

5 Distinctives Of Decisions

1. Decisions are interrelated

A decision has a history; that is, it is related to a past and to a future. Something has occurred prior to the decision that related to it and events will occur in the future as a result. Think of a row of dominoes standing on end. When the first domino is knocked over, the entire row falls in orderly succession. Decisions work in a similar way; once a decision is made, it sets in motion a chain reaction of further decisions.

2. Making a choice involves risk

“A decision has a history; that is, it is related to a past and to a future.”

There is no way of knowing for sure how a decision will turn out. Although we may base the decision on all the facts available and obtain the best of advice, there is still the possibility that the results will not be what we anticipated.

That’s how most of our decisions are made — the outcome cannot always be predicted. The risks involved are often the reasons people find it very difficult to make decisions, particularly big ones.

3. Decisions cause change

Although it is true that some decisions may not involve change, decisions that require the use of resources in order to be carried out call for change.

Decisions often require one to do things differently. If one wants to lose weight, it means a change in eating habits and regular exercise. A change in attitude usually precedes the actual decision.

Often the decision cannot be made until a change in attitude occurs that will permit one to accept the results of the decision. Many people who have stopped smoking will testify to this. The decision to stop had to be preceded by a change in attitude regarding the habit, a change that finally permitted the smoker to say, “Yes, I want to stop.”

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4. Decisions require commitment

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A commitment is a pledge we make to another person or to ourselves. This means that we make an agreement to do something or to take some course of action. It further implies that we will accept the results of what we do as well as the conditions under

which we must act. Commitment, therefore, is necessary.

When the whole notion of commitment is related to decision-making, two commitments are involved:

- a) the primary commitment to a goal; and
- b) the commitment to carry out the decision and accept the results.

Consider first the matter of goals. Without a serious and determined commitment, one often lacks the incentive and courage to make major decisions related to the goal and to follow through on them. Without a serious commitment to one’s goal, the drastic attitude and behavior changes which are sometimes needed will hinder you at every turn.

Consider the commitment involved in carrying out a decision and accepting the results. More often than not, a decision, in order to be acted upon, calls for a course of action that requires work of some kind, that alters habits, or that limits the use of certain resources (like your money). In other words, a decision makes demands that require self-discipline. Unless there is a firm commitment to

the decision, you might be tempted to throw in the towel—to give up rather than follow through. If you are involved in a self-improvement program, you must

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accept the pattern of change necessary to achieve your goal; you must be committed to your course of action.

5. Decisions involve cost

The cost of a decision may be measured in terms of money, but not necessarily. The cost may also be measured by what has to be given up as a result of making the decision, sometimes referred to as its opportunity cost. For some people, the cost of the

decision to lose weight can be measured in terms of what they can no longer eat. If one needs a second job, the cost may mean less free time for social activities.

With financial decisions, the cost in dollars and cents can be easily recognized. For families, sometimes the children will need dental work and braces. When making the decision to finance the dental work, families face the prospect of having to live on thousands of dollars less over the next 3 or 4 years. Orthodontia is usually worth the cost, however.

For the family hoping to buy their dream house, the decision is more complex and the cost far greater, because it will be felt for many years to come. After all, there is just so much money and, when some of it is used for one thing, there will be less to use for other things. This cost of the financial decision is often overlooked and yet, it is what can make the decision a difficult one to accept and to live with.