

How To Make Better Decisions



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Natalie Bacon

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How To Make Better Decisions

Hi there. Welcome to the *Design Your Dream Life* podcast. My name is Natalie Bacon, and I'm an advanced certified mindfulness life coach as well as a wife and mom. If you're here to do the inner work and grow, I can help. Let's get started.

Hey there. Welcome to the podcast. I'm so glad to be here with you today. We are going to talk about how to make better decisions. This is something that I came up with based on a conversation that I was having with one of my girlfriends who is also a Grow You member. She was making a really big decision in her life. I was talking with her about it. I was going back to the content that I've created on here.

I was thinking that we need more content about decision making. Why? Because our lives are made up of so many decisions from who you marry to how many kids you have to where you live to what you do for work to whether you send your kids to daycare to how you spend the next five minutes of your day. Where you're going to vacation, whether you're going to vacation, what you buy at the grocery store, when you go to the grocery store. Where your kids go to school, what you wear today, what time you go to bed, how your home looks, what you spend money on.

The list goes on and on. There are the big decisions and then there are the micro mini small day to day decisions. Some of the decisions we spend a lot of time making, others we make so fast we don't even realize it's a decision like what line to stand in at the grocery store or which leg to put into the pants first. Some of our decisions are habits and others are not. Others are new to us.

I think that because we have so many decisions to make every day, we can get into decision fatigue and decision overwhelm. It's something that can happen to everyone, but I think that you can minimize it by getting better by making decisions. I think decision making is a skill. So it's not something that you are born with. It's not something that you either are good at or are not good at based on your upbringing and who you've decided to become up to this point.

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You probably likely have a certain pattern of decision making. So for example, I'm pretty quick at making decisions, particularly because I've done so much of this work. I think even before doing all of the inner work, I was naturally a little bit quicker with making decisions. Contrast that with Steve who is the opposite. He likes to research and get all of the facts and information.

So I think it makes a really great balance for us because I can kind of give us a deadline for decision, but we know that it's going to be thought out. I seek his counsel so much to review things and research things. He's just so, so good at the research part and the gathering the information part.

What we want to do is we want to recognize what type of decision maker we are and make sure that we're not falling into any bad decision making habits. I think that when you have this skill of making decisions and making them confidently and a little bit quicker maybe than you're used to, it will increase your confidence. It will reduce that overwhelm and fatigue. It will bring about a lightness to your life. This doesn't even make sense. So let me explain it.

When you make decisions mean so much, when they are so heavy and big and determinative. We can do this to ourselves. They seem really overbearing and intense. Then there's this pressure and you want to make the right decision. You want to make it so you don't make any mistakes and you want to make a good choice. We have all of this mental chatter going on subconsciously.

When you get really good at decision making and you kind of see it as this skill that you can practice and really change how you've been doing it, you get rid of a lot of that. So you don't feel so intense about even really big decisions. So there's this lightness that comes from that because you think no matter what, you're going to have your own back. It's totally fine. It's going to work out great either way. So that's that decision making from abundance that we will talk about here in a minute.

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I just want you to think about how terrible it feels when you put so much pressure on yourself to make the right decision. This doesn't mean that you don't gather information and gather the facts, but it means that you do it kind of quickly and probably more quickly than you've done in the past if this is work that you've never done yourself. The work that you've never done yourself, the work of getting better at decisions. I'm telling you. It will compound the results you have in your life because you won't get hung up on making decisions take forever.

I was choosing the wedding photos to go in our wedding book, which is the most beautiful book I think I've ever seen. It's just so grand and leatherbound and all the things. I love it so much. I remember my mother-in-law asking me what I was just doing. I forget why we were together. I don't know.

I think we were at my in-laws house actually and I went upstairs for about 40 minutes and came back down. She asked what I was doing. I said, "Oh I had to reply to my photographer. I just choose all the photos for the book." She was in shock that I had done that in such a short amount of time. I think that it's such an example of how you can apply this skill to every area of your life in a way that feels very light. I was like yeah, no reason to keep looking at them. They look great. I'm excited to get it.

I just know that I'm going to have my back when I get that book in. I'm not going to go back and say oh well I wish I had included this or that or I should have included that photo. So I have a lot of confidence in myself and I don't beat myself up for my decisions.

