

The Decision-Making Process

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

By the end of this session, you will be able to: define decision making, define and explain schemas, and demystify the decision-making process. We will break this down into the following topics:

1. Decision Making

Decision making is a component of problem solving and entails the making of a choice. Decision making does not always result in problem solving. It involves cognition—communication, thinking, memory, and knowledge. Beliefs are often formed via the development of a **prototype**—a mental category of a given example. A **concept** is how one mentally groups ideas, individuals, objects, etc...



TERMS TO KNOW

Prototype

A mental example of a category.

Concept

A mental grouping of ideas, objects, people, or other similar things.

2. Schemas

Schemas are the mental framework that we use to shape our experiences. Schemas assist us in organizing our knowledge base categorically via aligning sensory information with outcomes. When explaining the employment and adjustment of schemas, Piaget proposed the concepts of assimilation and accommodation.

Assimilation is the utilization of one's current comprehension to interpret new experiences.

➞ **EXAMPLE** A young child may refer to a squirrel as a dog if they assimilate all furry animals to be dogs.

Accommodation involves the refinement of new information that enters our body of knowledge.

➞ **EXAMPLE** A child alters their belief that all furry animals are dogs after they encounter many other furry animals that do not look like a dog.

There are multiple types of schemas:

- **Person schemas** are centered around the understanding of specific people.
- **Social Schemas** enable people to know how to behave in a social situation.
- **Self-Schemas** assist us in understanding ourselves. They represent our being in the past, present, and future.
- **Event schemas (scripts)** contain the sequence of behaviors that one is expected to go through during an event.



As you continue to learn about the science behind our decision processes, watch the following video to hear how writer, actor, and father, Omar Epps, guides you through his intellectual and emotional journey and his struggles in the decision to become a father who's in the present.



Schema

The mental framework we use to shape our experiences.

Assimilation

The use of one's current comprehension to interpret new experiences.

Accommodation

The refinement of new information that enters one's body of knowledge.

3. Demystifying the Decision-Making Process

Why does the process of decision making pose such a problem for so many? Individuals often fall prey to the following:

- Not making a decision to avoid mistakes. Refusal to make a decision is a decision in and of itself and is potentially a poor one.
- Only one right answer exists. This is a flawed schema that contributes to the anxiety associated with decision making.
- Being certain of a decision prior to making it. Due to our complexity as humans, this is virtually impossible. We can never be 100% sure of any outcome.

What can be done to assist decision making?

- Clearly define the existing problem.
- Brainstorm options.
- Examine the pros and cons associated with each choice.
- Utilize your feelings and intuition, as well as knowledge to finalize the decision.



In this tutorial, you learned about the **decision-making** process and how schemas impact that process.

Schemas allow us to shape and frame up the way we see the world, so we can follow an orderly

decision-making process. We react to new information by either assimilating that information into an existing schema we have or accommodating the schema and adjusting it to address the new information.

A strong decision-making process involves clearly defining the problem, brainstorming options, assessing the pros and cons of the options, then using knowledge and intuitions to finalize a decision.

Good luck in your learning!

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