

this wasn't the only activity that caught his eye. With each additional click, the other doors diminished by one-twelfth, signifying that if not attended to, they would vanish. Eight more clicks and they would disappear forever.

Sam wasn't about to let that happen. Swinging his cursor around, he clicked on the red door, brought it up to its full size, and clicked three times inside the red room. But now he noticed the green door—it was four clicks from disappearing. Once again, he moved his cursor, this time restoring the green door to its full size.

The green door appeared to be delivering the highest payout. So should he stay there? (Remember that each room had a range of payouts. So Sam could not be completely convinced that the green door was actually the best. The blue might have been better, or perhaps the red, or maybe neither.) With a frenzied look in his eye, Sam swung his cursor across the screen. He clicked the red door and watched the blue door continue to shrink. After a few clicks in the red, he jumped over to the blue. But by now the green was beginning to get dangerously small—and so he was back there next.

Before long, Sam was racing from one option to another, his body leaning tensely into the game. In my mind I pictured a typically harried parent, rushing kids from one activity to the next.

Is this an efficient way to live our lives—especially when another door or two is added every week? I can't tell you the answer for certain in terms of your personal life, but in our experiments we saw clearly that running from pillar to post was not only stressful but uneconomical. In fact, in their frenzy to keep doors from shutting, our participants ended