

IDEAS 28

**International Online Teachers Society
Debate
Educational Materials For
Advance and Upper Intermediate
Students**



**International Online Teachers Society
Publishing Committee**



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THE 28TH INTERNATIONAL ONLINE TEACHERS SOCIETY ESSAY CONTEST

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DECISIONS, DECISIONS

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We often have to face decision-making numerous times in our individual lives. Nobody escapes making decisions—it is a significant component of existence. If you have never made a decision even once, you are most likely not of this earth.

It is not only corporate bosses who have the sole responsibility of making decisions. Housewives decide what to prepare for family meals or how to budget what their husbands make. Children decide to wake up at the proper time to get ready for school. Even our pets decide whether they like what we feed them or not by turning away when they don't and eating with gusto when they do. Simply put, no one, no living thing lives life without making decisions.

As humans, we are faced with a greater number of decisions than other living beings have to make. This very fact requires a greater sensibility to whatever decisions we make. Our options may be so great in number that the conscious decision we arrive at needs much mulching over to be considered an informed and wise one. Or the options could be so few that the final choice may not seem to be what we really desire at all. However else our options are outlined before us, we still need to choose; it is upon us to make a decision.

There are no surefire formulas for arriving at the best decisions. Sometimes, decisions are arrived at based on similar circumstances as other situations have been. Sometimes, the decisions work simply because of good fortune. In some instances, decisions actually work because of underground maneuvering. In others still, decisions work because they happen to be the exact fit for the actual problem at hand. Or of strange circumstance are situations where no manner of decision-making can simply help put everything to rest. Such Gordian knots have no solutions, the damned-if-you-do and damned-if-you-don't paradoxes of this world.

However, we must not shun decision-making. This is because of the simple fact that it makes us what we truly are: consciously-thinking humans. The decisions we make may not find approval from other people, might be utterly unpopular, might be the most difficult ones we ever have to make. Yet they are still ours to make, ours to have responsibility for, ours to either get blamed for or be glorified because of.

No matter how our decisions turn out, we should only look back knowing that we made them with full knowledge and information. Making decisions is almost always like casting the dice; there's just no going back once it is done. What we can do is to prepare ourselves for the consequences—expect the best and prepare for the worst. It's not going to be easy, but somebody's got to do it.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What are your thoughts on decision making?
2. What decisions do you often have to make?
3. Talk about the time when you had to decide on your college degree. What were the surrounding circumstances of that particular decision?
4. Was there ever an instance when you regretted a decision you had made? What happened at the time?
5. Do you consider yourself a wise decision-maker? Why or why not?



LIVING WITH AND BY THE FOUR-WAY TEST

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How often have we found ourselves at a crossroads and been at a total loss as to which path to take? You know, those moments of indecision where thinking about the options alone is painful enough, let alone making a real choice? It can be a rather losing proposition to make a hasty decision, but one will only stand to lose more if a decision is not made as soon as possible.

Those who call the shots in their own business companies often have to deal with such situations. They train themselves to make split-second decisions, and they also work on their decision-making skills after careful study. Many of them are visionaries, seemingly able to foresee the future and thus capable of making perfect, worry-free decisions.

For ordinary mortals like us, although the decisions we make are not considered earthshaking like those of say, presidential magnitude decisions, we still are faced with our own moments of decision-making. Because, whether we like it or not, we human beings have been gifted with intellect, and with such a gift comes the decision/s on how to use it.

The moment of decision is the moment of truth. This is why many are so scared of making decisions. We all subscribe to the saying, "Look before you leap." We turn things over and over until we get a semblance of order, not chaos. When we are faced with split-second decision making, we go by the lesser evil. Unfortunately, there are those who find that when they are constantly hung up with looking first before taking the leap, they never actually make the jump. Too scared, too inhibited, too careful. When one is thus, he never finds out what could be on the other side.

However, this doesn't mean that we should be gung-ho about things all the time. We shouldn't really be bullheaded and careless every time. What we need to do is find a balance between our options. Easier said than done, but others seem to have a certain knack for it, corporate executives most especially.

