

Episode: Decision Making



With Natalie Bacon, JD, CFP[®], Certified Life Coach

Full Episode Transcript

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Welcome to the Design Your Dream Life podcast where it's all about designing your life on your terms and now your host, Natalie Bacon.

Hey, welcome back. I'm so excited to be here with you today. I cannot even tell you the energy that I feel right before I turn the mic on because I really feel like we are now friends. It's so fun. This is one of the favorite things that I do every week is just spending this time with you and today I'm so excited to talk with you about decision making.

I have practiced the skill set of decision making so much over the last few years that it has really become one of the best tools that I use to create my future from my future. Some examples of that would be deciding to quit my job as a lawyer, which I did and it was probably one of the hardest decisions that I ever made. And then deciding to quit my job as a certified financial planner and go all in on my online business, which was a hard decision.

But having quit law already, I felt a little bit better even though it was still a difficult choice to make, but I did these things and they happened exactly how I wanted them to happen and I have created my future from my future and I'm now living in the exact career that I want to and I'm 32 years old on my third career. For most people that I know, the decision making is the area that gets them hung up the most because they are spending so much time and I don't know.

Now confusion and I don't know, are these like indulgent emotions where it feels really, really useful to be confused because it feels like you are being responsible and making better decisions by kind of dwelling in that space. But confusion is actually totally indulgent and not useful. What I mean by this is that you're not actually deciding when you're living in, I don't know, you think you're deciding, but you're actually not.

You are just procrastinating and wasting time. And then what happens is like whenever you do make the decision you've, you make it in an instant. There's nothing like when you're deciding, you're not actually deciding, you're just like wasting that time and then you finally make the decision after a whole bunch of time has been wasted.

And what I want to encourage you to do is get really good at putting deadlines on your decisions, making those decisions, honoring those decisions to yourself and then taking action because that's how you get the results that you want. And so many of us are just not creating the results that we want when we totally have the ability to do it. And a big part of that is going to be making those decisions. People will tell me all the time, I don't know what my passion is. I don't know what I should blog about.

I don't know if there's room in the marketplace for me. I don't know what my niche should be. I don't know if I should move. I don't know if I should quit my job. How do I know if I should quit my job? How do I know what my passion is? How do I know what my calling is? Should I marry him? Should I break up with him? I don't know what I should do. I don't know what I want. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know.

And it is not useful to stay in this space. There is no right or wrong decision. That's what I teach and I really, really encourage you to adopt this because if you think about what makes something

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a wrong decision, it's simply you deciding it was wrong. It's kind of crazy, right? It's just a wrong decision.

If you decide it was wrong. So if you adopt this mindset that there is no right or wrong decision, then you will know that you're always, you know, making the best decision for you and it's happening the way that it's supposed to be happening. Instead of thinking that there are wrong decisions, just think that all of the decisions you making are leading you in the right direction and on the path of what your life is.

You also have your own back. When you adopt this mindset, when you say, okay, well there is no right or wrong decision, then every decision that you make is the right decision for your life. And when you do that and you have your own back, you'll continue to make decisions and you'll have confidence in the future so that you'll support the decisions that you do make and you'll keep creating from your future and know that your life is happening for you.

I love believing that everything is happening exactly how it was meant to happen. How do we know? Because it wouldn't have happened in that way if it wasn't supposed to. So keep this in mind as your practicing your decision making that there is no right or wrong decision something is only a wrong decision if you decide it to be so. So just don't do that.

Just decide that all of your decisions are the right decisions for you right now and you can always change course in the future. So why does this even matter? Why is it really important that you get good at decision making? I want to give you a few reasons that you maybe haven't thought of.

The first one is that living in confusion and I don't know wastes time, like it literally wastes time. So like I said, when you are deciding and you're living in, I don't know, and that confusion and you're saying I'm, you know, I'm thinking about it, I'm deciding you're literally just procrastinating and postponing the decision.

