

15th May 2024

Decisions

**“Decide not rashly. The decision made
Can never be recalled. The gods implore not,
Plead not, solicit not; they only offer
Choice and occasion, which once being passed
Return no more. Dost thou accept the gift?”**

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Masque of Pandora*

I don't know anyone who makes decisions rashly. Decisions may be made quickly or pondered for a long time, alone or in consultation with others. They may affect our personal or professional lives, be massively important or relatively trivial. But few, if any of us, are prone to make hasty decisions.

However, I do know people who, like me, find making decisions difficult. It's not that I can't or won't make decisions. It's just that I was taught to take care, consider everything, before deciding. Longfellow's advice is wise indeed: "The decision made can never be recalled."

And sometimes, after careful consideration, the decision is *still* hard to make, and the balance of "this way" and "that way" is kind of equal. A Nursery Teacher offered me a tip she uses to help children make "practice decisions". When a child wants to do *two* things – to play in the sand-tray *and* the pretend kitchen, for example – and can't decide which one to choose because they'll miss out on the other one, suggest that they decide "which one you choose to do first". It's a "practice decision", but a decision nonetheless, with no pain of disappointment involved.

And here's another thought – which a close family member will *certainly* approve of! In *A Psychological Tip*, the writer Piet Hein suggests a way of making decisions. "Dost thou accept the gift" of this advice?

Whenever you're called on to make up your mind,
and you're hampered by not having any,
the best way to solve the dilemma, you'll find,
is simply by spinning a penny.
No – not so that chance shall decide the affair
while you're passively standing there moping;
but the moment the penny is up in the air,
you suddenly know what you're hoping.

I think I'd better leave you to decide whether that works for you – or not!

A prayer for today

Lord, help me to decide what's right, because you're not going to decide for me. Amen

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