

MAX PARADOX

PROBLEM? RELAX. YOU'VE GOT THIS!

Self-Help with a Sense of Humor ;)

I Can't Make a Decision

**How to Stop Analyzing Five Options
Until None of Them Makes Sense**



**We have a problem. Relax. We can solve it—
and have a laugh along the way.**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRO	1
Chapter 1 - You Are Not Bad at Decisions.....	10
Chapter 2 - Five Good Options Are Worse Than Two.....	22
Chapter 3 - More Information Is Not More Clarity.....	36
Chapter 4 - You Are Trying to Predict a Future That Has Not Happened	50
Chapter 5 - Stop Negotiating With Every Criteria.....	66
Chapter 6 - Other People Are Making Your Decision Worse	82
Chapter 7 - Stop Trying to Feel Certain First.....	99
Chapter 8 - Stop Reopening Decisions You Already Made	114
Chapter 9 - Decide What Matters Before You Compare	131
Chapter 10 - Put a Deadline on the Decision	149
Chapter 11 - Use Defaults So You Stop Deciding From Scratch	167
Chapter 12 - Decide With Experiments, Not Prophecies ...	184
Chapter 13 - Good Enough Is a Decision Strategy	203
Chapter 14 - Put the Whole Decision on One Page	220
Chapter 15 - What If You Choose and It Still Feels Wrong?	239
Chapter 16 - What to Do When Your Brain Is Too Tired to Decide.....	256
Chapter 17 - What If the Method Stops Working?	275
Chapter 18 - Learn to Recognize the Spiral Earlier	295

Chapter 19 - Build a Decision System You Can Actually Keep	313
Chapter 20 - Choose, Then Go Live With the Choice	332

INTRO

You are standing in front of a shelf holding four nearly identical bottles of olive oil.

One is organic. One is “cold pressed.” One has a picture of an Italian farmhouse that may or may not exist. One costs three dollars more and promises a “peppery finish,” which sounds less like food and more like something that happens during a difficult divorce.

You pick up the first bottle.

Seems fine.

Then the second.

Also fine.

You read the labels. You compare the sizes. You calculate the price per ounce even though you have never once gone home and congratulated yourself on achieving superior olive-oil economics. Then you notice a fifth bottle on the bottom shelf.

Excellent.

The situation has expanded.

Twelve minutes later, you are still standing there while normal people walk past you, choose an oil using a mysterious technique known as “taking one,” and continue with their lives. You, meanwhile, have somehow turned salad dressing into a strategic procurement decision.

Eventually, you buy the bottle you picked up first.

This is not really about olive oil.

It is about what happens when your brain treats every decision as if a poor choice could permanently damage the timeline.

Should you take this job or stay where you are? Buy the cheaper laptop or the faster one? Go to Spain or Portugal? Pick the blue couch or the gray couch? Order the chicken or the salmon? Send the message now or tomorrow morning? Start with the gym, running, swimming, Pilates, or the workout app that promises visible abs in the amount of time it currently takes you to find your charging cable?

At first, having options feels good. Options mean freedom. Flexibility. Control.

Then option number four enters the room.

Suddenly freedom has paperwork.

You begin comparing. You make a list of pros and cons. Then you realize some pros are more important than other pros, so you create categories. Then you assign scores. Then you question whether your scoring system is objective enough.

At some point, you are no longer choosing a vacation.

You are running Deloitte.

The frustrating part is that all this analysis often feels responsible. Thoughtful people consider consequences. Sensible people do research. Adults should not make every decision by pointing randomly at things and shouting, "That one!"

True.

But there is a point at which thinking stops improving the decision and starts destroying your ability to make one.

The extra review does not produce clarity. It produces new doubts.

You find one hotel with a perfect location but mediocre breakfast reviews. Another has excellent breakfast but is twelve minutes farther from the center. A third is cheaper, except the room looks approximately the size of a large wardrobe. The fourth has a rooftop pool. The fifth has free cancellation.

Now you cannot remember what you actually wanted from the trip.

You wanted four quiet days somewhere warm.

Forty-five browser tabs later, you are investigating whether Room 307 gets enough afternoon sunlight in October.

This is how decision paralysis works. Your brain begins with a sensible goal: avoid making a bad choice. Unfortunately, it often tries to achieve that goal by demanding something life rarely provides—certainty.

Not a reasonable level of confidence.

Certainty.

The perfect job, with good pay, interesting work, a short commute, excellent management, guaranteed promotion, zero annoying meetings, friendly coworkers, and a coffee machine that does not produce a substance with the emotional atmosphere of an industrial accident.

The perfect apartment must be affordable, large, quiet, central, bright, renovated, near public transit, surrounded by trees, far from traffic, and somehow located five minutes from everything.

