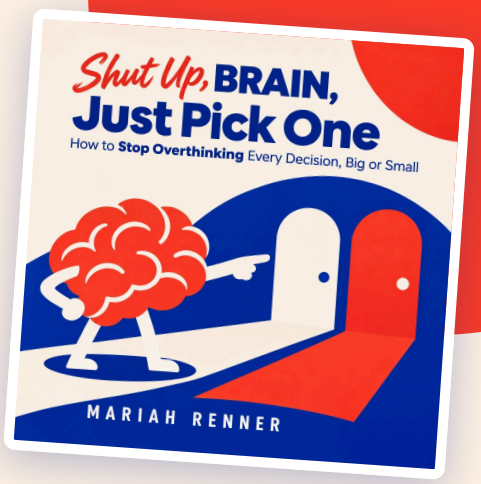
your free companion kit

Just Pick One Kit



For Shut Up, Brain, Just Pick One

How to **Stop Overthinking** Every Decision, Big or Small

THE PRINTABLE COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

The tools from the book, written down, so they're there the next time you catch yourself holding a box in each hand. Eight tools, with room to write.

MARIAH RENNER

SIZE IT · SET IT · SEAL IT · FREE TO PRINT



start here · with a pen, on a calm day

How to use this kit

Here's the job we'll use: Size it, Set it, Seal it. Every page in this kit is one part of that job, written down so you can try it on a choice of your own.

Size it

Size it means take a look at what your choice changes.

Set it

Set it means give yourself a finish and a limit on the options.

Seal it

Seal it means doing the thing your answer calls for.

A few house rules

1. Bring one real choice and take it through one page at a time. A small one is fine. Nothing here is homework.
2. **None of this is a speed contest.** Slow is fine for a big choice, and a small one can be done while the person is still standing there.
3. If the exercises in this book have given you another thing to get right, you can put them down. You don't owe that exercise another round. You can leave the whole business here.
4. If ordinary choices regularly demand everything you've got, the help page on page 13 is there for you now. You don't need a string of successful little decisions first. Help isn't a prize for getting good at the exercises.
5. Along the way you'll meet a few people: Rachel, Omar, Lena. Each of them is a composite, drawn from many real decisions, so no one person's life is on display.

BY YOUR PHONE

The Fact-or-Guarantee Question card and the Advice Is Not a Vote script.

ON THE FRIDGE

The six stages map and A place in the line card, for the days when several things want an answer.

IN YOUR WALLET

The closing line card and the Three Options, Then Two card, for the shop and the screen.

Only join in if it's safe to give this your attention. If you're driving, just listen, and try it once you're parked. That goes for every exercise in this book.

Inside

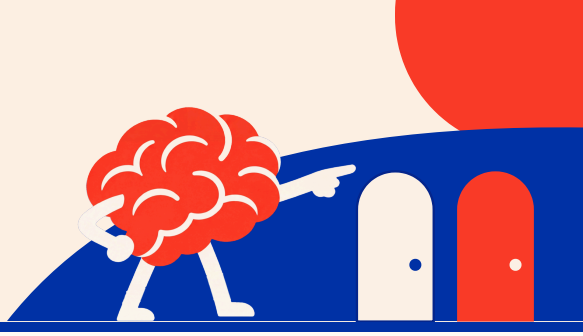
1 The Fact-or-Guarantee Question 3
2 The Size It worksheet 4
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+ Keep this page 14

Give a choice the time it deserves, not all the time you have.



tool 1 of 8 · keep it by your phone

The Fact-or-Guarantee Question



There's a question I use now. I call it the Fact-or-Guarantee Question. It goes like this:

FRONT · BEFORE ONE MORE CALL OR SEARCH

"Am I missing a fact, or am I asking for a guarantee?"

BACK · HEAR WHICH ONE YOU'RE MAKING

A missing fact needs an answer. The fear of being sorry would like a promise.

Once you hear which one you're making, you can do something other than ask it again.

- ☐ I'm **missing a fact**. A call or a search can answer it.
- ☐ I'm **asking for a guarantee**. Nobody can give it.