When making a decision, go by the four-way test of Rotarians: Is it the truth?; Is it fair to all concerned?; Will it bring goodwill and better friendships?; and, Will it be beneficial to all concerned? (<http://www.thefourwaytest.com/>) If one of those questions merits a NO answer, we had better reconsider our decision.

There are those who might argue that there are many decisions that are necessary to make but which have not just one but two to four NO answers to them. In such cases, the rebound is probably a long way away, or just around the corner. The choice is still whether we are ready to accept the outcome or not.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Why do people often find decision-making a great bother?
2. Have you ever been in an indecisive situation? What happened?
3. What will probably make decision-making easier?
4. Is there anyone you admire for being a wise decision maker? Talk about this person in class.
5. Is there anything you currently have to decide on? What are your options? What will your choice probably be?



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?



PARENTAL DECISION-MAKING GUIDANCE

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Parents are the first figures to which children look up in the process of making decisions. The responsibilities are great for parents, since they have to show temperance and sensibility at the same time as they must show wisdom. It is therefore essential for us parents to try never to make hasty decisions, especially those that are in direct path to our children's welfare and well-being.

I, for one, have made countless decisions singlehandedly as a widow. The calls have been invariably tough and easy, with a great many requiring much teeth-gnashing and hair pulling—which is why I have never grown my hair long after my husband died. It makes for less maintenance and less pulling traction. Oh, but the white hairs have been obstinate though, growing incessantly greater in number with every decision I make, haha.

With a significant number of the decisions I have made, I have always relied on my beloved mother and my late father for guidance. They are, after all, the ones who keep our clan together despite the odds and in the best of times. This speaks greatly of their unassailable wisdom and strength from which I derive my own. Thank God for our parents.

My siblings have been nothing short of wonderful, too. During those innumerable times when I have needed assurance and strong support, they have always been there. Helping me in countless ways and in situations that go beyond the merely financial, my sisters and one and only brother have been present, never leaving me behind. They too have their own decision-making moments, numerous also. But they keep an eye out for me, knowing that comforting words of assurance always go a long way.

It is my children, however, who have kept me in the right path of making decisions. Knowing that the choices I make in life ride a lot on my children's well-being has kept me on an even keel, and therefore on both a sensitive and a sensible level of decision-making. As a parent, the decisions I have been making have always been for my beloved children. I think that's what makes decision-making both easier and more difficult for parents--the fact that you're doing it not for your own good but for the good of your family. This imbues the decision-making process with the qualities of irreversibility and finality, I believe.

As parents, we must always take into consideration the value and the impact of the decisions we make, especially to the web of the family. Strike a balance between what is just and what is inherently good. If this is quite difficult, you can always rely on the strength of the family to help your decision-making along. There's wisdom, safety and comfort in numbers, after all.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Talk about how you learned decision-making from your parents.
2. Why is it both easy and difficult to make decisions as a parent?
3. How should parents make decisions that concern the family?
4. What would you do if your parents' decision was in complete opposition to what you wanted?
5. Have you always submitted yourself to parental authority? When are the times you feel you don't need to do this? When are the times you feel you should?



DECISION: MAKING UP YOUR MIND

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I was thinking about the subject on what to write when I suddenly remembered a famous saying. The famous and well known, Plato, once said "A good decision is based on knowledge and not on numbers". It was during high school when my Social Studies teacher told us to do a brainstorming activity using a guided pattern as part of her teaching strategy. I could clearly recall what I have shared with the group that a practical decision is more likely to make with no numerical knowledge than with numbers. I also emphasized that there's no such thing as a good decision. It's because numbers could be considered a subset of knowledge. For example, if you could quantify the value of choosing, for example, the right person to marry to share your happiness in life, then numbers could be invaluable in the procurement of a good decision. The problem lay with the fact that there's no mathematical formula available for calculating the acquisition of happiness, therefore, knowledge and intuition must be employed. However, it could have been a biased opinion if I would not have understood other ideas and concepts of my classmates. A viewpoint, on the other side, a person is much more likely to make a logical decision with numbers than non-numerical knowledge and he can choose to value the essence of logic over practical matters.