One thing I think that makes decision making hard for our brains is that here is always a component of decision making that is unknown. So decisions are about the future. We can't predict the future. So there are things that will happen that we don't know until they happen. Yet, I still think considering this if you're aware of it, you can have a mindset around decision making that will serve you no matter what happens in the future.

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Something else that our brains do, which I find just so interesting, is that we tend to think that the longer it takes to make a decision, the better the decision is. Like don't you sense that if we take a longer time to make a decision, we're being responsible?

We don't really talk about it in this way, but that's exactly what's happening. We think that okay, I've thought about this for a while. I've spent a lot of time thinking about it. I've weighed the pros and cons. I've done all of my research, and now I guess I can make a decision. So we think that the decision is going to be better because we waited longer. This isn't true.

So the actual decision is made in an instant. So you can make that decision instantly today or you can make that decision instantly in two weeks or you can make that decision instantly in two months. The only difference is that that time has passed.

I think that when you say I need to think about it a little longer, you are doubting yourself and you're doubting your decision making ability and your ability to create whatever result you want in your future. So you get better and better at doubting yourself every time you say I need to think about this a little bit longer.

So I want to encourage you to make quicker decisions. This will feel a little bit weird to you at first if you are not in the habit of doing it. It might even feel a little scary. So start with something small that you would dub insignificant decisions. Like where we're going to go to dinner or what movie we're going to watch or what you're going to cook next week. Anything that you don't consider to be a big decision, start there. Then over time you can practice this with those bigger decisions.

As you're doing this, keep in mind that what makes something a good decision is simply your decision that it was good or bad. So you make a decision and then you take action and then you create whatever it is that you create. It's only your reflection back on the decision later that determines whether it's a good or bad decision.

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So let me give you an example. Steve and I bought a custom beautiful Pottery Barn couch last year. It's gorgeous. I love this couch. It has a double wide chaise. It's down. Did I mention it's white? Not ideal for puppies and babies.

So fast forward a year and a half later and the couch is not working anymore for our family. So we got a new couch. We got a tan couch from Macy's and we bought it on Black Friday I think it was. Cyber Monday? Something like that. We got it like half the price. It was such a mom moment for me because I realized like oh, I was living in this high rise with this lux couch and now it's just different. I wouldn't have it any other way.

It's so tempting for my brain to want to look back at that decision to get that couch and think oh my goodness, if we would have chosen a different fabric, if we would have slip covers. Right those two small decisions with the couch would have changed the outcome. It's so tempting to do that for my brain. I redirect my brain away from that.

Why? Because there is no upside. If I think that I made a bad decision or a wrong decision in the past, all that does is beat myself up. It's me taking a hit for something that there's no upside to. Now this doesn't mean that I think oh my gosh, it was the best decision. Instead how I reframe it is at that time knowing what I knew then, that was the best decision for us to make. I just didn't know what I didn't know. That's okay. We learned. We got a new couch. Totally fine.

So you never have to think that you made a wrong decision even if you wouldn't make that decision again. That's the really important part. People think well if I validate my past decision, then that means that I would make it again. That's not true. It's like I'm so glad and grateful that I took out student loan debt. Would I take out student loan debt again? No.

So there's both. You can say at the time, I made the best decision for me. I'm going to have my own back on that. So you don't have to think you made a wrong decision ever. Even if it turns out totally in a different way than you thought, you can say well I learned a lesson there. Right? So

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notice how you treat yourself after making decisions. Do you treat yourself with love, kindness, compassion, and warmth? Or are you really harsh and self-critical?

So let's say that you decide to move your family out of state where you got a new job. It was an extremely difficult decision for you, okay? Then a year later you're let go from your job. There is no upside to regretting your decision to move, right. There's just no upside to it because you can't go back in time. You're always going forward. Now you can decide to think about it in a different way that's not "this is the best thing ever", but it's also not, "I really regret that. I made the wrong decision."

It's so damaging to your self-identity and to your confidence when you look back on decisions and you don't have your own back. So you can decide to think anything else you want. I don't know why this happened. I didn't see it coming, but I know that we made the best decision for our family to move. I can do my best right now with what we've got. I know I can work through this challenge. So it's very future focused instead of past focused.

So with decision making, you can always choose who you want to be when problems and challenges after you've made the decision. You don't have to worry about that ahead of time. If you have your back no matter what, then decisions aren't such a big deal. It's when you know you're going to be really critical of yourself that they have so much weight on you. Or if you think that other people are going to be critical of you and then what you'll make that mean.