Cut along the dashes Fold on the dots

A FACT DOES A JOB

Once you have the schedule, you know something you didn't know before. Either way, an answer does a job.

THE REPORT FROM FEBRUARY

It's not silly to want that. The trouble is, a sensible person who loves you can say, quite sincerely, "You won't miss it a bit," and February is under no obligation to cooperate.

THE FUNNY ARITHMETIC

One evening of wanting the spare room gets to settle the question of whether you chose well. Would you do the sum the other way around?

Try it: the next little bit of looking

1. Think of the next thing you were going to do about your choice. Not the thing you might eventually decide. The next little bit of looking.

   My next bit of looking: _____

2. Put into words what that call or that search could tell you. Give yourself a moment to be specific.

   It could tell me: _____

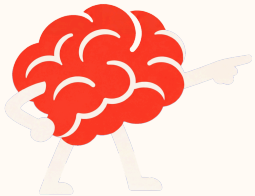
3. You might get two answers in one breath. Keep the fact. A prediction about how you'll feel is a different thing.

4. Now suppose what you hear yourself say is, "I want to hear that I'm doing the right thing." **You're allowed to put the phone down with the worry still there.**

5. It helps to have an actual job for those ten minutes, one with an end you can recognize.

   My job for the ten minutes: _____

Start small, with your next meal. Pick it without putting it to a vote.



If you're driving, just listen, and try it once you're parked.

tool 2 of 8 · before you give it an evening

The Size It worksheet



"This feels huge" tells you something worth knowing about how you feel. It doesn't yet tell you how big the choice is. **Start with Tuesday.** Pick a day on which nothing special happens and ask where, exactly, you would notice your decision.

There are three things to listen for in your answer.

How far does the effect reach?

You got the same invitation. You didn't get the same decision.

How long does it last?

You're allowed to have a disappointing lunch without doing any further work on it.

What would it take to change course?

"I can return it" and "changing my mind costs nothing" are two different sentences.

Size one thing now

Bring to mind one thing waiting for your answer. You won't have to decide it. We're only working out what sort of time it deserves.

The thing: _____

What would actually happen if it went badly? _____

Get past "It would be awful" to the bit somebody could see.

Who would feel it, and for how long? _____

You don't get extra credit for shrinking it.

What would it take to put right? _____

And what happens if you don't answer? _____

Not deciding has an outcome, too.

Now choose a pace, in your own voice.

- ☐ **"I can answer now."** For a small preference, try settling it when it reaches you.
- ☐ **"I want one comparison."** For a real inconvenience, give yourself one deliberate comparison. Remembering how much you like watching the game is not a new fact.
- ☐ **"This deserves time set aside."** For a choice that changes how or where you live, protect some thinking time. Give that thinking time a job.

THERE'S YOUR SIZE

A friend writes, "Coffee Saturday?" If the time stopped working, what would you do? Send another message. There's your size.

> **"I'd like that. Eleven?"**

MORE TIME? ASK EARLY

If the time before the deadline isn't enough to get her answer, she can ask for more of it. Before the deadline, not after.

You can stop there.

Before the day is out, find one small thing you've been treating like a major event.



You know whether you're free. You know whether you'd like to. Answer it while they've still got their phone in their hand.

If you're driving, just listen, and try it once you're parked. If you'd like to go through it more slowly, sit down with these same questions later, when you've got a quiet half hour.

tool 3 of 8 · for the crowded choices

Three Options, Then Two card

The time to set a limit is while you still remember what sent you looking. Set two, in fact. How many options get a hearing? And when does the hearing end?

MAXIMIZER MODE

Its question is, “But is it the best one?” Work backwards from the feature to a breakfast you’ve actually had.

SATISFICER MODE

All it means is that you know what you came for, and when you find something that does it, you’re prepared to buy it. **These aren’t permanent kinds of people.**

FRONT · THE CUT

1. **What it has to do.** What would make one no use to you at all if it couldn’t do it?
2. **Up to three.** Now name up to three options that actually do the job.
3. **Let the poor fit go.** Which asks you to put up with something you’d rather not? Let one go. Say the two names left.
4. **The small advantage last.** At the end you got to ask which small advantage you’d enjoy more.

