function as oral lotteries.

The Mother Goose collections of nursery rhymes are responsible for bringing the literature to children all over the world. The first collection to be called Mother Goose was published in French in 1697. Translated into English in 1729, the book failed to get much notice until 1760, when publisher and bookseller John Newbery, namesake of the Newbery Medal, republished the work and, by publishing specifically for children, created a new branch of the book trade. Mother Goose came to the United States in 1787.



ALL OUR FINAL DECISIONS ARE made in a state of mind that is not going to last.

—Marcel Proust

A WISE MAN MAKES HIS OWN decisions, an ignorant man follows the public opinion

—Chinese Proverb

Contemporary Applications, Including Deceit:

The recitation of a counting-out rhyme is executed while pointing back and forth between options; the landing place at the rhyme's end determines the selection. For adults struggling with nuanced binary dilemmas, counting-out rhymes can help determine a true inclination. Because the rhymes may be appended with known variations midperformance (such as "My mother says pick the very best one"), the rhyme reciter can rig the final landing place without prior planning. Vacillating adults, when using counting-out rhymes, often add syllables in order to arrive at the choice they truly want but haven't yet admitted to themselves. The rhymes can also be fixed by counting ahead so that the starting place will yield the desired destination.

A Checkered Past:

For more than a century, the most common lyrics of "Eenie" were as follows:

Eenie, meenie, minie, moe
Catch a nigger by the toe
If he hollers, let him go
Eenie, meenie, minie, moe

Increased sensitivity (or the desire to seem more sensitive) led to the substitution of "tiger" for "nigger." Few people under fifty today know the

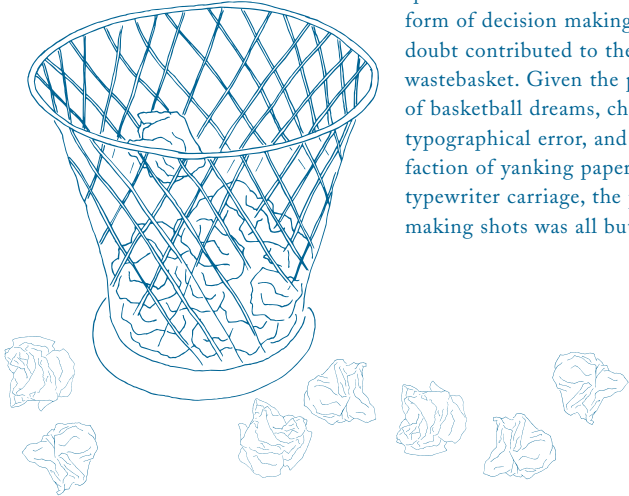
offensive version and remember only the "tiger" lyric. Even Big Bird recited the cleaned-up rhyme on Sesame Street. After a plane flight in February 2001, however, two black passengers sued Southwest Airlines for racial discrimination after a young flight attendant recited a version of a rhyme—"Eenie, meenie, minie, moe; pick a seat, we gotta go"—over the intercom.

Making Shots

The Basics:

Basketball, the only major sport exclusively of American origin, was invented by James Naismith in 1891. Its popularity grew steadily but spiked after World War II, with many youth playing the game in schools and following basketball's burgeoning professional competi-

tion. Around the turn of the twentieth century, the typewriter came into widespread use, while inexpensive, mass-produced paper also became a reality. Paper production skyrocketed, obviating the writing slate as paper was for the first time disposable. All these factors conspired to create the "making shots" form of decision making, and no doubt contributed to the rise of the wastebasket. Given the potent brew of basketball dreams, cheap paper, typographical error, and the satisfaction of yanking paper from a typewriter carriage, the practice of making shots was all but inevitable.



Before Paper:

Tlachтли, Pok-Ta-Pok, Ball Court—all names for the earliest known professional basketball leagues, among pre-Columbians including the Maya and the Aztec. After 900 A.D., the game incorporated stone hoops at either end of the court, mounted 23 feet above

the ground on 26-foot-high walls. Players attempted to get the rubber ball through the hoops without using their hands or feet. In addition to the serious injuries and occasional deaths resulting from brutal play, losers of the game were possibly sacrificed to the gods.