The actual decision is made in an instant. The thinking, the pondering, the humming and hawing, the going back and forth, that is not making the decision. That is the opposite. That is living in the confusion. So I do not want you to pretend that like the procrastination and that time is actually the decision making. You are making a decision in an instant.

So the longer you take to make decisions, the more time you're wasting. If you get really at decision making, you will save time. Another reason it's so important to get good at decision making is that decision making increases your actions, which gets you the results that you want. As soon as you make a decision, you can start taking action. When we say, I don't know, we are not taking action. A lot of times we're consuming. We are preparing, we are taking passive action, but we're not taking massive action to get the result we want.

Making a decision allows you to move forward, take action, and that is how you're going to create a new future from your future. Even if you take action that leads to something that you don't want, then you can make a new decision and take different action and get a different result.

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But staying in, I don't know, and not making decision doesn't allow you to get to that place so you never create the future that you want when you stay in confusion and I don't know.

The last reason that it's so important for you to get good at decision making is that it increases your confidence. Think about how you feel when you are confused. When you're hemming and hawing, when you're going back and forth, it's so disempowering and it kind of feels bad. You're just like blah. You know you're in limbo, but when you're decisive, when you make that decision, you feel empowered, you have increased confidence.

The way that you have to think to make decisions and have your own back on those decisions is the kind of thinking that generates the feeling of confidence. Remember your thoughts create your feelings. So when you're thinking in line with making these decisions, you're going to create that competence in yourself and when you're confident you'll make more decisions, which leads to more actions and more results in your life. As we're talking about the reasons why it's important for you to get good at decision making, I want you to really understand that decision making is a skill set.

It's not something that you're just born with and some people are just good decision makers. You can actually practice this and get good at decision making and I really, really want to encourage you to do that. If you want to create new results in your future, you may or may not find that it's easier or more difficult for you to make decisions in different areas of your life.

So if there is an area where it's really easy for you to make decisions, then think about how you think about that area and apply it to the area where you struggle. So for me, it's so easy for me to make decisions in my business and it's gotten increasingly easy for me to make decisions in other areas of my life because I understand the thought process and the feelings and then I understand the actions I need to take.

So I want to talk to you about the actual decision making process so that you can use this in your life and get really good at making decisions. The first thing that I want you to do for the decision making process is to identify what the actual decision is and your end goal. So what result do you want? Just be really clear about what that is.

So if you know the decision is whether to quit practicing law, you know your end goal might be you really want a fulfilling career, then I want you to give yourself a deadline to make the decision. Remember that decisions are made in an instant. So all of the time leading up to that decision is you just kind of procrastinating and putting off the decision because you actually make it in an instant.

Give yourself a reasonable timeline. And you know this might depend on the size of the decision. If it's, you know, talking about a vacation, it might be a few days. If you're talking about having kids or not having kids, it might be a month, but give yourself a deadline and then stick to it. Now, if this feels scary, you are doing it right and it's okay to be afraid. Nothing has gone wrong.

You are literally deciding your future. Of course it's going to be scary. Just don't make that fear mean anything. That's where we like get into trouble. We make it mean like, Oh, we're rushing

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the decision. No, you're not rushing the decision. You're actually taking action. You are going to make the decision. That is where the power is.

Next, I want you to make a list of all of the options you have. A lot of times we'll just go with two options. It's either a or B, but really I want you to think about all of the options that you have. There are so many different options. Make a list of all of them and I want you to ask yourself, would you choose this now if there was no history bias, for example, if you're deciding whether to leave your job and get a new job or going all on your business or whatever, re decide, would you retake this job?

I think this is so powerful because often we'll stay in things that we don't want to stay in just because we were in it in the past, just because there's history and that's a really bad reason to stay in something just because there's history, because you're literally just creating more of your future from your past instead of creating your future from your future. So ask yourself, would you choose this now? If there was no history bias.

