

# Every good decision starts with a stop



*From our guest contributor Michael Josephson.*

Most of us are regularly confronted with choices that can have serious and lasting impact on our lives. What's more, most really bad decisions – the ones that mess up our lives – are made impulsively or without sufficient reflection.

Thus, the wisdom of the oldest advice in the world: "Think ahead." The maxim telling us to count to three when we're angry and to ten when we're very angry is designed to prevent foolish and impulsive behavior. But anger is just one obstacle to good choices. Others are fatigue, frustration, impatience and ignorance.

We can improve our lives immeasurably if we can get in the habit of self-consciously stopping the momentum of thoughtless behavior. We must force ourselves to reflect on what we are about to do. Just like we teach our children to look both ways before they cross the street, we can and should instill the habit of looking ahead in making decisions.

So every good decision starts with a stop. We must stop to sort out facts from rumors, to evaluate the evidence and devise alternatives so we can choose the most effective and ethical course of action. Stopping to think before we act also allows us to muster our moral will power to overcome temptations.

The “stop” is a break in the action that allows us to ask ourselves a few crucial questions that could set us on a better road:

“Wait, what do I really want to accomplish here?”

“How will my decision affect others?”

“What are my alternatives?”

“What could go wrong?”

*Give it a try next time you are making a decision. Don't forget to stop back and tell us if it helped in your decision making.*

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