Modern Applications:

Making shots is another method best suited to binary dilemmas. The decider wads up a piece of paper and determines the sought-after answer based on whether or not the shot is made. If the result is not the desired one, terms can be changed to the best-out-of-three, -five, -seven and so on. Three-pointers in the office setting are based on difficulty in addition to distance; for example, throwing one's wad around an obstacle such as a desk leg, or not having a wall behind the basket. Beyond that, it's definitely all in the wrist.

More Shots than Ever:

While the making-baskets method is quite enjoyable, it's also important to practice conservation with your wads. In the last three decades, paper use has tripled; consumption could double by 2010. Paper comprises 40 to 50 percent of the trash in typical landfills. In 1982 the paper industry distributed 1.7 million tons of office paper; by 1997, that amount soared to 4.6 million tons. Today's average American office worker burns through some 12,000 sheets of paper per year. The answer? Recycle, use both sides, and make your shots.

Toys

The Basics:

The Magic 8-Ball and the Ouija board are the most popular and long-lived decision-making toy products. The commercial Ouija board debuted in 1886, named for what its inventor erroneously thought was the Egyptian word for luck. First created in 1950, the 8-Ball originally filled with viscous, nonfreezing molasses. The balls were subsequently filled with antifreeze until safety regulations

forbade it. Now the blue liquid (which stains, FYI) is a secret, proprietary formula. The 8-Ball answers both individual and collective questions; the Ouija board is best used with two or more. While the 8-Ball delivers immediate, unambiguous answers, the Ouija board is more cryptic, guiding its users to spell out messages from the spirits—indeed it grew out of nineteenth-century Spiritualism.



THE 8-BALL'S MESSAGE CENTER is a dodecahedron, a twenty-sided regular polygon. Before production, the 8-Ball's makers consulted a psychology professor to determine the proper ratio of positive, negative, and ambiguous responses:

SIGNS POINT TO YES	BETTER NOT TELL YOU NOW
REPLY HAZY, TRY AGAIN	VERY DOUBTFUL
WITHOUT A DOUBT	YES—DEFINITELY
MY SOURCES SAY NO	IT IS CERTAIN
AS I SEE IT, YES	CANNOT PREDICT NOW
YOU MAY RELY ON IT	MOST LIKELY
CONCENTRATE AND ASK AGAIN	ASK AGAIN LATER
YES	MY REPLY IS NO
OUTLOOK NOT SO GOOD	OUTLOOK GOOD
IT IS DECIDEDLY SO	DON'T COUNT ON IT

BE SINCERE! Ask only questions regarding the future—the past you already know. Do not ask the same question twice (unless told to . . .) as the first one you receive is the one intended for that particular question. Trick questions and the like will prove your insincerity and the answers you receive will not be reliable.

—Packaging copy from the Syco-Seer, the 8-Ball's immediate predecessor

And Ouija for All?

An English court ordered a retrial after the discovery that some jurors used a Ouija board while sequestered. The Ouija board told them to “vote guilty tomorrow,” and they did, convicting the defendant of two murders.

So Poetic

William Butler Yeats and his family were famously into the occult and mysticism; the Yeats estate made decisions on the basis of Ouija séances for years after the poet's death.

Meditation

Note: Methods described thus far are known in the decision-making community as disposable, suitable as needed for on-the-spot dilemma resolution. From this page forward, however, the techniques are not meant to yield immediate results, but instead to assist the individual or group in making a decision of life-changing importance or in making better decisions on an ongoing basis.

The Basics:

At its most general meditation can be defined as conscious relaxation, contemplation, or concentration in order to reach an altered meditative state of consciousness. Even the most apprehensive can be taught to meditate without discomfort, and its many benefits can be reaped in as little as ten or fifteen minutes a day.

