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Fork in the Road

Choosing which fork in the road can be excruciating. My son is in the throes of choosing colleges to apply to. There is an endless list of possibilities. In today's day and age, some kids apply to upwards of 20 schools. How do you pare down the list? How important is the engineering program? Public or private? Close enough for Mom to drop by...or not? Too far and Dad won't drop by and buy lunch once in a while. Is their mascot a dancing tree, a tiger or an insect? Are their teams worth painting his face for? Do their dorms have air conditioning? Can he even get in?

A colleague of mine quit his job last week. Without notice. Without a parachute. Without telling his wife. He chose his fork in the road when he wasn't even at the "fork". Abruptly turned right...a sharp right. He made a decision and he was relieved. Empowered. **He bent the fork.**



The anticipation of making the decision can be far more painful than making the decision. Ruminating through all the scenarios. Sometimes it's better to just deal with the aftermath rather than sweating over the "what ifs".

Here are some suggestions about getting past the fork in the road:

1. **Deadline.** Make a hard deadline. This is obvious in the college selection decision (you miss the deadline and it's time for plan B). Not so obvious if you are quitting your job, starting a business or purchasing a house. So mark your calendar and hold fast to the deadline. **This will help move the process along.** If by year-end you still don't like your boss or your commute (or even your significant other), move on.

2. **Black Hole.** What is the worst-case scenario? You are going to need to have a chat with your lizard brain. What exactly are you afraid of? If you quit your job, the world will not end. If you leave your spouse, the sun will rise tomorrow. If you start the new business, it might fail. You can always work at Wal-Mart. You can move to a cheaper living situation. You can be alone. Whew. OK. **So now we can only go up from here.**

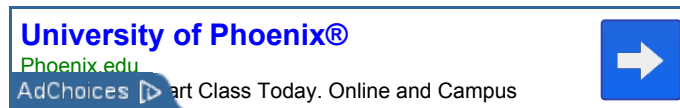
3. **Write.** Make a list of pros and cons with pencil and paper. This process helps you focus. Slowing down the thought process is important and improves the connections in your brain. If you type out a list of pros and cons, it's too rapid and uses both hands. **Writing with pencil and paper allows you to focus more and helps you be more deliberate and reflective.**

4. **Gut.** This was in a previous [post](#). Be the Gut Whisperer. Buried in your limbic brain is the right answer. So over thinking can cause you to ignore your gut. Do so at your own peril. I remember when we bought the house I now live in. My children came to see the house before we made an offer. My ten-year-old daughter loved it. There were a ton of issues with the house (it had been flooded in Hurricane Floyd) but she knew when she looked at the view of the lake from her future bedroom window...this was the place. We went with her gut and have never looked back.

5. **Run.** Go for a jog. Get the blood flowing. As [Dr. John Ratey](#) recommends in his book [Spark](#), regular exercise reduces stress, anxiety and increases the neuropath ways within the brain. **You learn better, are calmer and will make better decisions.** So if it's time to finally decide on which car you are going to buy, go for a run.

6. **Jump.** Hold your nose and jump on in. Turn down the job. Buy the car. Get engaged. Shut the doors to the restaurant. Go to the Ivy League school. Give it your all, what ever you choose. This is not the time to vacillate. **Commit to the direction and go.**

So what fork in the road are you dealing with?



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