

Clarity Map: Your Personal Decision Guide

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Decisions! Decisions! Decisions!

Should we take this job or that? Work on Project A or Project B? We can weigh the pros and cons of any option but in the heat of the moment, we are too often maddened by conflicting benefits. In today's world where all things are seemingly possible, the difficulty of making a decision is magnified by the range of possibilities. Knowing ourselves becomes ever more important because there are still only so many days in our lives.



One thing that can help is creating a Clarity Map to give us the insight needed to make good choices. This map should be done, as much as possible, long before a critical decision presents itself to you. Then, when you are faced with a choice or a new option, your map can help you make a decision.

Step 1: Excitement. To begin to develop your Clarity Map, it's important to know what you like to do. What is so much fun that you would want to do it even if you never got paid, even if no one ever said "good job," even if no one ever knew you did it?

**First Clarity Map question:
What excites my interest and passion?**

Make a list. Put down everything: hanging out with friends, playing golf, having fun, shopping, meeting interesting people, writing, hearing and telling stories, reading, and so on. Since work is a big part of our lives, be sure to think about the type of work you like to do: writing proposals, closing deals, thinking up new ideas, creating systems that make work more effective, leading teams, making presentations, and so on.

Think about: What do I love? Again, put down everything: chess, nature, beauty, color, solitude, mystery, travel, family, dogs, frogs, clothes, babies, trees, cars, and so on.

Start your list immediately and, throughout the day, add to it. Put down anything and everything that comes to mind. Think about the best times in your life. What was going on? Think about the most exciting projects you've ever worked on. Why were they exciting?

Step 2: The Yes's. It's important to recognize the factors that entice us into a new project so that we can recognize them when we are faced with making a decision about participating in a new project. Think back through your life and identify two or three times when you felt the most pride in your personal achievement, the most engaged with whatever was going on, the most alive. This could be a work project but it could also be coaching soccer, singing in a church choir, working with a group of volunteers to paint a house for a senior citizen, making a Halloween costume for your child, writing a poem, or planting a garden.

Choose a project where you can still feel the joy, pride and excitement of being part of that activity.

Second Clarity Map question:

What makes me want to say "yes" to a new project or opportunity?

Identify common elements of those project or activities. Were you:

- working on a team or in solitude, outside or inside?
- learning something new or doing something you knew well?
- collaborating or competing, with children or adults?
- working within a well-established structure or breaking new ground?
- mainly using your hands, your heart, or your mind?
- meeting new people or staying within the comfort of family or close associates?

List as many "yes" elements as possible and add to them throughout the day as you think back to these activities.

Step 3: The No's. Continue creating your Clarity Map by thinking about the two or three activities in your life that were most frustrating and least successful, projects that seemed to suck all the life and energy from you and left you with a hollow "why did I ever do that?" feeling.

Third Clarity Map question:

What makes me want to say "no" to a new project or decision?

See if you can identify common elements. Did the project or activity involve:

- lots of details or conceptualizing the big picture?
- high level of risk or completely routine?
- travel and moving around or staying in one place?
- being in front of people or being behind the scenes?
- regular or sporadic, unpredictable hours?
- taking detailed directions or making your own decisions?
- supervising other people or working alone?
- variety of tasks or repetitive routines?
- maintaining an existing system or creating a new process?
- control of the outcome or having it controlled by others?

When the project was over, what was your biggest loss: prestige, money, respect, self-worth, time, love, friendships, or health? What was it that made these activities cost more than they were worth to you? Write down all the elements you can think of that would make you avoid a new project or say no to a decision.

Step 4: Putting it all together. You've just been offered a new job on the other side of the country. You'll be leading a "power team" to create and launch a new product. The pay and benefits are terrific; the hours will be long with a great deal of foreign travel; the career visibility incredible.

Is this the opportunity of a lifetime or the job from hell? Depends on who you are, where you are in your life and what your Clarity Map looks like. To an upwardly mobile, energetic person who thrives on challenge, loves to travel and explore other cultures, this opportunity could be nirvana.

For a person committed to family time and participating in community activities, this could be life destroying.

We're all different and the Clarity Map helps you understand your unique strengths and weaknesses. Now it's now time to put everything you've learned from the past four days into the creation of your own map.

- Draw a circle in the center of a page and write the words "Clarity Map."
- Draw a branch up from the center of the circle and entitle it "Excitement." Write down all the elements that you said excite you on lines off that branch.
- Next, draw a branch to the right and on it write, "Yes!" Write down all the elements that you came up with that would make you say "Yes" to a new project or decision.
- Finally, draw a branch to the left and on it write, "No!" Write down all the elements that you came up with that would make you say "No" to a new project or decision.

Changing Your Clarity Map

This is your Clarity Map but it is not a fixed document. You change; it changes. You learn more about yourself; you add or remove elements from your map. To test your map, apply it to a project you are working on right now ... one that you had a choice of doing or not doing. If you were making the decision today and had your Clarity Map to look at, would you do the project? Often this will help you identify more elements for one of the branches of your map.

Remember, the Clarity Map is not a "decision map." It is not a piece of software. It doesn't make decisions for you, it just gives you clarity into what's important and what's not. It helps you look at the decision from the perspective of who you are and where you found your successes, and failures, in the past.

Sample Clarity Map:

