

# DECISIONS, DECISIONS, DECISIONS...

Advice on making good decisions

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## DO I NEED TO MAKE A DECISION?

Every day we make decisions. Some are easier (Do I drink a glass of water or not?); others are more complex (Am I going to break up with my partner or not?).

We spend our lives wanting everything to be great, to avoid bad feelings, and to have nothing bad happen to us, but the truth is that this is practically impossible. After all, we don't know what tomorrow will bring.

## WHAT MAKES A GOOD DECISION?

A decision depends on:  
paying attention  
analyzing available information  
remembering what we learned  
setting goals  
having a clear mind  
a process of deliberation  
considering how we feel

We must combine our personal qualities with information about our surroundings.

Social variables influence, directly and indirectly, personal decisions and, conversely, personal characteristics influence how one decides and which option is chosen.



***"I have no special talent, I'm just passionately curious."***

Albert Einstein

## DID YOU KNOW THAT...

... Most of the time we are led to decide what other people want. For example:

When we don't have all the information needed

When music is played in supermarkets to slow us down

When white paint is used to evoke purity and perfection

When famous people lead us to imitate them

When we are told exactly what we want to hear

When we are promised easy success

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### Useful contacts:

Police | www.psp.pt  
Health services | 24h Health Help line (808 24 24 24) | www.saude24.pt  
Polytechnic of Leiria | www.ipleiria.pt

## WE ARE INFLUENCED BY BIAS (examples)

Possession Effect: an object or idea that belongs to someone is always better than other things.

Salience effect: when one pays more attention to the most obvious and striking aspects of a piece of information.

Negativity bias: in the face of both positive and negative information,

more weight is given to the negative information.

Choice supportive bias: Once a choice has been made, people tend not to see the defects associated with their choice, in an attempt to not undermine the choice made.

Ambiguity effect: In a situation with a known outcome and another with a high

level of ambiguity, people choose the safe option.

Primacy effect: tendency to give primacy to the first information received from a varied list of elements.

Confirmation bias: a tendency to prefer information that confirms what is believed to be true.

## AM I CAPABLE OF MAKING DECISIONS?

Try to answer these true or false questions:

1. I tend to compare my decisions with what I think others would do.
2. I don't think I'm able to make difficult decisions.
3. I don't like to ask for opinions.
4. I don't think that the way a problem is presented will influence the decision I must make.
5. I do not think I'm influenced in any way in the decisions I make.
6. I am afraid to make decisions.
7. I don't often think about the consequences of my decisions.
8. I prefer to avoid having feelings when I am deciding.

## WHEN DO YOU KNOW THE DECISION WAS A GOOD ONE?

In fact, we will never know.

Some people think that the decision should be evaluated by its consequences, but this is not evaluating the decision: it is evaluating the results.

We should consider the moment we decided and think:

Am I satisfied with the decision I made?

Regardless of the results, am I sure I made the best decision possible?

Would I reach the decision in the same way again?

Do I feel guilty about the decision I made?

Could I have made a different decision?

Have I considered all the important aspects of the decision?

## AM I CAPABLE OF MAKING DECISIONS?

If you answered "true" to more than 6 statements, unfortunately you're not very good at making decisions.

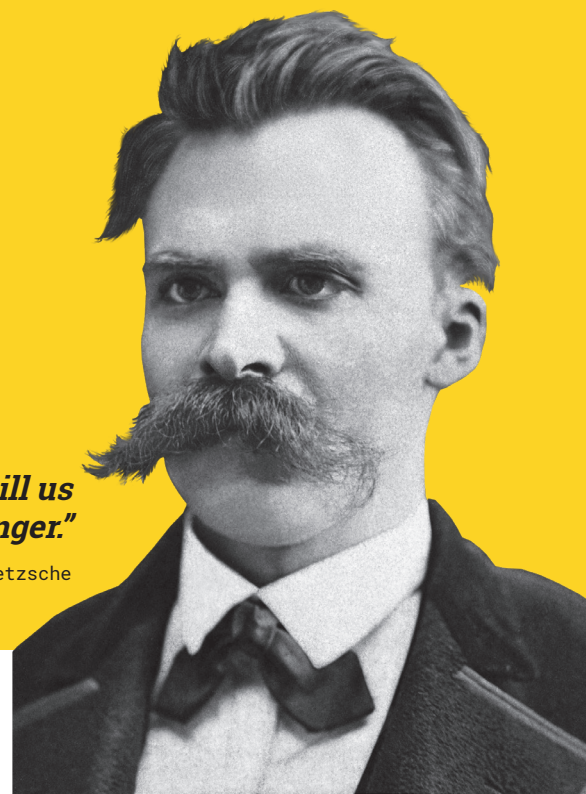
If you answered "true" to between 3 and 5 statements, you're capable of making good decisions, but it's still possible to improve.

If you answered "true" to 2 or fewer statements, then congratulations: you are able to make tough decisions. Still, try to improve in other respects.

Decision-making becomes more complex in proportion to the weight of responsibility and the extent of the consequences. We must accept reality and make our decisions. We should never leave the governing of our lives to someone else.

***"What doesn't kill us makes us stronger."***

Friedrich Nietzsche



## STEPS TO MAKE A DECISION

The following is a step-by-step decision-making procedure, that may serve as a useful guide; however, each person must consider what process makes the most sense in their case.

The steps are:

1. Identify the decision to be made
2. Gather information about the decision
3. Outline the options
4. Define standards or criteria to evaluate the decision
5. Score the alternatives by using the standards
6. Make the decision
7. Act on the decision
8. Reassess the decision and consider what you learned from it



***"The bravest act is still thinking for yourself."***

Coco Chanel

## IN ORDER TO MAKE A GOOD DECISION ...

We must ask who, how, when, why, and what.

Do not accept everything that is said as truth: beware of fake news and people who claim to know everything.

Ask for advice from people you trust

When in doubt, opt for the decision that seems to be 50% + 1 right. You'll never be sure.

Go back if and when necessary.

Be curious and always seek to learn more.

SSS can help you with:

psychological support

pedagogical support

vocational guidance

training in time management, study methods, presentation of work/projects, etc.

student support and integration into school and the community

sharing of information and activities or your interests

SSS has consultation offices in each of the IPLeiria campuses and a team of 3 specialized psychologists

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