



## 201: Your Decision-Making Starter Kit

I'm Emily P. Freeman, and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 201.

This is a podcast about making decisions, but also about making a life. If you struggle with decision fatigue, chronic hesitation, or if you just need a few minutes away from the constant stream of information and the sometimes delightful but also distracting hum of entertainment, well, you're in the right place for a thoughtful story, a little prayer and a simple next right step.

While every episode is in some way adjacent to discernment or decision-making here, not every episode is a straight line from "I have a decision to make" to "and here's how to make it." Actually, none of the episodes are like that. That's nearly impossible to do in this kind of a format, but also, it's nearly impossible to do at all. You are endlessly complicated, and decisions are multi-layered and nuanced, which is by the way, why I love the practice of spiritual direction for decision-making, but that's another conversation in episode 167: Spiritual Direction for Beginners.

But I digress back to the point. Today's episode, I did want to point you to the episodes I've created here that will give you some direct guidance, maybe more than the others specifically, if you are holding a decision right now. Think of it as your decision-making starter kit. Especially if you're new around here, here are 10 episodes and maybe a bonus to help you get started if you're holding a decision right now. Listen in.

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The thing about decisions is they never go away. Not really. We make one, we decide our next right thing, and then here we are having to decide something else. Making decisions is not something that we grow out of, that we can retire from, or that we get to put off for a time that's more convenient or easier. Sometimes we can, but not forever. And so we'll always have decisions to make as long as we are living. Here on The Next Right Thing, that's something we talk about a lot, but as I mentioned before, there isn't necessarily one right way to discern your next right thing. So for today, I wanted to offer you some sort of direction when it comes to finding episodes here in this space that would be most helpful for you if you are carrying a decision right now.

Jumping right in; the first episode I recommend is episode 32: Stop Collecting Gurus. Back when I created that episode, it was just a couple of weeks after I had sat down to clean out my email inbox and I realized that over the course of that year, I had started to collect gurus. All of those experts arrived in my life, or

I sought them out at a time when I thought I could use what they had to offer. You probably know what I'm talking about. For example, an online course I'd taken, or a free download that I wanted to check out, experts in organizing my closet, or wearing the right thing for my body type, or my personality type, or my enneagram number. All of these things are valuable and helpful, but the problem was that I was collecting way too many of them for way too many areas of my life.

As I combed through my inbox past all of the advice and instruction, results and evaluation tools, I noticed that I was breathing more shallow and my head started to ache. The problem wasn't the courses or the email series or the updates, but the problem was I had too many going at once. When I have a decision to make, and maybe you're like this too, what I've discovered is I often seek outside advice sometimes in the area of the decision I have to make, and sometimes just in any area at all. In an effort to find clarity in something, I end up collecting gurus in everything. So if that's you and you can relate, episode 32: Stop Collecting Gurus, could be helpful.

Next up episode 70: The Best Time To Make a Decision. The fact is we have a finite amount of mental energy to spend and making decisions is one way that we pay. The problem is unlike being winded when we run, or feeling hungry when it's time to eat, there isn't an obvious physical sign that we can all point to and say, "Hey, guess what? Your decider is fatigued and you need to take a break." So oftentimes we are suffering from decision fatigue, but we don't realize it. Episode 70 will help you discern the best time to make a decision.

Speaking of the best time, episode 109: Wait Until the Morning. The truth is that you already know unmade decisions hold so much power. The less control we have over the outcome of our decisions and the less choice we have in the decisions themselves, the more power they hold. If you have a decision hanging over your head right now today, and you can feel yourself becoming irritable, anxious, weary, and way down, maybe your next right thing has nothing to do with making the decision and everything to do with getting some rest, taking a breath, close the notebook, the computer, the phone, the list, and just go to bed. This decision it can't wait forever, but can it wait until the morning? Find out in episode 109: Wait Until the Morning, and see if that might be your next right thing.

Episode 113: Decide to Decide is another one that could be helpful for you if you're carrying a decision. As I pay attention to my own life and the life of the people around me, I've come to the conclusion that we can trace a lot of our anxiety, stress and feelings of overwhelm back to a single or a series of unmade decisions. It's not always because we're putting those decisions off on purpose, but sometimes it's because we don't even realize we're carrying them. So 113:Decide to Decide, that's an episode to help you uncover decisions that need to be made that you might not even realize, and they'll help you discern your next right thing in order to make them. Because if you're stuck with a decision in your mind that you know of right now, there could be a possibility that there are some decisions that need to be made before that big one that you don't even realize. Episode 113 could help you uncover what those might be.

And then episode 136: This is for a particular brand of decision-maker, and that is decision-making for slow processors. I mentioned this on Instagram a while back that I'm kind of a slow processor, and I had so many people respond that they are too. As I did the tiniest service-y level of research for that episode, I realized there is an actual diagnosable term. I think it's called slow processing speed, or it has to do with slow processing speed. I'm no scientist here, but that term, and I'm using it more in a conversational way, but I've heard a lot of people talk about I'm a slow processor just in every day conversation, but the truth

is there isn't just one right way to process.

In fact, even saying the words, "I'm a slow processor," implies that there's a baseline of regular normal processing that everybody agrees on and some are faster and some are slower, but the truth is, that's just not the case. There's not just one right way to process or one right speed. In fact, there are three right ways and it just so happens that many people value some over others. Some of us feel fast, others of us think fast. I dive into that concept and more in episode 136: Decision-Making for Slow Processors.

