



## THE PAINFUL DECISIONS OF MICE AND MEN

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No, this is not about mice making decisions, although such creatures often have to decide on whether to take that oh-so-delectable-looking chunk of cheese laid out on that oh-so-harmless-looking contraption we humans call a mousetrap. We humans are often in such situations: not knowing whether to take it or leave it and suffer the consequences no matter what decision we make.

Decision making in the board room is often fast and definitive, with no prisoners taken and all casualties accounted for. The trend of business is cruel, without let up. Those who slow down will easily get left behind or even worse, get run over. This is why businessmen have to attend all those conventions and seminars and all manner of speeches and conferences—they do not wish to be the ones left out in the cold.

And then there's the fact that the decisions they have to make entail sacrifices, not necessarily on their part. Consider those who get laid off in the name of streamlining, downsizing and redundancy. Those are just colorful euphemisms leading to one single thing: retrenchment or laying off. Companies which find their manpower too large to be supported by how much they actually make in profits have no other choice but to start the process of letting employees go. Such companies hire consultants with fat fees to carry out the process of pointing to which departments have to be downsized, totally axed or absorbed by other business areas. Younger blood is also brought in, because such people have less demands and more productive years ahead of them. The much older ones who have been in service for more than half of their lives have to leave their fat paychecks, bonuses and incentives behind. This is just one painful decision that company heads have to make.

What of the decision whether to pull the plug on a relative's survival apparatus? How many people have been asked by their loved ones' doctors to decide if the relative has to continue using the respirator, the life support system that keeps the loved one alive, but barely so? When a doctor says that a relative is brain dead, it's a toss-up between letting the loved one survive longer on the life support system or simply letting the loved one be taken by his Maker. Such kind of survival is not real living with the quality of life that the brain dead loved one would probably prefer. But who will ever find it easy to actually pull the plug?

There are many more such case scenarios that we humans have to face. One write-up may not be even remotely enough to outline the pain of the decision making process involved in such situations. What we can only do, perhaps, is to ask for greater strength for those who are actually in those situations. Be thankful we're not.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Have you ever made a painful decision in life? Describe the situation in class.
2. Why is it never easy to decide on life support system cases?
3. What are your beliefs on keeping people under life support?
4. If you owned a company and you were advised to downsize, how will you go about it?
5. If you worked for a company that was in the process of downsizing, how would you deal with the situation?