As years have gone by, decision making was always a part of me and it is still until as of this writing. Our cognitive skills are always at stake to arrive a specific decision, if not an accurate one. I cannot understand that sometimes decision simply means a judgment. It may be a quick conclusion or people regard a notion "you jumped to a conclusion". This hasty finding is considered useless. It's wrong, inaccurate and no sense at all. Other people will disagree simply because it was not a good decision. In this way, we feel regret. We should remember that every decision making process produces a final result, a final outcome and this will lead into action. It is a fact that we should be very careful in analyzing both sides. One side maybe favorable and the other one is unfavorable. You halt into a fifty-fifty situation and you consider these questions and ask yourself "Which is more important? Which is better? Which is more appropriate?" The ability to decide is a great factor to think about. You should have sufficient knowledge to weigh things in all aspects. According to Jim Nightingale, author of Think Smart-Act Smart, "we simply decide without thinking much about the decision process." It means to say that, most decisions are made unconsciously. In addition to his viewpoint, he explained that in a controlled environment, such as a classroom, instructors encourage students to weigh pros and cons before making a decision. However in the real world, most of our decisions are made unconsciously in our mind because frankly, it would take too much time to sit down and list the pros and cons of each decision we must make on a daily basis.

Whatever ways that we have to come up a decision are key factors and essentials to reach a good and wise decision. We need them in order to attain a partial judgment. A well decision is a product of careful and intellectual analysis. It is the beat of our hearts and the control of our minds that provide the final conclusion. We need time to give a result. It is not a one-step process to understand the whole scenario. How do you make up your mind to give the final verdict in a certain situation is what decision calls for a reliable and truthful result!

Questions for discussion:

1. What do you mean by "a good decision"? Use your own ideas/opinions.
2. Why do we need to have a careful analysis before giving a decision?
3. How does decision making affect your life?
4. Why is decision making important?
5. Explain this maxim by Plato: "A good decision is based on knowledge and not on numbers".



MAKING RIGHT DECISIONS

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In this God-given life we are in, we always combat the thought of wandering if we are making the right decisions in our everyday dealings in life? Questions arise such as, "Are you stuck in circles of solving the same problem over and over again, or are we being rational in solving our problems to come up with a decision? Sometimes we come into a realization that we have reacted to a decision that seems to have worked before when we are confronted with a problem, only to find out that this situation has recurred a dozen of times already. There are a lot of instances wherein people worry too much about what to do to the point of wreaking havoc with your mental health. When you reach this point, it seems that you are not really up to making a decision and consequently it makes a mess out your life.

At times people tend to be emotional to a point that their decisions are being affected. There are instances when we try to rationalize our emotions and come up with a dodgy decision. To be able to come up with the right decision, we have to consider and learn from our past experiences, that is, according to the different decisions that we have already made. Therefore, this allows us not to commit the same mistakes that we had in the past. Actually, it is very probable that you may never know how to make the right decision or if what you just decided on is really the absolute right decision. At the end, you were still happy about that decision of yours. Thus, ambiguous situation comes about and you end up having a bad decision, but you are still at the brink of wanting certainty. Whereas, you know pretty well that there is no reason or that you don't have a right for you to expect something good to happen.

Here is the twist, some researches show that you would be better off not to think about whatever right decisions to make. For that matter, when decision making gets tough, don't dither, but instead trust your gut instincts. As a matter of fact, researches shows that snap decisions prove to be better than endless pedantic pondering. Sometimes you are at your best when you are given no time to linger and you are forced to rely on your subconscious in order for you to arrive at a right decision. Almost always your conscious logical brain does not always make the logical decisions.

Then when we think too much about a decision to make, it leaves us to be even worst than ever. Therefore we should also trust our human instinct, don't you or would you want to give it then a try. Do not brood too much about a problem or whatever troubles you. Trust your instinct to lead you to make a right decision.

Questions for discussion:

1. Do you ponder for a long time thinking of whatever decision you have to make? Why?
2. Do you trust your instinct? How?
3. Can you cite a situation wherein you played deaf to all the advices you have received and just relied on your instinct? Explain your answer.
4. How can you come up with a clear decision and make a right one?
5. Are you always confronted with having a bad decision or a good one? Justify your answer.



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