

40. Effort Activity: Pre-Making Decisions

Life is full of decisions. Each day we make thousands; estimates range between 3,000 for young children to something like 35,000 for adults. We all experience something called decision fatigue – a decrease in the quality of our decisions over a long period of decision making. (That's why those decisions we make at 10pm after a full day at school might not be our best!) It's partly because we often spend a lot of our decision making energy throughout the day on small material decisions – whether to buy this chocolate or that chocolate, what to eat for lunch and where to sit, how to spend a small amount of money, which bus to catch home and so on.

Often, our material decisions have taken up a lot of mental energy, leaving our behavioural decisions as unplanned reactions. So when a teacher challenges the quality of your homework, it feels unexpected and you might get angry even though you know you shouldn't. Or a friend asks you to skip an after-school class and you blurt out, 'Yes!' even though you know it's a bad idea.

This activity allows you to anticipate some of those decisions and to 'pre-make' them. Use the decision making energy you've got now to plan out responses to future events, and make decisions now that represent the best possible future you.

First, consider these questions and use the space below to answer them:

- » What kind of person do you want to be?
- » What qualities do you want to have?
- » What's important to you?
- » What do you want other people to say about you?
- » What ideals do you want your strong, confident decisions to be based on?

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Scribble down some notes and bear them in mind as you put yourself into some difficult scenarios. Some of them happen to everybody, and we've included them below. Others might be specific to your situation, so there's blank space lower down for you to add your own scenarios.

Scenario	Pre-made decision
You plan on doing some important research but your internet connection is down.	
You set aside some time to catch up on some crucial work but a friend arrives and wants to hang out and chat.	
It's one week until an important test and you know you've got a significant amount of revision to do.	
You're planning on working but a friend tries to persuade you not to.	
You have important tasks you want to get finished but there is something great on TV/social media/ the internet.	
A fellow pupil asks you to cheat on a test.	
A friend asks you to skip a class with them.	
A close friend suggests grades aren't that important – that revision is boring and school is worthless. They ask you to join them in quitting study and deliberately failing all exams.	

May Activities

You can even add situations that help you to pre-decide even more crucial decisions. Think about how you would like the best version of you to respond if, for example, someone offers you drugs or you see a group of people mistreating someone.

You might not always make decisions that fill you with pride, but pre-making good decisions does make them more likely to happen!

Final Thoughts

One way to focus your mind on making good decisions is to recall times where you've made bad ones. Everyone can look back on a bad decision they've made, and the experience of reviewing it can help us figure out things to avoid in future.

Try recalling a bad decision. Focus on key details like – *Who was there? Where were you? What time of day was it? What was the exact point at which the poor decision was made? Why was the decision made that way?* Use the space below to record your thoughts:

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