The Five Basic Elements of Effective Decision Making

1. **Gather Information**: As time allows, get as much information as possible before making a decision. Then you can make what is referred to as an *informed decision*. Information gathering can include:
   a. *Research* – Nowadays if you have a smart phone there is no excuse not to at least “Google it”
   b. *Talk to trusted others and others with experience* – Why learn the hard way when instead you can talk to someone who has been through it or someone who has more life experience?

2. **Weigh Outcomes** – This can be the most commonly neglected step. Taking a little bit of extra time to think things through is probably the most important thing a person can do to avoid problems in life. Consider the following:
   a. *Pros and Cons* – Risks (Possible Consequences) vs. Benefits (Potential rewards)
   b. *Ethics and Morals* – “Right and Wrong” is an essential consideration in any decision we make
   c. *Short term and Long term* – How may things work out now, but also what about later down the line?

3. **Consult**: Again, as time allows, talk to trusted friends, family, mentor, etc. and review all of your choices. Choose wisely as consulting with someone foolish likely will bring foolish results
   a. *Consider the Source*: For example, should you take job advice from someone who has been long term unemployed? Would you take financial advice from someone who is broke? You get it!

4. **Meditate** – This is not they kind of meditation associated with clearing your mind of all thought. To the contrary, in this case to meditate means: *to think deeply or carefully about something – to focus one’s thoughts, ponder, reflect upon, contemplate*. *This is with the goal of selecting your final choice*
   a. *In this case meditation is also not the same as anxiously obsessing about the same thing over and over*. The key should be to think with a goal and purpose in mind rather than to go in circles. A good comparison would be to be more like a runner in a race striving for the finish line as opposed to a rat on a wheel endlessly going around and around but getting nowhere fast

5. **Act** – This is also a commonly neglected step. A good decision is useless if it isn’t acted upon. At some point it is important to make a move otherwise nothing will change
   a. “*It’s hard to fail, but worse to never have tried to succeed*” – Theodore Roosevelt