If you have parents who are pretty critical or a spouse who's pretty critical or in-laws, whoever in your life or your family is pretty critical of your decisions, that's okay. They can be them. What do you make that mean when they're critical of you? Do you make that mean that you've done something wrong and that you are not a good decision maker? Instead you can do some work on that and think, "Oh that's just them. That's just what they think about my decision. What do I think about my decision? I think I was doing my best at that time and it's totally fine."

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Sometimes I'll get passive aggressive comments about how much I move and have moved. I'm always fascinated by it. I'm not offended at all ever. I think it's weirder that you've lived there forever, right? Not that there's anything wrong with either way, but my brain thinks it's odd. Like I can't even imagine.

Maybe I will one day. For my life so far, it's been so fun to have that freedom and flexibility. It's kind of like travel. I don't love to travel the way most people love to travel. I really don't. I had to make terms and peace with this.

I like to travel if it is in a really high end way. I'm not bunking up in an Airbnb at this point in my life. Like just no. It's just not comfortable for me. There are other things about travel when it's not done in kind of a lux way that I just don't enjoy at all. Making peace with that has been so amazing for my soul because it's inconvenient dream of the opposite of what most people think and how most people want to travel.

Steve is so easy going. He loves to travel. He'll do whatever whenever. He's always down. I love that about him. I'm like yep. It's so not me, and that's okay. So deciding kind of on purpose how you want to be instead of on default trying to be like everyone else. That's also a decision that you can make. You can always change it. Maybe one day I'll love to travel in a different way. For now, no thanks. I want that hotel with that nice bathroom fully stocked. What else?

Okay so after you make a decision, I want you to focus on going forward and taking action and not looking back. There's just no upside to second guessing yourself.

I remember, I may have talked about this on the podcast before when I invested in a PR company a few years back to help me get on podcasts. It was a referral from a friend. If you're measuring it by results, they did not get me the results that I wanted. They did not get me on the types of shows that I wanted to be on. I had invested a few thousand dollars with this

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company, but I never once thought that it was a bad investment or a bad decision. I never want to think that about myself.

So instead what I thought was I just got a really good lesson in marketing, in public relations, in podcasting. I decided that I had learned so much about business and working with a company that it was worth the investment. I just had my back. It was only going forward from there.

So if you know you're going to treat yourself with love and kindness even when you make mistakes, you don't have to put so much weight and pressure on yourself for all of your decisions. Instead you can decide on purpose to make decisions from your highest self in a rather, I would say, quick and thoughtful way. You can still gather information, but once you have a little bit that's enough. Then decide. That's kind of how I feel about big decisions and small decisions.

I mean if you know what you are looking for in a home, you can wait to buy until you find it. But as soon as you find it, it's let's make an offer today. Or if you are buying a car, pick three maybe five options total. Narrow it down to one and buy a car that day. Really it can be that easy. When we make these decisions so big, again it feels like pressure and it slows us down in our lives in a way that just doesn't serve you.

I want you to pay attention to to how you feel when you make a decision. So if you're feeling very rushed and hurried, you're likely making the decision out of scarcity. Scarcity is always rooted in fear. I used to actually do this a lot with my business. What's least likely to cause problems and a disaster here is sort of the mindset, right?

Or if you're thinking about sending your little ones to daycare versus getting a nanny versus you just staying home. Making that decision out of scarcity and fear would sound like where are they least likely to get hurt? Where are there least likely to be problems? That mindset kind of feels terrible. It's kind of like this world is a big and scary terrible place and I need to watch out for it.

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Since this is a mindset, it's a thought pattern. It's likely that you'll do this in all areas of your life. Of course it doesn't mean that you ignore warning signs, that you ignore data, that you don't research ahead of time. Just check in with yourself and notice how you feel. Do you feel fear? Or do you feel confidence when you're making a decision?

If you're making an abundant decision, it will feel like confidence. It sounds like what's the best case scenario in either option? What sounds the most fun? Where will my kids have the most fun, learn the most, and have the best experience? Do you see how much different that decision making is in terms of how you feel when you're making it? So try your best to make decisions from a place of confidence.

I know for myself when I quit working to do my business full time, the decision was made from my highest self in an instant from a place of confidence. Now once I took action, I experienced enormous discomfort. This is normal. So I want you to expect this for those really big decisions. So your brain thinks you're going to die because you're doing something from this future self that you haven't done before.

