



## SESSION 3.

### Decision-Making Steps

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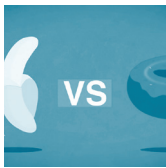
Our decisions have consequences—sometimes positive, sometimes negative. They have an impact on us, our children, our parents, our partners, and even on strangers we interact with. So it's important to be skilled in making decisions. Fortunately, we can learn how to make wise decisions.

There are specific steps you can follow when you make a decision. They are:

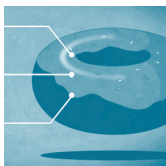
#### Example:



1. Identify the decision that needs to be made. Determine if it is in your control. Is this something about which you can actually make a decision?



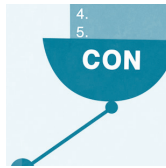
2. Clearly define the decision.



3. Identify your options. This might mean doing some research by reading and talking to people.



4. List the pros and cons of each option. Think about the pros and cons for yourself and for the other people in your life.



5. Rank the pros and cons according to how important they are.  
Then weigh the pros against the cons.



6. Make the decision.



7. Take action.

■ Think about two decisions you have to make. Write down one small decision and one big decision.

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### Map Your Decision-Making Process

Choose one of the decisions you just wrote down and write out below how you will follow the steps in making that decision.

1. Is the decision in your control? Is it something you can actually decide about?

■ Write your answer below.

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2. Write out a clear definition of the decision. Remember José from the last session? He had a decision to make about whether to apply for a new job. If he was writing a definition, it might look like this: “I will decide if I will apply for a job as a waiter at a high-end restaurant and, if I get it, quit my current job.”

■ Define your decision.

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3. Identify your options. Using José again as an example, he has two options. He could apply for the waiter job or he could decide to stay in the job he currently has.

■ Write your options below.

Option 1 \_\_\_\_\_

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Option 2 \_\_\_\_\_

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One thing that is helpful to do before you list pros and cons is to do some research about your options. For example, José could do some research on waiter jobs. He could look at want ads to see how many and what kind of waiter jobs are available where he lives. He could ask his friend about the amount of tips that is typical for a shift. He could ask his friend if the other people working there are friendly.

■ Write down the questions you want answers to in order to make your decision, and explain how you will find those answers.

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4. Look at the pros and cons. Below is an example of what José's list might look like.

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More money</li><li>• Could give my ex more child support</li><li>• Chance to learn more</li><li>• Improve my resume</li><li>• Meet new people</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have to buy new uniforms</li><li>• Have longer commute</li><li>• Have to learn more</li><li>• Won't get to see my friends at old job</li><li>• Might have to work shifts I don't like</li></ul>

Fill in the pros and cons for the decision you have to make.

PROS	CONS

5. Rank your pros and cons according to importance. Assign each pro and con a number from zero to four. Write the number next to each pro and con in your chart.

**0 = Doesn't matter at all**      **3 = Matters quite a bit**  
**1 = Doesn't matter much**    **4 = Matters a lot**  
**2 = Matters a little**

This is a step where you need to check in with your feelings. You might want to close your eyes and imagine the situation and see what your gut is telling you.

After you have given each pro and con a number, add up the number of points you have for pros. Then add up the number of points you have for cons. Put the totals in the spaces below.

This is what José's pros and cons looked like after he ranked them and totaled the points.

PROS	CONS
4 More money	1 Have to buy new uniforms
4 Could give my ex more child support	3 Have longer commute
2 Chance to learn more	0 Have to learn more
3 Improve my resume	4 Won't get to see my friends at old job
1 Meet new people	2 Might have to work shifts I don't like
<b>Positive points: 14</b>	<b>Negative points: 10</b>

How do your pros and cons add up?

PROS	CONS
<b>Positive points:</b>	<b>Negative points:</b>

6. Now it is time to make the decision. What decision are you going to make?

■ Write it here.

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7. Take action. This sounds like the easy part. Just add up the points and then do it. But taking action can be just as hard as making the decision in the first place.

We often make decisions but don't follow through on them. This is especially true when it's something we think we should do, or want to do, but it's difficult. But making a decision is only worthwhile if you take action on it. It doesn't do much good to decide you're going to quit smoking if you immediately tell yourself, *That was a hard decision, but I'm glad I made it. I'll quit soon.* And then you light up a cigarette.

There are lots of reasons people have for not taking action on a decision. They get distracted. A friend calls and invites them to do something. They feel stressed and tell themselves they need to take a break and watch some television. They don't know how to get started, so they feel overwhelmed and just don't do anything about it.

■ Write down some of the things that could get in the way of following through on the decision you have made.

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## **Your Decisions Affect Other People**

Remember to consider the impact your decision will have on other people when you are making your pros and cons list. José thought about the impact his decision would have on his child and his ex-wife. José could remember a time in the past when he hadn't bothered to think about the impact his decision would have on his child. He decided to stop for a drink before he picked up his son from school. Not only was he late, which was frightening for his child, but his reactions were slow and he rear-ended a car in front of him on his way home. Fortunately his son wasn't hurt, but this, too, frightened his child. It also frightened José.

■ Can you think of a time when a decision you made hurt someone else?

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■ Can you think of a time when a decision you made helped someone else?

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Take time to practice these decision-making steps every day for the next week. You might even want to write each step down as you did in this workbook. It's worth taking the time to practice this skill because positive decision making can help you and the people you care about. When you have these skills you can make hard decisions with confidence, knowing that you made the best decision you could with the information, resources, and time available.



## SUMMARY

- There are seven decision-making steps: identify the decision, define the decision, identify your options, list the pros and cons of each option, rank the pros and cons by importance, make the decision, and take action.
- It is important for people to follow through on their decisions.
- People should consider how their decisions will impact other people.
- It is critical to practice these steps to become a better decision maker.

## CHALLENGE

Think about another important decision you need to make and use the decision-making process to help you make that decision. Share your process and decision with your significant other or friend.

