



## 105: How to Manage Holiday Decision Fatigue

I'm Emily P. Freeman and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 105. This is a podcast about making decisions, but also about making a life. With four weeks left until the end of this year, it's possible you feel pulled in two directions, at least. On the one hand, it could be easy to become overwhelmed with all there is left to do, to buy, to make, to finish and wrap up, both literally and figuratively. On the other hand, you long for slow, for memory-making traditions with friends and family, a restful season for your body and time of thoughtful reflection for your soul.

It's a time for both gathering and retreating, for fun celebration, and for quiet waiting. And in the midst of all that, it may also be a time of decision, transition, and year-end deadlines. All of this begs the question, is there a way to enter this season thoughtfully with our whole hearts? How can we manage the holiday decision fatigue that seems inevitable? Is there a way to remain centered even in the midst of lots of activity? If you've had these questions, too, listen in.

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Last January, I made a decision that turned out to be one of the best decisions of my year, but I didn't know that at the time. First, here's the decision. I decided that any invitation to travel for work during the month of December would be an automatic no. This was a personal decision for me, but I made it shortly after last December when I did travel for work, and it took its toll on me.

For me this year, that meant saying no to several lovely events at various churches and other gatherings. It isn't always an option to turn down work, and I understand that may not be an option for you or even

for me in the future, but it was an option for me this year. Still, even as I made that decision, I didn't automatically know if it was the right choice. Just like a lot of decisions we make about our future. At the time, I made that one, and I wondered if I would regret it later.

Well, later is now and guess what. I'm happy to report I regret nothing! I'm glad to be home. I'm glad my traveling is over for the year, and I affirm my past self in her decisive "no travel in December" ways. But beyond the details of my particular decision, here's what I want to point out. It's possible I could have made that decision and moved on with my life and never paused to be grateful for the discernment that I had back then. Never realizing the gift that a "no" can sometimes bring. I'm glad I remembered to check in with that decision, so I could affirm that what I thought was my next right thing many, many months ago was, in fact, right.

Chances are you're making great decisions all the time about your future, but you forget to circle back around and remember them. In our few minutes that we have together, I want to offer you some space to do that, but first, here are three ways to manage that holiday decision fatigue before it takes over.

Number one, decide now one thing you're not going to do. As you look at your family calendar, your work calendar, and the actual time you have, decide now one thing you'll say no to. Maybe it will be an actual event like a particular party or a parade that tends to cause extra stress. Maybe you'll decide to say no to overspending, to late nights, or something else that might not necessarily show up on your calendar, but it still impacts your wellbeing.

Even more, maybe you'll decide to say no to a particular posture or a mindset like shame, hurry, or caring too much about stuff that doesn't matter. If it feels too late to say no to something this year, decide now to say no to it next year.

Number two, a second way to keep holiday decision fatigue at bay, pick two. You know at some restaurants how you can get a whole sandwich or a whole soup or you can pick two and get half of each. It's like instead of forcing us to be decisive, these restaurants have found a way for us to have everything we want. Well, we can do the same thing as we set an intention for this Advent season. Not have everything we want, but pick two.

Instead of becoming overwhelmed by all the choices of readings and playlists and thoughtful meditations, just take a few minutes today and decide now two simple ways that you want to be thoughtful this season. One might be a book of Advent readings. I have several of my favorites listed on my website. I'll link to those in the show notes, but don't read them all. Just pick one of them.

Choosing one now can keep decision fatigue at bay in the fog of morning when you really want to be intentional, but you don't know what to read and you haven't had your coffee yet. If you decide now which book to read, order it or pull it off your shelf. Put it next to your chair, and that's going to be your companion during the next four weeks. Choose one now and keep it close by.

Your second pick could be a seasonal playlist that you want to have on repeat, or maybe you want to spend a little time and make one of your own. Now, two Christmases ago, I created an audio devotional that I named *The Quiet Collection*, which is 14 days of readings and reflections on Advent. This year, I'm happy to offer it again. I'll leave details all about it at the end of the episode. But maybe *The Quiet Collection for Christmas* that I've created is just what you need to have a few quiet moments every day to set your mind and clear the clutter.