BACK · ONLINE, THE SHELF NEVER ENDS

Use the filters for anything that would rule one out: the width, the most you’d pay, delivery by the day you need it.

Then pick a sort order you actually care about, perhaps price, and take the first three that pass.

Close the tab.

If you started with two, good. You don’t owe the exercise a third.

Cut along the dashes Fold on the dots

Make the cut with a choice of your own

What it has to do: _____

1. _____ **2.** _____ **3.** _____

The one I let go: _____ **The two left:** _____

SET A FINISH

A small field helps you pay attention. A finish gives you a reason to do something with what you notice. Omar gives the decision a delivery appointment.

Make a list. What do you still need to see, ask or try out? **If you can’t name what the extra time is for, it isn’t doing a job.**

My finish: _____

ATTACH IT, OR TRY BOTH ANSWERS

“After Friday breakfast, I’ll order one of these two toasters” gives you a finish you can recognize.

Try both answers first. “If it shuts, I’d like this place. If it sticks, I’ll apply for the other one.”

“I haven’t looked everywhere” isn’t that kind of missing fact.

You don’t have to keep a seat warm for an option that hasn’t shown up.



If you’re driving, just listen, and try it once you’re parked.

tool 4 of 8 · before you ask around

Advice Is Not a Vote script



You don't have to give up asking for advice. You can get much better advice with a much smaller request.

Ask one trusted person one question they're in a position to answer.

THERE'S A TELL

You ask a question. Somebody answers it. Before you've really considered what they said, you're thinking of the next person to ask.

NOT A LIMIT ON FINDING OUT

Ask as many as you've got. What the rule limits is asking the same question around the circle, hoping somebody will finally say it the way you want to hear it.

FRONT · THE QUESTION

Who I'll ask: _____

What they know from their own life: _____

My question: _____

_____

With a day and a time in the question, she can talk about her own week.

> **"In a normal week, how many nights did you work past six?"**

BACK · THE WORDS AROUND IT

When you have the answer

> **"That's what I needed to know. I'm going to sit with it after work."**

Thanks last

> **"A bit, yes. I'm glad you told me. Thank you."**

When you choose differently

> **"You were right about the room. The shorter trip mattered more to me."**

To the group chat, then mute it

> **"Thanks, all. Really helpful. I'm deciding after the viewing and I'll tell you where I end up."**

Nobody has been told their view didn't count. You've just stopped taking a show of hands.

Cut along the dashes Fold on the dots

ASK WHO HAS THE FACT

She isn't asking them to promise she'll never work late, or to talk her into the job. She's asking for facts about the role that only they can supply.

EXPERIENCE, OR A SHARED CHOICE?

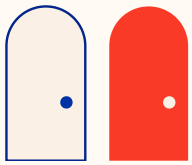
"I'd like to know what it was like for you" is a request for experience. "We need to work out where we're going to live" is two people making a choice that belongs to both of them.

MONEY OR A LEGAL MATTER

If a decision involves a large sum of money or a legal matter you don't understand, take the specific question to a qualified professional.

Or skip the poll altogether.

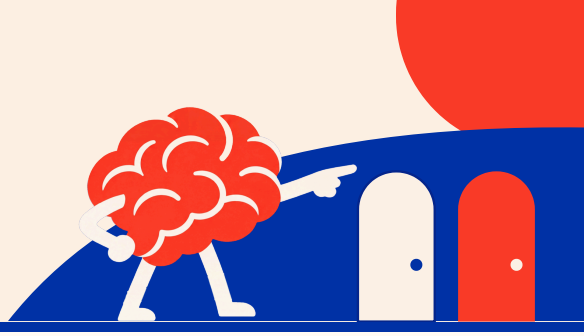
If what you really wanted was company tonight, send the message you mean: "Are you free for dinner?"



If you're driving, just listen, and try it once you're parked.

tool 5 of 8 · for a real either-or

The regret test worksheet



The regret test gives staying a Thursday, too. He's given staying the word "stay." Of course it looks peaceful by comparison. Nobody's in it.

