



## Episode 65: How to Make Decisions More Confidently

Welcome to In the Right Direction podcast, where we believe you get to choose what's on your plate, you can manage the overwhelm, and that change is possible. I'm your host, Deb Elbaum, and I'm here to share insights and strategies to increase your happiness, one baby step at a time. Let's dive in.

Hi everyone, it's Deb. Today, let's talk about making decisions – and how to make challenging decisions more confidently, easily, and with more peace of mind.

Every day brings new choices. We choose small things, like what to have for breakfast. We think about big choices, like when to buy a new car, or which car to buy.

Our brains are tasked with choices all the time. Some decisions are easy. For breakfast most days, I choose oatmeal. Some decisions weigh more heavily on our mind. For me, one decision that was hard to make was when to buy a new car.

I had been driving my minivan for 13 years. I loved that car, and I knew it was time to start thinking about getting a new one. For months, my husband and kids kept asking me, when are you going to get a new car?

It was one of those decisions that took up a lot of brain space and made me anxious to think about.

My Toyota Sienna was a faithful companion. Together, we brought my kids to summer camps and moved them into college dorm rooms. It took our family on road trips to Canada, Washington DC, and Niagara Falls. It was my beach car – always carrying my beach chairs, towels, flip flops, and a bathing suit so I would be ready for the beach anytime, anywhere.

Giving up this car was a hard decision for me, because it still drove fine. Sure, one sliding door didn't work anymore and the other needed to be manually locked from the inside. But it drove me around to where I wanted to go. For months, this decision ping ponged back and forth in my brain – do I buy a new car? Do I get another minivan? If not, what do I get?

Decisions where there's no clear answer can be hard. They keep our brains stuck in a loop. They take up more brain space than we'd like. And they might take up more of our thinking time than we'd like. We start researching options and get stuck in internet rabbit holes. Sometimes, they take over our brain when we're trying to sleep.

As a neuroscience coach, my role is to help people move forward in their lives with more clarity, confidence, and purpose. Part of that involves having a way to make decisions more easily and clearly. This is where a structured approach can help.

Having a clear way to approach, make, and move forward from big decisions can help us feel calmer as we navigate the ups and downs of life.

Today's approach helps us feel calmer because it's a way to connect to and honor what's most important to us. When we know that the life we're creating is one that reflects what's most important to us, we're living an intentional life.

Here's a big idea I share with clients.

For many of the important decisions we make, it's often that there's not a right or wrong answer. That's what makes these decisions hard. In these cases, if we want to make a decision with more confidence and peace of mind, we need to anchor the decision in what we care about and in what's important to us. In other words, we want to ground our decisions in our values, purpose, and priorities.

Our values are our core principles that we care about the most.

Our purpose is what we're here to do; what fulfills us.

Our priorities are the things that are most important considerations to be met at this time in our lives.

To make big decisions, we can run them through the framework of values, purpose, and priorities.

To do this, we first need to reflect and get clear what our values, purpose, and priorities are.

As we think through the values, purpose, and priorities a decision lines up with, it can be helpful to start with the tactical priorities.

For example, some clients come to coaching when they're considering looking for a new job. The questions they're wrestling with are questions like: Do I look for a new job? Where? Doing the same thing or something different?

This can be a weighty decision – and if there's no pressing need – it's often one with no right or wrong answer. So we start by talking about what's most important to them.

It's often easiest to start with their priorities. I ask, Given this stage of life, what are your tactical needs? What are the financial considerations? Geographic considerations? Other life considerations? Getting clear on your priorities helps to guide the thinking that comes next.

We then discuss values. Let's talk about the concept of values for a moment. We all have values – we have personal values, professional values, and societal values. At different times in our life, certain values want to be honored most. The professional values you might have when you started your career might be different than the ones you have today.

When we make decisions that honor our core values and when we see those core values reflected in our daily life, it feels good. Living our values helps us feel excited for our days, knowing that we're being true to who we are. It's also a way to live our purpose.

When faced with a big decision, it's an opportunity to ask yourself, Which values would choice A honor? Which values would choice B honor? Often, different decisions honor different values. That's fine, and it's helpful because it's a great reminder that in life, there's often no one right choice. That can be reassuring and comforting.

The third piece of our framework for making decisions is clarifying our purpose.

In other words, what do we want and how much do we want it? Living intentionally means living in a way that honors a purpose of ours. Different things in our life feel purposeful, and ideally we want important decisions to have a purpose behind them. This purpose might be personal, or it might be organizational.

As a leader, when it comes to making a decision, grounding the decision in the organization's purpose and mission is a way to make decisions with more clarity and confidence. When my leader clients talk about the big decisions they're facing – like hiring, scaling back, or implementing new initiatives – connecting it back to the company's purpose and goals allows them to make the decisions more easily and communicate them more confidently.

In life and in work, we want to feel like we're moving forward. We want to know that we're making things happen, we're achieving goals, and that we're giving ourselves permission to experience the full range of being human. Making decisions efficiently and confidently is how that happens.

Let's bring this to you.

As you think about your life, bring to mind a big decision that you've been wanting to move forward.

List your different choices. Then for each choice, write down the values, purpose, and priorities that choice would honor.

As you do this, notice your thinking. Maybe there's a clear choice that needs to be made at this time. Maybe it's a choice that can wait? Or maybe both choices are fine – and you can be reassured that you'll be honoring things that are important to you either way.

For me and my car decision, what I realized is that it was time to buy a new car. I wanted to honor my value of ease with working car doors and locks. I also wanted to honor the value of recognizing and appreciating that this was a new chapter of my life. With adult children, I was ready for a car that was a bit smaller and better for the environment. Rest assured, though, when I bought my new car, I still made sure it had enough trunk space to always carry my beach chair, towel, and bathing suit.

Thank you so much for listening and being part of my community. If you want help thinking through the important and big decisions on your mind, please reach out. Email me at [deb@debelbaum.com](mailto:deb@debelbaum.com) or go to my website [debelbaum.com](http://debelbaum.com) to schedule a consult. I look forward to it. I'm here to help you create your best self at home and at work, so that you're confident you're moving in the right direction for you.

Until next time!