



116: See Through the Fog

I'm Emily P. Freeman and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 116. This is a podcast about making decisions but also about making a life. Many of the decisions we make are second nature, I'm here for the ones that aren't. If you struggle with decision fatigue, chronic hesitation, or just need a few minutes away from the constant stream of information and the sometimes delightful but also distracting hum of entertainment, you're in the right place for a thoughtful story, a little prayer and a simple next right step.

In our last episode, I talked about the HALT method and how using that can help when we have big decisions to make; meaning if it's possible try to avoid making big decisions when you're hungry, angry, lonely, or tired. Instead, do the next right thing, eat, breathe, find a friend, or go to bed. HALT is so easy to remember because of the acronym. By the way, I didn't come up with HALT, in case that wasn't obvious last episode, but I do love it because it is so easy to remember.

But I thought it could be fun. Fun, is fun the right word? Let's say interesting to come up with another acronym to help us consider other states of being that could skew our ability to think clearly about decisions. And I'll offer a few suggestions for discerning our next right thing instead. Listen in.

All right, so my acronym is not as cool as HALT, I'll go ahead and confess that. Actually, maybe mine is only half as memorable because of how it's spelled but here goes. Before you make a big decision, consider if your mind is FOGI. That's my acronym, FOGI. But in order to completely confuse you and to make this super hard to remember, it's spelled with just four letters and actually it looks like FOGI, now that I'm thinking about it, rhyming with Yogi because I'm spelling it F-O-G-I.

It's fine, calm down, we're going to get through this.

Now, obviously we can't always avoid making decisions during these particular times, but we can set ourselves up to have support, clarity, and our best shot at making wise choices by recognizing and naming these particular times and doing our simple next right thing. So let's begin, shall we?

Alright, the F in FOGI stands for flattered. How many times has an opportunity presented itself to us and we are just straight up flattered to be asked? It's a joy to be picked, invited, welcomed, and wanted. It's a gift to belong, but it's wise to not let an invitation do a job it was never meant to do. An invitation is a question, not an obligation. It's only the first step. An invitation is someone else's idea, and if the

invitation is a flattering one, let me tell you, it can sometimes be difficult to discern if the invitation is a yes or a no.

There are times when I think something could be a great opportunity, for example, so I say yes out of fear of missing out. I have also said yes in the past to some things because I just wanted everybody to know I was invited. Sometimes in order to remain true to my life, to my people, and to my own calling, I need to turn down what others may call great opportunities and choose my absence from them.

If you're in the middle of a situation right now where you feel flattered to be invited but you're not sure what to do, your next right thing could be to find a No Mentor. I talk in detail about No Mentors in episode 21 as well as in Chapter 17 of the Next Right Thing, the book. Essentially, a No Mentor is someone who knows you well, who loves you but isn't impressed by you or your interesting invitations and who understands the big picture of your life and not just one aspect of it. A No Mentor helps you say a brave "yes" to the right things and a strong "no" to everything else.

Okay, that's the F. We're spelling FOGI in a super weird way y'all, come on with me. F is for when you feel flattered, and O stands for when you feel offended.

I would love to tell you that I don't get offended. I have an entire episode called Don't Take Offense, that's episode 80 if you want to go back and listen. The most important decision you make today could be to decide to not perseverate over a certain conversation or that weird look someone gave you or that dismissive behavior. What if you took the word, the glance, the insult, and instead of carrying it around, what if you acknowledged it, yes, but then set it down instead?

What if you dared to remain delightfully unoffended? I'm not saying this is easy, but it is interesting because being offended takes energy. Staying offended is a full-time job. The energy we use up being offended is energy we need to do our good and beautiful work, to love the people we're called to love, to move through the world as the people we most deeply are, and to live this one life well. Don't allow someone else's dysfunction to poke yours awake.

Now, I believe all that, but the truth is we're still going to get offended. There's often a period of time between when the offense happens and our healthy releasing of that offense, so during that in between time maybe your next right thing is to avoid making rash decisions. Set some boundaries, remain grounded, remember who you are, remember what you're doing and why. Keep a light heart, if you can. Extend grace. And if none of that yet feels possible, maybe your next right thing is to do nothing and wait for cooler heads and calmer hearts.