The perfect decision must have all the advantages and none of the trade-offs.

This creates a small problem.

Perfect decisions are usually available immediately after perfect weather, perfect relationships, and printer software that installs correctly on the first attempt.

Most real choices involve uncertainty. More importantly, most real choices involve sacrifice. Choosing one thing often means giving up another thing that was also pretty good.

That is where many people get stuck.

Not because they cannot see a good option.

Because choosing it means officially abandoning the other good options.

You pick Apartment A, and now Apartment B will forever remain the imaginary apartment with better light, nicer neighbors, lower utility bills, and possibly a golden retriever living next door. You accept Job A, and Job B becomes the mystical career path where the boss respected your boundaries and quarterly bonuses fell gently from the ceiling.

The option you did not choose remains flawless because reality never got the chance to ruin it.

Very convenient.

So you keep comparing.

You ask friends. Then you ask different friends because the first friends gave answers you did not like. You read reviews. You watch videos. You search Reddit. You search Reddit again using slightly different wording, because perhaps the internet has been withholding the decisive comment until you phrase the question correctly.

"Best laptop for normal use."

No.

"Best laptop for normal use 2026."

Still unclear.

"Best laptop for normal use 2026 actually worth it honest."

There we go. Surely civilization has solved it now.

Except additional information often creates additional variables. Battery life matters. Weight matters. Screen quality matters. Ports matter. Repairability matters. Price matters. Apparently fan noise matters. Someone online says the keyboard has "unpleasant key travel," a phrase you had never heard before and will now think about every time you type for the next seven years.

Research was supposed to make the decision easier.

Instead, you have unlocked side quests.

This book is about getting out of that loop without becoming reckless.

I am not going to tell you to "trust your gut" and wander through life making major financial decisions because your breakfast felt spiritually aligned. I am also not going to give you a forty-seven-step decision matrix requiring three colored markers, a spreadsheet, and a weekend retreat.

You already have enough analysis.

What you need is a better stopping point.

You need to know which decisions deserve serious thought and which ones deserve seven minutes. You need to know how to narrow options before comparison turns into competitive suffering. You need a way to separate important

criteria from criteria your brain invented because it got bored halfway through the process.

You also need to become more comfortable with one deeply irritating fact:

A good decision can still produce a bad outcome.

And a bad decision can occasionally produce a good one.

You can carefully choose a restaurant with 4.8 stars and still receive pasta that appears to have been emotionally abandoned in the kitchen. You can take a job after excellent interviews and discover three months later that your manager communicates exclusively through mysterious calendar invitations.

We make decisions using the information available now.

We do not control the entire future afterward.

That distinction matters because many chronic overthinkers are not really trying to choose well. They are trying to guarantee that they will never regret the choice.

That is a different project.

And unfortunately, the warranty department is closed.

Throughout this book, we are going to make decisions smaller, clearer, faster, and less emotionally theatrical. You will learn when more information helps, when it only adds noise, how to set decision rules before your brain starts negotiating with itself, how to stop reopening choices you already made, and how to deal with the fear that somewhere out there a slightly better option exists.

Because yes, sometimes there probably is.

There may be a slightly better laptop.

A slightly better hotel.

A slightly better restaurant.

A slightly better route to work.

There may even be a slightly better vacuum cleaner, though I refuse to believe humanity was placed on Earth to spend six evenings discovering which one.

The goal is not to make the mathematically perfect choice every time.

The goal is to make good decisions efficiently, live with reasonable uncertainty, and get back to the part of life where the decision is actually used.

Buy the olive oil.

Cook dinner.

Move on.

Chapter 1 - You Are Not Bad at Decisions

You open a restaurant menu and immediately locate something you would happily eat.

Then you keep reading.

The burger sounds good, but perhaps ordering a burger at a nice restaurant is wasting an opportunity. The salmon is healthier. The pasta looks excellent, although pasta for dinner feels strangely irresponsible because apparently adulthood now includes moral judgments about carbohydrates. There is also a seasonal special, and seasonal means limited, which means if you do not order it tonight you may spend the rest of your life wondering what could have been.

The server returns.

"Do you need another minute?"

"Yes, please."

You have already needed eleven.

The problem is not that you cannot make decisions. You make hundreds every day. You decide when to get up, what to wear, whether to answer a message, which route to take, what to put in your coffee, which email deserves immediate attention, and whether the laundry currently qualifies as "still wearable."

Most of those decisions happen with almost no drama.

Then certain choices trigger a completely different operating system.

Suddenly your brain wants evidence.

What if the pasta is disappointing? What if someone orders the salmon and it looks better? What if the seasonal special is