Next, I want you to ask yourself some really, really useful questions. I'm going to go through them. If you did know, what would the answer be? Okay, so so many of us, right? We're in. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know if I should do this. I don't know if I should do that. I don't know if I should date him. I don't know if I should marry him. I don't know if I should divorce him. I don't know if I should get a new job. I don't know if I should start a business. I don't know if I should take this trip. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know.

If you did know, what would the answer be? It's so interesting that this question actually leads to an answer. It's really fascinating, so ask yourself, if I did know, what would the answer be? The next question I want you to ask yourself is, what is the best case scenario in both of your decisions? So assume that both options are amazing. If you stay in this job, it's amazing.

If you leave the job, it's amazing. So it's up to you to create an amazing life. It's not up to anyone else. It's not up to your employer, it's not up your spouse, it's not up to any of your circumstances. It's all up to you. So if you assume that you're going to make your life amazing and in both cases it's going to be amazing, which one would you choose? This is also really powerful to do.

Next I want you to ask yourself, what would you decide if it was 10 years from now and you're looking back, I love to do this in a letter form so you know me and 10 years is writing a letter to me now and giving advice. It's so fascinating how 10 years out me knows the answer and you can do the same thing for you know you at a hundred years old, reflecting back on your entire life, what would you have wanted you to do so fascinating that we already have that future wisdom. If you haven't actually done this exercise before, in theory it sounds like it would be great, but like it's so much greater than great.

It's powerful. I highly, highly recommend actually writing it out, you know, write a letter from your future self to yourself now about what the decision should be.

The next question that I want you to ask yourself is, what if failing didn't matter? Would you do it? What if you are either winning or learning? If you didn't attach so much meaning to failure,

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would you do it? So failure is just how you think about it. I remember when I failed the certified financial planner examination the first time, and this is after I was already a lawyer.

So you know, you can imagine everyone in my life being like, well you passed the bar. How did this happen? It was wonderful. Um, but I, I never like really felt like I failed. It's so fascinating. I'm so detached from failure in my professional life that I literally remember logging in and seeing the results of the CFP exam saying fail.

And like, I was like pissed. I was like, it should say like try again. Like I was like, I didn't fail. I just need to do it again. Like in my mind, I, I don't see any failures in business and my professional life as actual failures. Like I don't even like the word failure. So think about what you're making failure mean because like I talked about in the Aassive action podcast episode, if you stop attaching so much meaning to these obstacles or failures, then it's going to be a lot easier for you to keep taking action to move forward.

So whatever your decision is right now, whatever you're deciding between, if failure wasn't an option and you are just either winning or learning, what would you do? So I want you to really think about reframing that failure. Then I want you to ask yourself, what moves you toward who you want to be? So what's your goal here? What do you want? What do you want from your future? Who do you want to be and what decision, what choice that you need to make moves you towards becoming that person? That is powerful.

The next question is such a good one and I am guilty of not doing it enough, but it's a what would love do. This is so good. It's so powerful and I really can't even tell you why, but whatever the problem is, whatever the decision needs to be made, what would love do? And that doesn't mean that you stay in a relationship or stay in a job or whatever. It's, it often can mean leaving, right? It's it's love for yourself. It's what would love do. Love this question.

The last question I want you to ask is what's the worst case scenario in both of your decisions? Often you'll start thinking like the worst case scenario is something you know totally outside of your control, like you're going to go bankrupt, your business isn't going to work, all this stuff, but I really want you to think about is that the worst case scenario or is the worst case scenario that you just stay where you are in this limbo, in this place where you don't want to be and you don't take action?

I find that for me the worst case scenario is not going for it. It's staying. Like if I would have stayed in attorney, Oh my gosh, like that would have been terrible. If I would have stayed a CFP and not created this business and not moved to Chicago. Oh my gosh, I've only been here a few months. The amount of resistance I had to moving out of state was amazing.

It was so much, and I had to do a lot of self coaching to make sure that I was still taking action and not letting the fear stop me. So I want you to think about what the worst case scenario is for you. And after you've answered all of those questions, I want you to take the next step, which is to choose. You decide which choice you're going to make and then you stop. You're done.

