

# Finding Clarity, Creativity, and Focus in Decision Making

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By far, the most frequent issue clients come to see me about has to do with problems making decisions. Sometimes the decisions are career related, sometimes they are personal, but they are always crucially important to my clients' future and they are frequently accompanied by confusion and anxiety. No wonder they are feeling indecisive.

The stress of making a major decision often brings up emotions my clients don't want to face. For instance, the prospect of having to fire an employee might remind my client of when she was summarily dismissed from her first job. Unresolved issues can lead to anxiety, confusion and destabilization. Anxiety often leads to sleeplessness and host of other symptoms that causes secondary stress. Making a decision under these circumstances would be difficult for anyone.

Good decision making is important for effective leadership and career success. Good decisions, made in a timely manner can make all the difference to your success. Poor decisions court failure, affecting your status and leadership of your own life. One of the most effective tools I use with these clients is to ask them to create a list of pros and cons to help clarify the dilemma in their mind. This is such a simple technique but one that never fails to point to the right decision.

My job as a coach is to bring creativity, clarity and focus to my client's problems. When Linda came to see me about whether she should accept an early retirement package or continue working for the media company she works for, she was extremely anxious and nervous about making the decision. No wonder. Linda had worked there for twenty-five years and it was her life. She was tempted to take the package but she was worried about losing her friends, her social life, and her reason for getting up in the morning. She was deeply divided.

## Skills Inventory

I asked her to keep an open mind to any and all possibilities. Is it possible her dilemma isn't as black and white as she perceives it? I asked her to write down everything she is good at and things she is not particularly good at. I then asked her to write down what she loves and hates about her job—even people she likes to work with or not. As we discussed her work she wrote it down as a pro or a con. For home work, I asked her to make a list of all the things she might like to do if she opted for early retirement. I asked her to make a list of the pros and cons of each option. We discussed some options and agreed to meet a week later.

## Relief

When I talked to Linda a week later she had already made up her mind. Writing down the pros and cons of each option not only helped her make up her mind but she was instantly relieved of anxiety and uncertainty and she could sleep soundly again.

Writing a list of pros and cons can help bring clarity to any decision. In the end she decided to take the package and volunteer as a media consultant to environmental groups because she has very strong values about helping others, a commitment to the

environment, a need to be valued and a she needed to have a social workplace.

Linda also decided to hang out her shingle as a media consultant to keep her skills sharp and to bring in extra income. The relief on Linda's face said it all. She was comfortable with her decision because the uncertainty of her future had dissolved. She was now sure about her course.

Using the right tools and some creative input helped Linda come to the best decision on her own. Rather than seeing the problem in an either/or situation, Linda saw that there were plenty of opportunities waiting for her and that she is still valued. She realized she would still have her friends and with luck she would be greeted back as a consultant. Contributing to a cause she passionately believes in will bring her what she wants at this stage in life—satisfaction and being valued. She confided that making this decision was the hardest thing she has done in years but with coaching she was able to see exactly what she wanted for herself.

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