

1.1 What If I Had To Decide Now?

A method for quickly reaching a decision.

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Sometimes, we go back and forth on making a decision without reaching a definite conclusion because we are unsure about how to resolve our conflicting wants and needs into a cohesive course of action. We're afraid of making the wrong choice, so instead of settling on a decision, we get stuck in limbo, failing to choose at all. At times like this, it can be useful to proactively shift our point of view.

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- A shift in perspective can be enlightening and galvanize you into action.
- For a simple tool, it can deliver a high return on a small investment of time and energy.

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- Using this tool can sometimes yield yet another data point to consider, increasing confusion.

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If you've been debating several options for a while and can't reach a decision, you can do this experiment. Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. Get settled and take a few moments to breathe and relax your mind.

When you're ready, think about the decision you need to make and bring to mind two or more possible solutions. Each option should be very clear and actionable, e.g., "I will talk to X about Y." Then, ask yourself, "If I had to decide right now, if I could not change my mind in the future, what would I do?" Continue to sit quietly until the first answer comes to your mind. The answer that comes may or may not ultimately be the right answer for you, but it will surely give you an interesting perspective on what your intuitive mind wants to do. You can take this gut decision at face value or incorporate the information into your deliberations. Either way, hopefully you will gain some valuable information about your desires and thought processes.

This process works for both big life-changing decisions and smaller ones. For example, when you ask, "Do I want to have children?", you may give yourself answers like, "I don't know; my job is so demanding," or, "I don't know; parenting looks hard." These external factors may have nothing to do with whether you truly want to have a child or not. Instead, if you ask yourself, "If I had to decide right now, for forever, with no changing my mind, if I want to have a child, what would I choose?", you may find that a clear yes or no enters your mind.

You don't need to act on the response right away and, if it's positive, start planning for a child that very minute. Still, the thought process that you go through to reach this conclusion can sometimes reveal deep intuitions that were previously inaccessible and may surprise you, such as, "I definitely don't want to go through life without having children." Whatever the outcome of your inquiry, you must still do the hard work of reaching and standing behind a decision, but this process may be easier after you have explored the question from this angle.