You do not go back and rethink your decision. The decision has been made, you honor yourself and your decision and you don't look back. And then you take massive action. You take the

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action, you move forward, and then you get the result that you want. And I will tell you that if you get a result that you didn't expect, you can always make a new decision, but you only make a new decision after a lot of action has been taken.

I'm not talking about going back and forth between a decision. When you're in that like confusion, I'm talking about you've taken so much action and so much time has passed that you've changed like the result you want. So I actually had decided to move to Dallas and it turns out I didn't really decide because I never took action. I changed my mind and I decided to move to Chicago and as soon as I made the decision to move to Chicago, I went there.

I found an apartment and I signed a lease that weekend because I knew that if I didn't take action, no decision had really been made. The real decision was made because I took the action. Now if I love Chicago, right, but let's just say that, you know, after the next year I just really don't like it. Then I can make a new and then decide for my future where I want to live.

But you don't stay in the place you're at and go back and forth between decisions without taking action. You want to take action and then finally you want to evaluate that decision. You have more information. I've lived in Chicago for let's say a year or more. Do I like it? Is it giving me the result that I want? You think about it, it's like I love the Andy Stanley quote where he says experience changes, nothing evaluated experience changes everything. You have to evaluate your experiences.

So you make the decision, you honor your commitment, you take action and then you evaluate. You don't let fear and doubt win and you don't change your mind and you review your decision and then you know, if you're either winning or learning, maybe you're learning and then you make a new decision and you take new and different action and you get the results that you want.

Anytime you make a rational decision from a calm state, you're doing it from your prefrontal cortex. You've done the work, you've weighed the pros and cons. You've answered all those questions I said, and you finally decide that you're going to choose one option over the other and you're feeling great and then you take the slightest bit of action and I will tell you, fear and doubt and all those feelings will creep in.

They will come in and you will feel almost paralyzed. I want you to understand that this is normal. Nothing has gone wrong. Discomfort is normal. I love Brooke Castillo says that discomfort is the currency to your dreams. If you remember this, then you will stop making the fear and the doubt and the discomfort means something. What I see so much and what I have to make sure that I don't do as well is that when we have fear, we make it mean something's gone wrong.

Fear doesn't mean anything unless you give it meaning and that's just like good to know, right? It's like, Oh, this is just fear. It's just in my body and I like to say, Oh, I see you fear, I see what you're doing. I'm going to act anyways. I did this a lot when I knew I wanted to quit my job as a certified financial planner. I still had all of those feelings. You mean? It was, it was a lot.

And I remember just coaching myself and making sure that I didn't let that win I just experienced it and took the action anyway cause I knew I'd already made the decision. When you make

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decisions that your brain isn't used to, that you don't have any experience to pull from from your past, it's going to freak out because your brain just wants to keep you alive.

So my brain had no idea how to run a business full time as an entrepreneur. All I had ever wanted to do was be a lawyer and then a certified financial planner. So when I decided that I was going to do this and I knew it was the right thing to do, my brain still freaked out. But now that I've been doing it since April, I can tell you that I, it's like the best decision that I've ever, it is amazing and I don't freak out anymore.

It was just that little freakout and had I made that mean that I'm making the wrong decision. I would have missed out on the best decision that I've ever made in my life. So don't let the fear and the doubt win nothing has gone wrong. There are a few resources for decision making that I want to mention here that you might want to check out, Thinking Fast and Slow by Daniel and I'm gonna mess up his name, but it's KAHNEMAN. Kahneman? Thinking Fast and Slow.

Um, there is a good Ted talk How to Make Hard Choices by Ruth Chang. There's another good Ted talk Why We Make Bad Decisions by Dan Gilbert. I have an Ultimate Guide To Decision Making blog post and a YouTube video. This is all stuff that I teach as well in Design Your Dream Life Academy, which is my personal development course. All right. Start practicing that skill set of decision making and I will see you next week.

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