Alright, we're halfway through FOGI, and the G stands for grief. They say when someone close to you dies you should avoid making any big decisions for a full year; to sell a home, to throw out the keepsakes, quit your job, make a big financial investment, or another equally irreversible decision in the midst of grief. Well, these could be cause for some regret down the road. There's nothing quite like the fog of grief to cloud our judgment, skew our vision, and hinder our ability to think clearly.

The mind does weird things in the face of loss, and we would do well not to blame ourselves for that or to put a deadline on our own process. We would do well to be our own friend and be relentlessly kind to

ourselves. The grief of death is not the only kind that counts, and it's important to acknowledge that. There is a kind of grief that accompanies beginnings because a new beginning often means we've just had an ending.

There's the grief that hangs around with anniversaries, with moving to a new town, with saying goodbye or changing careers. If we don't admit these losses, the big ones and the small ones, then we may be making our decisions with our eyes closed. Of course, we can't avoid making all decisions when we're in the midst of grief, but we can resist the urge to measure our handling of the grief against a standard we've created in our own heads or that someone else or culture or the people around us have created for us.

Sometimes we think we should be over it by now, or we should be less sad, or we should be more sad, or anything other than what we most plainly are. So we deny the grief, we set it aside, and instead of considering it and considering the fog that it brings in our decision making, we hide it and maybe deny it.

If making a decision during this particular time of grief can't be avoided, could you possibly make a decision, yes, but maybe one that's reversible, maybe one on a smaller scale? Could you bring other people into the process? No matter what, when you're in the midst of a time of grieving, don't make big decisions alone.

Well, we've made it to the last letter in FOGI spelled wrong. Please forgive me, all of you who don't like words spelled wrong, but you're going to forgive me for it because the I stands for infatuated. Yes, I'm spelling FOGI with an I, F-O-G-I, we've made it.

When John and I first started dating, I still remember walking across campus one unseasonably warm North Carolina January afternoon, and I was 100% convinced the sky was bluer than it ever had been before. How could the sky be so blue? Why is everyone around me walking around like this is normal? Why aren't we all looking up in admiration at this incredible blue sky? That was my condition when John and I first started dating.

If you're newly into someone and colors seem to be more literally vibrant than ever before, it could be a good idea to get a second opinion. I'm not saying that you can't make decisions when you're in a new relationship, of course not, but maybe don't make them fast and maybe don't make them alone. The discovery that accompanies a new relationship is thrilling, and beautiful, and fun, but if we make big ol' decisions during that time, we might not be able to see all the facts. Again, that's not to say that we avoid decisions, it's just to say your next right thing could be to give yourself a little bit more time to do it and to find some support from a few people who know you well and can help you see clearly.

Alright, that's FOGI for you. If your head feels foggy when you're trying to make a big decision these days, I wonder if it might help to consider these questions before you move forward:

Is this decision difficult for me because flattery is clouding my judgment?

Am I unusually passionate to make one decision or another because someone has offended me and I just can't wait to respond?

Is there something I'm grieving that I haven't acknowledged? A loss, a transition, an anniversary, a goodbye?

Does everything seem amazing and all seems like a good idea because I've recently met someone and I'm basking in the glow of it?

If you're feeling flattered, offended, if you're grieving something or falling in love, you may not be able to avoid making big decisions but perhaps these simple practices of doing just the next right thing could help clear your head when things feel foggy.

In every decision you make this week, may the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you, the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.

Thanks for listening to Episode 116 of The Next Right Thing. Well, I hope this invitation to notice what may be clouding your vision for clear decisions can be just one more rung on the trellis upon which your rhythm of life can continue to grow. Because it's true this is a podcast about making decisions, but the bigger truth is that our daily decisions are actually making our lives. As always, you can find me at emilypfreeman.com and [@emilypfreeman](https://www.instagram.com/emilypfreeman) on Instagram.

In closing, if you're in a FOGI place of decision making right now and you just can't find your way through, you could ask yourself just one of my favorite decision making questions.

In this decision, am I being pushed by fear or led by love?

That may be all the insight you need to take your next right step in love. Thanks for listening and I'll see you next time.