Another episode I talked about in our last episode, and I actually refer to this one a lot is 172: Make These 2 Lists Now. This is where I really dive in to two of my favorite lists, which is the questions and arrows list. Instead of a Q&A question and answer; this is Q&A questions and arrows. Essentially every decision we have to make begins as a question, but rarely does a decision start with a question and an immediate answer. Instead, what I have found is we'll have a question, a decision we need to make, and then we have one next right thing, then another next right thing, and another. One step might not be an answer, but it is an arrow. It's a one step closer to a final decision. So episode 172 walks you through what it looks like to make a questions list and an arrows list for the sake of making a decision.

That brings me to episode 196, which is, Why Your Pro/Con List Isn't Working. That's a list that most of us are probably familiar with. We probably made a million of them over our lifetime. That's the list that we know to make when we're stuck in a decision-making process. Maybe you've made it about this decision you're holding right now. Now there are helpful things about the pro/con list, but we all know they don't work all by themselves. It could be a good starting point, but what do you do next? So that episode 196 is dedicated to anyone who's ever made a pro/con list in the middle of the night. I'll share why they don't work so well and also things to do instead of a pro/con.

Well a few other episodes that are a little bit more on the nose, depending on what type of decision you're holding, one is episode 162: Is It Time to Move On? It's one thing to change your mind when you're sure of your decision, but how can you know if it's time to move on when circumstance, desire and opinions are mixed? So in episode 162 I give you eight questions to ask yourself to find some clarity.

Then there's episode 168: Is it Time to Dream Again? Of all the things we lost during 2020, the year of the pandemic, and even now one thing that has taken the longest, at least it took the longest for me to name, was a sense of possibility. Maybe the last year or so has been the year where the dreamers stopped dreaming. That may not have been true for you, but I think it's been true for a lot of people. So much felt impossible for so long and some things still do, but a question maybe rising up in you and it was rising up in me and that's, is it time to dream again? So in that episode 168, I give you three things to consider.

Finally, the 10th recommended episode in your decision-making starter kit is episode 174: Is it Time to Quit My Job? Of all the questions that I get asked, this is one that comes up maybe if not the most, it definitely comes up a lot, is people asking me for discernment when it comes to quitting their job or changing vocation or moving across the country for the sake of a job. When it comes to decisions we make in our lifetime, questions about our job and vocation, top the list as ones that can cause the most decision fatigue. So this is a 15 minute episode to help you consider the question beneath the question and see if you can uncover more information that could help you discern your next right thing when it comes to quitting your job.

Well finally, maybe this is a bonus episode. It's 121: How to Discern and Decide. This one was recorded at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was right in April of 2020. So just spoiler alert so you know it is tied to that particular period of time, but I'm including it here, because there is still some solid decision-making principles to pull from there in episode 121. How can we trust ourselves to make wise decisions during uncertain times? So in that episode, 121, I have a couple of tools that I hope will help.

Well that's it. That's 10 episodes and a bonus for you to get started when it comes to making an actual decision for your life. I just want to pause at the question as we close, what if the way we make decisions is just as important as the decisions we make? I've said it before and I'll continue saying it, our unmade decisions hold a lot of power. The secret to making better decisions is to learn to make decisions in a better way. That's what simply doing the next right thing is all about. It's a practice made up of if I have to be forced into some movements here, three simple movements that can repeat for every decision big or small; clear out the clutter, name the unnamed things, and then do your next right thing in love.

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Thanks for listening to episode 201 of The Next Right Thing. I hope the simple practice of making decisions can be just one more rung on the trellis upon which your rhythm of life can continue to grow. While it's true this is a podcast about making decisions, the bigger truth is our daily decisions are making our lives.

As always you can find me online at [emilypfreeman.com](http://emilypfreeman.com) and on Instagram at [emilypfreeman](https://www.instagram.com/emilypfreeman). Hopefully you know that along with the podcast, I also have a book called *The Next Right Thing: A Simple, Soulful Practice for Making Life Decisions*, and we also have a 12 month guided journal to companion you as you move through times of decisions and discernment.

A few words from readers:

Caterina says this on Amazon in her review, "More than being beneficial, I appreciate how much enjoyment and peace I derive from reading this book. I'm not Christian or generally religious, and yet I find Emily giving away a lot of food for thought. And considering the fact that there is quite a bit of religious content, it did not make it any less relevant."

Well, thanks for that Caterina that sure does mean a lot.

Nicole left five stars saying, "I was pleasantly surprised with this book. The things I was procrastinating about, I found ways to solve the problems so that I could fulfill the next right thing in love."

And then finally Brandy said, "I could hear Emily's calming voice as I read through this book. If you're having trouble making decisions, this book is for you."

Well thanks Caterina, Nicole and Brandy for your kind words.

If you're listening and you have left or want to leave a review of the book on Amazon, Goodreads, Barnes & Noble, or if you've left or want to leave a review of the podcast on Apple Podcast, I sure hope you'll let me know. Tag me [@emilypfreeman](https://www.instagram.com/emilypfreeman) on Instagram or shoot me an email and say hello. I always love

hearing from you, and of course appreciate any reviews or stars that you would like to give the podcast or the books.

Well in closing, I'll read a few words from chapter one of *The Next Right Thing: A Practice of Paying Attention When You have a Decision to Make*.

“What is something you're thinking about pursuing, starting, quitting, making, finishing, or embracing? If you don't see the clear path, the end game, or the five year plan, take heart. Be obsessively gentle with yourself. Get still. Stop talking. Pause the constant questioning of everyone else's opinion. Now hold that thing whatever it is in your mind. Pay attention to your body and to your soul. Now, does it rise or does it fall?”

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