Choose something that has come down to two things you could actually do. Picture an ordinary day one year after the first choice. Pick a time of day, say coming home from work. Keep the good part while you look. You're not going hunting for a disaster.

Choice one, a year out

The choice: _____

The time of day: _____

One thing I'm glad of: _____

One thing I miss: _____

Choice two, a year out

The choice: _____

The same time of day: _____

One thing I'm glad of: _____

One thing I miss: _____

No matching a lonely Tuesday in one city against a holiday weekend in the other, when everybody's off work and somebody's made a cake. Neither evening is a report from the future.

THE TWO QUESTIONS

"If I try, what might I wish I'd kept?"

"If I don't try, what might I wish I'd done?"

Listen to what comes after "wish."

GIVE IT ITS PROPER NAME

"Join the choir" sounds like doing something. "Don't join" sounds like failing to do it. Give the second choice its proper name.

Its proper name: _____

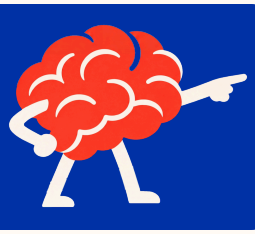
If staying protects something you deeply want, the test is allowed to favor staying.

FOR A CLOSE CALL, THE COIN IN THE AIR

Think of tossing a coin. You don't need to find a coin. Just send it up in the air and leave it there a moment.

Which side are you quietly begging for?

You haven't agreed to obey a coin. It's worth listening for the rest of the sentence.



Give the loss its name in the same breath as the thing you want.

I'd miss _____ **I want** _____

If you're driving, just listen, and try it once you're parked. You don't owe that exercise another round.

tool 6 of 8 · when the choice is made

The closing line card

Sealing is the point where comparison ends and follow-through starts. It does three jobs.

1
It gets done whatever your answer calls for.

2
It stops you putting the choice back on trial every evening.

3
And it settles, while you're thinking clearly, what would count as a real reason to open the case again.

FRONT · SAY IT ONCE

Start with one closing line.

"I'm taking the earlier train because I want time to walk from the station." Then book the train.

A small choice will do.



BACK · MY CLOSING LINE

I'm _____

because _____

_____

Let yourself hear that sentence without adding "unless." You can leave the space there.

The action that makes it real: _____

Cut along the dashes Fold on the dots

Try a closing line aloud

1. Think of something you've chosen but keep putting back on trial.
2. Say what you chose. Now say why it matters to you.
3. What action would make that answer real? Send the reply. Confirm the booking. You don't need one last favorable review to close it on.

A REASON GOOD ENOUGH TO ACT ON

You need a reason that's good enough to act on. You don't have to win an argument on behalf of early trains.

THANKS WITHOUT APPROVAL

She can thank them for their time without asking them to approve what she plans to do with hers.

RACHEL'S CLOSING LINE

> **"I want the work, but I want to keep my evenings more than I want this job."**

She opens her reply. "Thank you for the offer. I've decided to decline." She adds a line of thanks for showing her the work, checks the name at the top and sends the reply while the offer is still open.

Say the reason you actually chose it, then do the bit that makes it count.

If you're driving, just listen, and try it once you're parked. Page 9 has the fair rule for opening a choice again.

the closing line card, continued · a fair rule

When to open it again



There are good reasons to open a choice again. It helps to give them a fair rule, because at bedtime quite a lot of thoughts can present themselves sounding like urgent business.

THE TERMS CHANGE
That wasn't part of the choice you made. You're entitled to look again.

A FACT YOU MISSED
You're not being indecisive. You're trying to have lunch with your aunt.

USING IT
You've given it a fair try, and your reason for booking it isn't being served.

YOU CHANGE
Sometimes the facts stay put and you change. You chose well for what mattered then.

NOT A REASON

Has it changed anything important about the place you chose? No. Somebody saw a window and thought of you. "Oh, I'd grow basil there" is a perfectly adequate response.

THE REOPEN QUESTION

"What do I know now, or want now, that wasn't true when I chose, and what part of my reason does it change?"

What I know or want now: _____

The part of my reason it changes: _____

Not sure which? Look again on: _____

If you can't tell which you've got, give it a date rather than a debate. Look again in a month. If it's still there on an ordinary day, take it seriously.