I had the same experience when I got Penny. Deciding to get a dog was easy. I made it from my highest self. I felt amazing. I wanted to be a dog mom. All good. Then I got more into it and bought some things. The closer it got to that day the more I was freaking out. I think everyone has a different level of this freakout.

Like Steve was very surprised at my brain, at my anxiousness around it, but it was just my brain not having any past history of having a dog. So my brain couldn't create that certainty of okay this is what's going to happen next. This is how it's going to go and all of that. My brain had no idea. I didn't let that stop me. I just expected it.

So your brain might be like my brain. When you make big decisions, you want to make them from a very settled confident place. Know that once you make those decisions, it can feel uncomfortable because your brain just doesn't have any evidence and experience from what you've done in the

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past to calm it down. Your brain always wants that certainty. You can say, “Brain, I'm not going to die. I'm getting a puppy.” Right? Which is what I did. I felt so much better once we actually got her. That morning of I was sick to my stomach.

You have to just be careful to not make that feeling of anxiousness mean that you've made the wrong decision. Like I knew that I would not redecide until I was in a calm state making that decision from my highest self. So that's how you want to make your decisions is really from that calm state. From your highest self decided and then do not second guess. Ask yourself what if both scenarios turned out amazing. Which would you choose?

I think that you can sit down, gather the facts, give yourself a deadline particularly if you're someone who takes a long time to make decisions. Particularly if you think that taking a long time makes you more responsible. Give yourself a day, two days, max at the end of the week. No decision should be taking longer than that. Decide.

I think that making decisions faster than you think you need to is generally a good practice. Because what I see so much is putting so much weight onto each and every decision that ends up creating this decision fatigue and this decision overwhelm.

Another way to make a decision is to ask yourself what your future self five years from now would want you to do. Because a lot of times it's hard for us to get out of our present moment. If you go to your future self, your future self always has the best advice. Ask her okay, what do you want me to do? She will tell you. Future self knows. Your future self five years from now will tell you what she will hoped you have done.

Sometimes that creates more discomfort now because it means you have to change things or you're moving or you're going to the event or you're not, you're moving your kids or whatever it is. But you'll at least have the decision.

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I like to say, I say this all the time in Grow You. Decide whatever you want, but like your reason. So that means you're not judging yourself. It means that you're being honest with yourself. Kind of like when I talked about now loving travel the way that some other people love travel. I'm not going to judge myself for that.

I'll often coach women in Grow You and notice that their reason for doing something is fear. That's where we want to question if we really like that reason. Or I've also seen a lot of decision making done to protect someone else's feelings. You just want to notice and be onto your brain and notice that that might not be a reason that you want to do something. So someone will say, "Oh I'm not going to tell her exactly what happened because I don't want her feelings to get hurt." That's manipulation, right. It's not telling the truth.

The whole truth might sound something like, "This is so challenging for me to tell you. I care so much about you and your feelings, and this is exactly what happened." So it can really help not just with taking action and changing your results, but also with your relationships and how honest you are and how you show up.

One other thing that I think is important to know is that you can always redecide in the future. So if you decide to move, you move your whole family. Two years later you find out there's an amazing opportunity for your husband where you used to live. You can redecide to move back and not make it mean that it was wrong that you moved in the first place. Remember we want to have our backs for the decision that we made at the time with the amount of information that we had.

This is kind of counter to what a lot of people do socially. So it might seem weird to them, and that's okay. So if you say, "Yeah we're moving back two years later. No problem. We're so excited." People, your aunt or your father-in-law or whoever it is kind of raises an eye and says, "Oh, well that probably wasn't a great decision to move in the first place." Or something like that, right? You don't have to agree with them at all.

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It doesn't mean that you are confrontational and say that you don't agree, but it means that in your heart you don't agree. In your heart you know, "No this was the best decision for our family. I'm actually so glad we got to do it. I don't mind moving at all." You can just believe that.

I promise you that when you practice this, you will free yourself from decision fatigue, from worry, from that judgment of making something a bad or wrong decision, from spinning out and ruminating on what choice to make. You will stop that hemming and hawing and doubting yourself over your decisions. Instead you will be left with so much more confidence and lightness in your decisions. So practice small and practice making decisions quickly and having your own back. This will change your life. Take care.

If you loved this podcast, I invite you to check out Grow You, my mindfulness community for moms where we do the inner work together. Head on over to nataliebacon.com/coaching to learn more.