It's amply documented that meditation reduces the stress and anxiety that so often interfere with effective decision-making; develops one's ability to hear internal voices and deep desires; and promotes a heightened sense of calm, control, and happiness. Contrary to popular belief, a mantra is not mandatory.

The Only Drawback to Meditation:

Those who begin regular meditation but fall off the wagon suffer from chronic guilt at not meditating, as do those who feel they meditate too infrequently or in an inferior manner. While antithetical to meditation itself, which is by definition eschews judgment, this type of superego pressure nonetheless afflicts most westerners.



Prayer

The Basics:

Every religion in world history has incorporated some sort of prayer into its worship practices. Prayer has historically been defined as a human act of communication—and often supplication—with the sacred or holy, but in the modern world the concept of prayer has also been secularized: praying to an unnamed presence or force, or conducting a noncommunicative practice such as meditation. Both prayer and meditation entail a silent, inward reflection that proves beneficial on many levels. Before the concept of psychotherapy, prayer (and confession) played a more therapeutic role. The act of requesting something in a prayer functions to help an individual clarify

and acknowledge what he or she wants, another boon to decision making. In addition to the positive impact on the individual, prayer and meditation appear to impact the outside world with remote healing or improvement and also causes shifts in a collective unconscious as measured, among other studies, by random-number generators all over the world. In most people's minds, prayer requires a deity audience, so for those who are nonreligious, prayer may not be the optimum mode of decision making. For its principles of voicing desire and silent, relaxed reflection, however, prayer remains a viable decision-making aid.

WE OFTEN WANT ONE THING, and pray for another, not telling the truth even to the gods. —*Lucius Annaeus Seneca*

PRAYER MUST NEVER BE ANSWERED: if it is, it ceases to be prayer and becomes correspondence. —*Oscar Wilde*

Self-Help

The Basics:

The self-help movement (also known as the mutual-aid movement) has been the subject of much parody and derision, in part deservedly. Yes, many aspects of self-help are whiny and maudlin and offer useless quick fixes (“Say five times a day, I *love* myself!”). As a movement, however, it refers to a communal system of peer counseling rather than to the overuse of the word *codependent*. The first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous, in 1935, provided

the basics for the self-help model, emulated by so many other groups. The term “self-help” is also used in reference to articles, books, and television shows, which vary widely in their credibility, depth, expectation, and interactivity. For those who frequently suffer from indecision, a self-help group might be formed in which members describe to the group personal dilemmas for debate on an ongoing basis, helping each other find resolution.

The Self-Help Model:

- Groups are formed on the basis of common experience.
- Acceptance, support, and guidance come from others who’ve experienced something similar if not identical.
- The groups foster systems of mutual care on a voluntary basis.
- In addition to receiving help, members are benefited by giving help.
- No professionals run the groups.
- The groups are inexpensive if not free.



Therapy

The Basics:

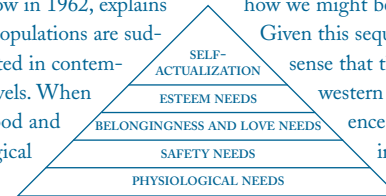
Many new patients cite indecision about an important dilemma, or a chronic tendency to make poor choices, as a dominant reason for seeking psychotherapy, a learning process in which mental-health professionals work directly with individuals and small groups. Therapy subscribes to the “Give a man a fish and he eats for a day; teach him to fish and he eats for life” school of thought by endowing patients with the ability progressively to make healthy decisions

for themselves. The most difficult decision relating to psychotherapy is whether or not to do it. Unfortunately the professional community includes problematic or ineffective practitioners; draw upon quality recommendations and interview multiple therapists before beginning, and then go with your gut. Despite growing acceptance, psychotherapy still carries a societal stigma; those who disparage it, however, are generally those most in need of a good dose of cranial shrinkage.

Why Everybody’s Doing It

The human hierarchy of needs, formulated by psychologist and philosopher Abraham Maslow in 1962, explains why wealthier populations are suddenly so interested in contemplating their navels. When our needs for food and water, physiological safety, and

community are met, we begin to wonder how we feel about ourselves, then how we might become our best selves. Given this sequence, it makes perfect sense that the twentieth-century western world would experience the psychology and inner-consciousness revolution.