SAME FACTS, SCARIER AT BEDTIME

"Same facts, scarier at bedtime" is not breaking news. The loss can feel sharper once the other option is gone.

> **"I turned it down. I'm a bit sad about it. I really liked the work."**

There's room for a whole conversation after a closing line.

AFTERWARD IS NOT A WARNING IGNORED

It's tempting to take what you learn after a purchase and hear it as a warning you ignored before it. "Next time I'll try the seat for longer" is something I can use when a salesman leaves me alone for a bit.

When you want something from the life you didn't pick

Stay with the moment itself. What was missing, or what wasn't working, just then? Get down to a plain answer.

The plain answer: _____

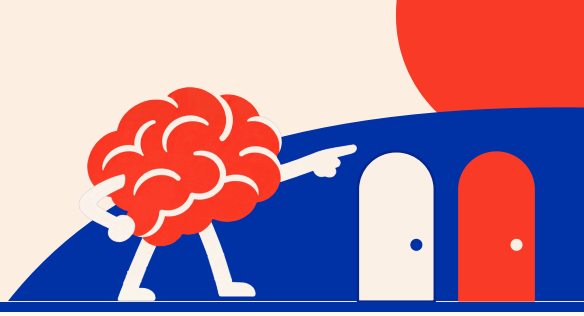
Missing a thing doesn't mean you chose wrong. So pick one thing your actual situation calls for.

One thing: _____

If you're driving, just listen, and try it once you're parked.

tool 7 of 8 · one fork, six short stages

The six stages map



BEFORE YOU BEGIN

If fear for your safety is shaping a relationship decision, set this exercise aside. Seek support in a way that's safe for you, from someone you trust or a service that helps people in your situation. If you're ever in immediate danger, from someone else or from your own thoughts, call your local emergency number, that's 911 in the US. Nothing in this kit is a prompt to confront anyone.

Choose one fork, not your whole life: a job, a move, an invitation that would mean giving something up. At the end of each stage you'll have one short answer to carry into the next. Write it on the line, then take it into the next box.

1 Name the fork, and look for anything that could change.

Say your fork in one sentence. Then ask what, exactly, you object to in how things are now. Could that one part change, without the whole thing having to go?

Carry forward your fork, and any third option you've spotted.

2 Find out which options are real.

Name the options you actually have. If one depends on someone else, say who, and what they'd need to confirm.

Carry forward your real options, and any one fact still outstanding.

3 Size it.

Who would feel your choice? What would change in a normal week? What would be hard to undo? Now say the cost that matters most to you, at the size it actually is.

Carry forward that cost.

4 What you want, and what you're afraid of.

Say your sentence: "I want this enough to give up that." Then say your fear without the insult. What's left is the part to take seriously.

Carry forward both.

5 Set the finish.

What do you still need to know, and from whom? When, and to whom, will you answer? "What will I know at the end of this that I don't know now?"

Carry forward a time and a person.

6 Seal it.

What's the first thing you'll do that someone besides you could notice? If one fact is still outstanding, say what you'll do with each answer, and when. Make it conditional.

Carry forward one action, or one appointment.

One worked fork: Lena

Her fork. "Take the design job or stay at the garden center." Third option: "Stay at the center on a weekday shift."

Her finish. Lena's manager can confirm the shift on Tuesday morning. She'll answer the firm Tuesday afternoon.

Her seal. "If the weekday shift can be my regular hours from next month, I'll stay. If it can't, I'll take the firm's offer."

A big choice doesn't owe anyone speed, but it deserves a place to land. If it's a decision appointment after the one fact that could change your answer, make the appointment. Fit it into the day you actually have.

If you're driving, just listen, and try it once you're parked. For a decision about a relationship, page 11 comes next.

A change made together

THE SAFETY NOTE COMES FIRST

If fear for your safety is shaping a relationship decision, set this exercise aside. Seek support in a way that's safe for you, from someone you trust or a service that helps people in your situation. If you're ever in immediate danger, from someone else or from your own thoughts, call your local emergency number, that's 911 in the US. The conversations we'll look at are ones in which it's safe for both people to speak.

