

107: Decision Making Criteria

[00:00:00] **Elena:** I'm embarrassed to tell you that a great number of fights with my husband used to happen. When at the end of the day, he would say something like, what should we do about dinner? Or what do you want for dinner? And I would spin around and glare at him and say something like, why do I have to figure this out?

[00:00:35] Why can't you just decide? So there, he was thinking he was doing the right thing by consulting with me, getting my opinion, asking me what I wanted. And I responded as if he was making a ridiculous ask. Now, when I finally recognized this pattern in part, because of the feedback he gave me. And when I slowed down enough to figure out what was going on for me, what I saw was that in those moments I was exhausted and I experienced his question as a request for something more from me, for me to make yet one more decision.

[00:01:15] And in that moment of exhaustion, What I wanted, I realized and the way that I recognized he could actually be supportive and loving was for him to decide to say, here's what's for dinner or say something like we're having salmon and kale and Shataki mushrooms for dinner, and it'll be ready at six 30.

[00:01:36] And that actually is what he made for dinner earlier this week. And it was delicious. When I was still in the classroom, I remember once hearing something about the number of decisions that teachers have to make every day. I wish I remembered what that number was.

[00:01:56] I just don't have the time to go into the research right now to find it, if any of, you know, what that number is and the research let me know. But in my memory it was something like teachers may. A thousand or 1,542 decisions every day. It was a really big number. And this research also said that teachers and.

[00:02:18] Medical professionals who work in hospitals, in all the professions. Those are the folks who have to make the highest number of decisions every day. So I heard this research and like many of you right now, probably I was nodding. I was like, yes, of course it felt so. Affirmative and validating to hear that because that's how I felt as a teacher in the classroom, like all day long, hundreds and hundreds of tiny little decisions.

[00:02:49] And when I got home, I was just depleted. I felt like I can not make any more decisions. I do want to say, however, that was not an excuse. For how

I responded to my sweet husband's request. Here, he was just saying, what do you want for dinner? That was a reflection of my lack of recognition of my emotions and my lack of skill in responding to them.

[00:03:19] That's a different episode. But right now I want to talk about decision making And two reasons why you need.

[00:03:26] To use a decision making process for yourself, and you need to use the one that I'm about to share with you. So first is to mitigate that decision-making fatigue because you actually can do something about that. You can really relieve it. And two, it's not just in reaction to what is, but so that you can be who you want to be so that you can have the life you want to have.

[00:03:54] So I'm going to talk you through this decision making process and I want you to call to mind a decision you need to make right now that you're uncertain.

[00:04:07] Maybe a small or medium-sized decision could be personal or professional, you know, it could be something you're being asked to do. Like, can you come to this event or can you join this committee? And if nothing is coming to mind right now, think back to a time when you had to make a smaller, medium decision.

[00:04:28] I mean, this can be something that. Should I take a break from work right now and take a 15 minute walk or should I have this for lunch or that for lunch? That's a small or maybe medium-sized decision. So as I talk you through the process, Think about the decision you have to make, if you are in a place or a moment where you can jot down some of the things I'm asking you in your responses, then do that.

[00:04:56] If you're listening to this, as you are commuting or getting ready or. On a walk then maybe just think about it or do it when you get back. If you can. Just a reminder, if you can't jot down some of the questions I asked you, you will find them all on the bright morning, Instagram feed. So hop over there afterwards.

[00:05:18] Bookmark. Posts and share them also with other folks. So as I said, there's three steps to this process. And the first step is to ask yourself what matters most right now, what matters most right now. So this question is actually a multiple choice question, and I'm going to give you the options to pick.

[00:05:49] What matters most right now to you a, your core values, be your annual goals, or you could say resolution, whatever that annual I'm committed to this, or see your annual intention. Maybe you have a word for the year. Maybe you have some other way that you have encapsulated your annual intention de. Is your school or your organization's mission.

[00:06:25] What are you there in your district or school, your company, your organization, what are you there to do? Your mission? And E is your sense of purpose in life? Your, this is sort of your legacy. Okay. So those are five options. Again, you'll find those in the bright running Instagram feed. I'll review them quickly a your core values, be your annual goals.

[00:06:56] See your annual intention D your organization's mission and E your personal sense of purpose. So those are the five options that I suggest that you use to answer this question of what matters most. Now your answer to that question might be the same. Every time you engage in a decision-making process, really, this is different for everybody.

