



The Challenging Choices Checklist

As we maneuver and navigate through the daily grind of life, tough decisions and choices are bound to come up. At times, certain choices we face can be very challenging and even life changing. This **Challenging Choices Checklist** below is a tool for just those situations when the “big decisions” need to be made. Being able to make the difficult choices in life is a much-needed skill. This brief “to do” list offers some really important things to consider:

The Challenging Choices Checklist:

Ask yourself the following questions and be prepared to answer them honestly. Examples in Italics

- **Am I allowing emotion to cloud my decision making?** – Especially early on in a challenging situation, feelings can really disrupt the decision-making process. A strong feeling in one direction can be extremely misleading especially because we may feel quite different later down the road. **Tip** – If possible, take a break to destress before making a big move
 - *“I wish I didn’t let my anger cause me to quit my job. Now I am broke and unemployed, and I feel like if I just talked things out maybe I could have come up with a compromise*
 - *“I wish I didn’t dump my boyfriend because of my feelings of insecurity and jealousy. I should have taken the time to talk things through when I was calmer first before emotion got the best of me*

- **Am I allowing misguided pride to confuse my thinking?** Standing by your values and principles is admirable and necessary in life. However, in this case “misguided pride” refers to situations when we overestimate our importance, or we overstate how “offended” or “hurt” we are.
 - *“I broke off the deal when they tried to renegotiate. I said to myself ‘How dare they question me!’ and I left the deal on the table. Now I am back to square one because I walked away from a good opportunity because of my pride”*

- **Did I weigh this out on the scales of life?** It is really important to count the long-term cost of decisions. In the short-term things may seem fine but an unwise decision can lead to regret down the line
 - *I dropped out of college to go for the fast money job opportunity that came my way. Things fizzled out pretty quickly with my decision and now, years later I wish I would have thought about how much I would regret leaving school before graduating*



- **Did I get at least one (or more) other objective viewpoints?** – This one can help so much as a good friend can see things from a valuable new perspective. A good person to consult with meets these qualifications
- They care about you and their actions show it. If a person is not really invested in your wellbeing, then they may steer you wrong, but when someone cares, they should be looking out for your best interest
 - This person will tell you what you need to hear (not just what you want to hear) – Will this person tell it like it is, even if it is a viewpoint, you may not like?
 - Is this person's own life somewhat stable and do they "practice what they preach?" Taking advice from someone whose own life is a train wreck is a risky move. For example, would you be quick to take career advice from a chronically unemployed person or health advice from someone who is completely out of shape? Ideally, the person should have a track record of reliability, loyalty and sensibility

There are no guarantees and sometimes risks are needed to make decisions that count. Still, this checklist can help put the odds in your favor for making a choice you won't later regret as you successfully navigate the grind of life.