You may also want to listen back to episode 90. *Start With This Simple Rhythm* is the title of it, and that's where I share my five-step morning routine of prayer, reading, and writing. Now, spoiler alert, it's not fancy, but it's life-giving to me, and maybe you'll find some life in it for you as well.

So that's a second way to keep holiday decision fatigue at bay. Decide now what you'll read and listen to this month. So that's one thing you don't have to think about over and over again.

All right. Finally, number three. Schedule your look back. Sometime in early January of next year, go ahead and write down on your calendar that you're going to take 30 minutes and look back at the month of December and be honest about what worked and what didn't.

Did your morning rhythm stick? Did your calendar seem too full? Did that Advent reading bring life or did it totally stress you out?

I'm going to schedule a look back for myself, but for now, I want to invite you, let's do one together. Now, here are the rules. For the next minute or so, you are an observer of your life. You are a friend to yourself, supportive and listening. You are full of kindness, free of judgment and open to learn what you need to learn to move forward into your next right thing. Are you ready? Here we go.

Can you think of a decision that you made earlier this year that you're reaping the benefits from today? A brave yes. A strong no. A rearrangement. A set boundary.

Whisper a word of thanks. Let's celebrate together the wisdom of your next right thing.

Can you think of a decision you made this year that turned out differently than you thought? A consequence you didn't anticipate. An outcome you regret. A misunderstanding or a miscommunication.

Whisper a word of acknowledgment and believe that you did the best you could with the information you had at the time. Let's celebrate together all you've learned during this difficult season.

Finally, let's take a few moments together and consider your next right thing today. When you finish this episode, what is one thing you need to do next?

Will you walk the dog, pay that bill, write an email, pick up the groceries, prep the dinner, brush your teeth, check the mail. Present the proposal. Make the offer. Call your mother. Say a prayer?

Life is a series of moments, and the moments are determined by the decisions we make.

*May you continue to stay in today, to finish your tasks one at a time, to read words that nourish your soul, to listen to music that brings life and joy, and to do your next right thing in love.*

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Thanks for listening to episode 105 of The Next Right Thing. Several things I want to mention before we close, and the first is thank you to everyone who filled out our first-ever Next Right Thing podcast survey. We selected the winner of the \$100 gift card. Congrats to Jacquelyn Davis for giving us your

opinion. And to everybody who took the time to fill that survey out, you're making this podcast even better. And for that, I offer my sincerest thanks.

And thanks to you who've sent me messages about a particular movie that just came out, *Frozen II*. For about two months now, I have been receiving emails and text messages and DMs and all the ways that you have wanted to communicate with me about this movie's theme song, *The Next Right Thing*. But recently, those messages have picked up speed since the movie released. Well, I can't wait to talk more about that in an upcoming episode, so stay tuned for that.

Finally, I mentioned this before, but here are the details about this collection I've created called *The Quiet Collection*. This is the third year in a row that I want to make that Christmas audio devotional available to you. It's a 14-day audio devotional series that I created to help you set your mind before you begin your day for two weeks in December. Many of you have asked if this would be returning this year, and I'm happy to announce that today is the day.

Now, please note this is the exact same collection as last year, so if you've already purchased it, you probably still have access to it in your email inbox. You could just search there in your past emails, and you can probably find it. But if you would like to gift it to somebody else this holiday season or have it redelivered freshly to your own inbox, simply visit [emilypfreeman.com/christmas](http://emilypfreeman.com/christmas) to learn more.

Thanks to Anne, who after purchasing a couple of years ago, she said, "*The Quiet Collection for Christmas* is just what I need during this hectic but beautiful season. Short, peaceful, and thoughtful, when doing a long or difficult devotion seems like too much. It's truly helping through this busy time in our lives."

I'm so glad to hear that, Anne. Well again, if you want to have *The Quiet Collection for Christmas* delivered to you every day for the next 14 days, you can find out more in the show notes or visit [emilypfreeman.com/christmas](http://emilypfreeman.com/christmas) and you can have day one delivered to you today.

As you reflect on the year you've just come through and head into the season of waiting, listening, celebrating, and togetherness, here are a few words from John O'Donohue in his book *To Bless the Space Between Us*.

*“May all that is unforgiven in you be released. May your fears yield their deepest tranquilities. May all that is unloved in you blossom into a future graced with love.”*

Thanks for listening and I'll see you next time.