[00:07:25] For some people it's always going to be my poor values matter. Most my core values for others that might be. The way, I feel my sense of purpose in life. Now those are connected as well, and I'm not going to go into the nuances, but just keep asking yourself each time what matters most, and you might see patterns.

[00:07:48] So what matters most to you? When I was a central office leader in the open public schools, part of my job was to manage a multi-million dollar federal grant and to allocate funding to different programs. And when I had decisions to make, and I asked myself what matters most, I often answered that question.

[00:08:15] Our district's goals and top priority, which at that point was about educational equity. So actually that really aligned with my personal core values. But when I had decisions to make, let's say about how to manage some of my direct reports, then what mattered most to me was my core values. How I showed up in that conversation.

[00:08:41] So sometimes what matters most to you will shift depending on the context in which the decision is being made. And sometimes it may not. So of course, to answer this question, what matters most, you've got to know your core values. Or maybe you have to have a goal or a focus or an intention, or your district has to have a top priority.

[00:09:04] And so I just want to acknowledge that has to exist. That's a precursor. And I know that many of you have heard me talk about core values and you've engaged in the exercise that I always offer to figure those out. If you haven't, you'll find links to learning more about core values in the show notes.

[00:09:25] Okay. So that was the first question. What matters most? The second question is to what extent would the options for this decision allow me to live my what matters most or to make progress on what matters most. Okay. So this is about thinking about how your options for your decisions will allow you to realize to live in what matters most to you.

[00:09:58] It can be helpful to ask yourself this question with a, like on a scale of one to 10, to what extent would my options for a decision for my decisions allow me to write. So a one to 10 thing can, can help you figure that out. So, let me give you an example. One of my goals for this year for 2022 is to complete a very strong first draft of a book that I've been working on for awhile.

[00:10:29] And this is really, really important to me. And I've blocked off time this year to make it happen. And it really connects with me feeling like I'm living my purpose in life and living my values. It's really, really important to me. Last month, an opportunity was presented to me that. Was so enticing. It was an opportunity to travel abroad and share the work that I've developed around coaching in a part of the world that I've never been to, but I've always wanted to travel to, and to work with incredible people who are doing incredible work in a community that I would love to serve that I've never been able to directly support and. I love traveling. So-so so much, and I haven't done much traveling in the last two years for the obvious reasons. And the whole thing was so enticing. I was even going to get paid for it. It was like, oh, so I talked to a friend about this and her response was, this is something you can't turn down.

[00:11:38] You know, when people are like, you cannot say no to this. And all of me was like, yes, yes, yes, yes. I really, really, really want to do this. But in a hard conversation with myself, I asked what matters most right now and what matters most to me right now this year is writing the book.

[00:12:01] It really is. And if I had said yes to that incredible opportunity, it would have taken me weeks of this. Weeks that I've been advocating for writing. And so I said, no, not this year, that was an example of like a big decision, but we make small and medium-sized decisions every day and we can hold those up to our what matters most and see the connection.

[00:12:35] And that's really important actually, because it is those small and medium sized decisions that we make every. Things that we do every day that either propel us forward on our goals or living our life's purpose or living our core values or really hold us back. Let me give you another example.

[00:12:58] This might be like a medium sized decision. I was recently in conversation with some family members. I don't see them very often. And one of them said something that was raised. And we were sitting around a table, having lunch lunch was over the energy was kind of light and fun. And the comment was just one of those little ones that like slips in and that you could easily ignore or overlook so easily could have just brushed it past.

[00:13:29] And I asked myself what matters most in my answer here is always living a life of integrity. Living my core values speaking up to injustice. And I asked myself on a scale of one to 10 in that moment, how much did it matter to me? And my answer was it mattered at a level 10. So I said something, I made the decision to say something at the risk of creating friction and tension and long story short, it was okay.

[00:14:07] It was really fine. And I felt like I was living my values, which was the most important. Okay. So I have just shared with you the first two questions to ask in this decision-making process, what matters most? And to what extent would the options for your decision allow you to live into what matters most or make progress in that?

[00:14:31] So I do want to say, the more you ask yourself, these questions in this decision-making process, the faster you will internalize the process and the faster you'll actually be able to go through all of this reflection and make a decision. The third and final question pushes you to acknowledge the loss and the risk in your decision.

[00:15:00] One reason it's so hard to make decisions is because so many of us don't know how to deal with loss, to deal with grief. Some people struggle to make decisions or they're ambivalent, or they can't make up the mind is that they're so afraid of the emotional experience of loss that they choose to stay in this limbo place.

