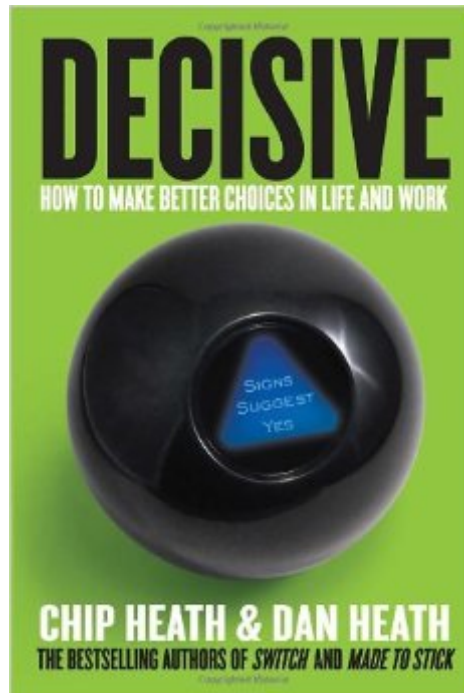


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Decisive: How To Make Better Choices In Life And Work



Synopsis

Chip and Dan Heath, the bestselling authors of *Switch* and *Made to Stick*, tackle one of the most critical topics in our work and personal lives: how to make better decisions. Research in psychology has revealed that our decisions are disrupted by an array of biases and irrationalities: We're overconfident. We seek out information that supports us and downplay information that doesn't. We get distracted by short-term emotions. When it comes to making choices, it seems, our brains are flawed instruments. Unfortunately, merely being aware of these shortcomings doesn't fix the problem, any more than knowing that we are nearsighted helps us to see. The real question is: How can we do better? In *Decisive*, the Heaths, based on an exhaustive study of the decision-making literature, introduce a four-step process designed to counteract these biases. Written in an engaging and compulsively readable style, *Decisive* takes readers on an unforgettable journey, from a rock star's ingenious decision-making trick to a CEO's disastrous acquisition, to a single question that can often resolve thorny personal decisions. Along the way, we learn the answers to critical questions like these: How can we stop the cycle of agonizing over our decisions? How can we make group decisions without destructive politics? And how can we ensure that we don't overlook precious opportunities to change our course? *Decisive* is the Heath brothers' most powerful and important book yet, offering fresh strategies and practical tools enabling us to make better choices. Because the right decision, at the right moment, can make all the difference.

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Customer Reviews

I highly recommend *Decisive* as a valuable aid to making more objective decisions. The Heath Brothers do a great job laying out a better and more memorable process for making decisions while illustrating the principles with a wide variety of examples. They begin by discussing how the normal decision making process proceeds in 4 steps, each of which has a "villain" that can negatively impact it. To quote from their introduction: * You encounter a choice. But narrow framing makes you miss options. * You analyze your options. But the confirmation bias leads you to gather self-serving information. * You make a choice. But short-term emotion will often tempt you to make the wrong one. * Then you live with it. But you'll often be overconfident about how the future will unfold. They spend the remainder of the book detailing a process to make better decisions - the WRAP process: * Widen your options * Reality Test Your Assumptions * Attain Some Distance * Prepare to Be Wrong. Each part of the process has several powerful ideas that are worth chewing on and implementing in the context of one's life. I have chosen a few of the ideas to give you a flavor of what is in store: For widening your options, it is important to avoid a narrow frame. In order to make sure you challenge yourself to do this, they propose an idea called the Vanishing Options Test - what would you do if the current alternatives disappeared? Here is a key quote: "When people imagine that they cannot have an option, they are forced to move their mental spotlight elsewhere - really move it - often for the first time in a long while." For Reality testing your assumptions.

Chip and Dan Heath are known for writing insightful and approachable books like *Switch*. Their new book, *Decisive* does not follow this pattern. That simple statement required me to make a decision about this review. Writing a less than stellar review is often a challenge eliciting negative feedback when sharing reasons why something did not live up to your expectations or was worth the time to read. We all make decisions and the topic of making better decisions should have been a slam-dunk. While *Decisive* does deliver, particularly in the first few chapters, overall the messages in this book get lost. The book is too long, heavy and complex to be helpful, particularly covering a subject already treated by others. The core messages of the book are sound and helpful. The book covers recognizes the challenges we face in making decisions: > Forcing an either/or decision when it's not needed > Confirmation bias, when we seek and see only the data that supports our views > Removing emotion from the decision making process > Overconfidence in decision making that limits our ability to consider alternatives. The answers to these challenges are a pop acronym WRAP that describes their four-step process to making better decisions. > Widen your options > Reality test your assumptions > Attain distance before deciding > Prepare to be wrong. These are commonsense

and helpful ideas. They are the basis for an easy to understand, actionable set of tools, you are right. This is a case where the structure and prose gets in the way as the book uses 11 chapters to cover each letter of WRAP.

The Heath brothers' previous books *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die* and *Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard* are mainstays on my book shelf, and now "Decisive" joins them as a worthy companion. It is pretty shocking to think how little education most of us get on the art of how to make decisions. This book arrived at a very opportune time for me, as it immediately helped think about two major life decisions in new ways. First, my family was thinking of buying a new house, one of a family's biggest purchases. When my husband and I were touring the home, the real estate agent said, "make a list of pros and cons as you think it over." As she said that, I thought how inadequate that seemed as a decision-making strategy. Later that day, I cracked open "Decisive" and the Heaths immediately offered novel alternatives to the "pros and cons list." These solid, research-tested ideas laid out in their "WRAP process" helped me realize that the costs of moving, both financial and opportunity costs of time, were too great, and we should learn to love our current home. Second, I am thinking about applying for a new job in a new field, and the advice to "ooch," to take a small step and experiment and try out the job (by shadowing someone who is already in the role), was right on target. Take a series of small steps before you leap into a major life change. As "Decisive" can help us make decisions more wisely and thoughtfully, it proves its worth over and over again.

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