Sleep on It

The Basics:

“Sleeping on it” is at once the most pleasurable and effective way to make a decision (provided, of course, that one can fall asleep). Sleep researchers, however, have unanimously declared a crisis of sleep deprivation, a result of our exemption via electricity from natural circadian rhythms—we sleep one and a half hours less than our turn-of-the-century counterparts, who slept nine to ten hours per night. Subjects who are forcibly reverted to natural circadian cycles immediately begin sleeping almost ten hours a night and report in their waking hours to feel more happy, alert, and awake than ever before. Up to one-third of the American population have symptoms of insomnia; most sleep problems, however, are caused by poor “sleep

hygiene,” behavioral habits that sabotage one’s quest for a good night’s rest (going to sleep at widely varying times, drinking caffeine, etc.). One study suggests that sleeping less than seven hours a night results in a greater mortality risk than smoking, high blood pressure, and heart disease. Seventeen hours of wakefulness—on seven hours of sleep—results in motor function impairment equivalent to a 0.05% blood-alcohol level. Sleep has been shown to be responsible for consolidating memory, reinforcing learning, and integrating as-yet-unprocessed information from the daytime. So stop boasting about how little you sleep—no important decision should be made without a good night’s rest.

YOU TRY TO MAKE THE RIGHT DECISION, sleep on it, and then forget about it. —*Harry S. Truman*

SLEEP THAT KNITS up the raveled sleeve of care. —*Shakespeare*

Lucid Dreaming:

Lucid dreams are those in which one is conscious of dreaming while within the dream. Although the term was not coined until 1913, reports of lucid dreaming extend as far back as 415 A.D. Many lucid dreamers are able to influence the dream narrative with the conscious mind. One method especially helpful for decision-making entails thinking about a question or theme just before falling asleep in the hopes that the issue will appear for resolution in the subsequent dream. In confronting nightmares and worries, lucidity is seven times more likely to make nightmares better than worse. While some individuals are predisposed to lucid dreaming, it’s a skill anybody can learn.



Official Consequences of Fatigue as Pertain to Decision Making:

Decreased alertness	Impaired judgment
Poor communication	Poor decision making
Higher error rate	Persistence with ineffective solutions
Reduced decision-making ability	Fixation
Below-standard performance	Apathy
Loss of initiative	Lethargy

Procrastination

Sometimes the best decision is not to decide, or at least to put it off. Every well-prepared decider should have an indecisive backup plan. Following is a guide to productive, or at least justifiable, procrastination:

Stagger Decisions: Make incremental decisions to achieve an objective in order to avoid upfront commitment to a decision you cannot change.

Explore: Gather information available to probe for a solution. Use trial-and-error strategy to manage risk, moving cautiously toward a solution.

Manage by Exception: Work only on those matters that are critical to you, and leave matters to others that are not; strategize and prioritize.

Hedge: Spread risk by avoiding decisions that lock you into a single choice if you aren't prepared to commit (don't put all your eggs in one basket).

Intuit: Use logic first, then intuition to see if a decision feels right.

Delay: If an immediate decision isn't necessary and there's time to develop options, go slowly or let it wait. Sometimes doing nothing is the best decision—the problem either goes away, or events overcome it.

Delegate: Why not let somebody else decide whenever possible?

Vision, Opportunity, and Options: Focus on the future to uncover hidden opportunities and options. With options, we make better decisions. Without them, decisions become forced choices. By finding and developing opportunities and options, you can make enduring, quality decisions.

—According to the Adaptive Technique

Notes

“How To Make A Decision”

Copyright © 2003 by Who’s There, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this pamphlet may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission from Who’s There, Inc., except in the case of brief presentations embodied in critical articles or reviews.

For information, address Knock Knock.

PRINTED IN CHINA

**KNOCK
KNOCK™**

1633 Electric Avenue
Venice, CA 90291
(800) 656-5662
knockknockstuff.com