[00:15:24] It feels like purgatory to me, the inability to decide. But for some people, that feels easier than facing loss. So in order to complete your decision-making process, you've got to acknowledge what you will lose. And you've also got to have some skills for processing that loss.

[00:15:47] So for example, when I said no to the work of. I had to recognize my sadness at not being able to do everything, not being able to travel to that region, not being able to work with that community. And it was really only by being with that sadness that I could get to this point of clarity around my decision.

[00:16:14] Whenever you make a decision, there will be lost. You are saying no to something that is inherent in making a decision when I'm exhausted at the end of the day. And I make the decision to just get in bed and watch Netflix. I have to acknowledge to myself that I am saying no to spending time with my son.

[00:16:41] And that is hard. But when I ask myself in that moment, what matters most. And when I acknowledge that losing time with him is okay for that evening, it makes it easier for me to get into bed, take care of myself, watch Netflix and do it without guilt, and helps me reflect on everything that's going on and think about the next day.

[00:17:07] Okay. So here's the third question again, and, an expansion of that third question. So, am I okay with the risk in this decision how, okay. Am I on a scale of one to 10 with the risk of loss inherent in this decision?

[00:17:24] On a scale of one to 10 howl KMI. So when my family member said something racist and I knew that if I said something, I was actually, I was risking the loss of our relationship. I was risking creating tension in that moment. And I answered this risk question to myself with the number eight, like on a scale of one to 10, how okay.

[00:17:48] Am I with the risk of loss? And I said, I was at a level. I didn't need to be a full-on 10 I'm fully. Okay. To be able to take action. I just needed to really acknowledge to myself that I was okay with the possibility of. But I also have to say that moment reminded me of my own capacity to deal with discomfort, to deal with the strain on the relationship.

[00:18:15] It reminded me that yeah, I have faced those moments before and relationships can be repaired and discomfort can dissipate. All of that quickly enabled me to say yes, I am going to say something. And I did say something and it was okay. All right. I want to give you one final example. A few days ago, I got a text message from a former colleague who sent this really warm greeting.

[00:18:46] And I hadn't heard from her in awhile and I really loved her. I loved working with her and she asked me if I had 10 or 15 minutes to chat that day. So. I responded to the text message, like great to hear from you. But I had a fully planned day, like a packed day, but I felt conflicted because I missed her.

[00:19:07] I wanted to chat. I asked myself what matters most and what came up for me in that moment was one of my core values, which is community. And I asked myself if I talked to her today, how will this allow me to live my value of. And on a scale of one to 10, I said a nine, this was someone I really, really valued.

[00:19:33] I wanted to stay connected to. And when I asked myself, am I okay with the loss? I won't be able to get everything done that I want to get done for that day. I said, yeah, I'm okay. Um, okay. So I texted her back. I said, great to hear from you. I would love to chat. And I really do only have about 15 minutes because this definitely was one of those text messages where you're like, we haven't talked in a long time.

[00:20:01] I could easily spend an hour talking to her. She said, great. It really is a quick question. And we talked and it really was a quick question and it was so nourishing and it just felt like, yes, I'm so glad I made that decision and we set a time in the future to connect for longer. So that was a moment when I quickly asked myself these three questions, what matters most?

[00:20:30] How would this decision allow me to live? What matters most? And am I okay with the law? And I was able to use those quickly and make a decision that relieved my decision-making fatigue. I didn't per overate about what is the decision to make here. And my decision allowed me to feel even more like I am living my core values.

[00:20:55] I'm living my purpose in life. I'm living my goals, my vision. So very habit. That's my decision making process. Again, the more you ask yourself, these questions, the faster you'll internalize them and the faster you'll be able to go through them and come to the decision that you want to make.

[00:21:14] Remember, you'll find these on our bright morning Instagram feed and. Hey, if you find them useful, bookmark them to save them like them, it lets me know that you are here and even share them. Finally, if you use this process, let me know how it goes again on Instagram, or you can send me an email or you can leave a review on apple podcasts because those reviews really matter.

[00:21:40] I do read them all rate us, review us, and that's a way to help get the word out about the work I do. All right, friends. Thanks so much for listening. I hope you are well, and thank you to Leslie Bickford, who is bright mornings. Operating officer and our podcast producer. Thank you also to Stacy Goodman, who does the sound engineering take care and I'll see you next week.