One last part, for decisions about a relationship. If yours isn't one, you've done what you came to do, and you can stop here.

FIND OUT WHETHER IT EXISTS

Sometimes there's real affection, nothing decisively wrong, and something that keeps coming back. The third option is a change made together, and that's one you can't make alone.

Name the specific thing, not a verdict on the person.

> **"When money comes up, we stop talking, and I'd like that to be different."**

Ask whether it bothers them too, and whether they'd want to change it. If they would, agree on one thing to try and a date to talk about how it's going.

Our change

The specific thing: _____

One thing to try: _____

A date to talk about how it's going: _____

Some couples bring in a counselor to help with those conversations. If your partner says clearly that they don't want to change it, believe them. You're back to two honest options.

AND SOMETIMES THE ANSWER IS ALREADY CLEAR

Two people have been together three years. One wants to raise a child. The other has said, gently and clearly, "I don't want children. I don't mean 'not yet.'" Each has been understood. Being understood hasn't changed either answer. "Ask again in spring" is tempting. It would get them through this weekend. But it starts a waiting period the partner doesn't know they're in, and at the end of it they'd have to defend an answer they've already given.

THE FEAR UNDERNEATH

The fear underneath is often "If I hurt a kind person, that makes me cruel." Take "cruel" out. What's left is "Someone I love will be hurt by what I tell them." That's real.

STAYING

Staying can be an honest answer.

> **"I'd have liked to raise a child. I want my life with you more."**

It holds as long as "with you" means the person in the room, not someone you hope to persuade later.

GOING

So can going.

> **"I love you, and I believe you. I do want the chance to raise a child, so I'm ending this. I don't want either of us waiting for the other to give in."**

It hurts. Nobody in the room is a villain. Then let them speak.

If that's the fork you brought, be gentle with yourself about the time it takes.

You don't need to have the words ready tonight. You need a private morning, a clear sentence, and enough room afterward for both of you to be sad.

tool 8 of 8 · when everything wants an answer

A place in the line card

It takes one free hand to answer a phone, which is one more than you've got. Put the box in your right hand into the cart. Put the other one back on the shelf.

FRONT · THREE QUESTIONS

1. **When does somebody actually need an answer?**
2. **What does waiting cost?**
3. **What is this answer waiting on?**

Let that one step forward.

BACK · THE LINE

Your taco friend needed her answer before she could book. A yes took ten seconds. Done first, and done.

But your answer is waiting on the viewing at four. So she comes after the landlord.

That's the whole line. One now, one after four, one after that.

Each one has a place in the line.

Cut along the dashes Fold on the dots

My line today

Before you answer any of it, sort it with three questions: when does somebody actually need an answer, what does waiting cost, and what is this answer waiting on?

	WHAT WANTS AN ANSWER	NEEDS IT BY	WAITING COSTS	WAITING ON
1				
2				
3				

JUST WHAT YOUR YES WOULD COVER

Say just what your yes would cover. Go back to the question. How many did they actually ask for?

> **"Tacos sound great. See you at seven."**

A TIME AND A PLACE

If it needs more than this minute, give the answer a time and a place. "When we've both seen the room, we'll sit on the bench outside and decide."

THE REPLY FROM THE OTHER END

Now hear your reply from the other end. If you know you can come and you'd like to, see how many of those words you can leave out.

A REMINDER WITH A QUESTION ON IT

Set a reminder for when you need to leave. Put the question you want answered on it, too: "How much can I hear from the bedroom?"

Then pick one thing that's yours to settle, give it your answer, and let the person at the other end do something with it.



If you're driving, just listen, and try it once you're parked.

when you need more than tools

When "Just Pick One" Isn't Enough

YOUR SAFETY COMES FIRST

If fear for your safety is shaping a relationship decision, set this exercise aside. Seek support in a way that's safe for you, from someone you trust or a service that helps people in your situation. If you're ever in immediate danger, from someone else or from your own thoughts, call your local emergency number, that's 911 in the US.

This kit is general self-help, not medical or psychological advice, and not a substitute for professional support. If you ever feel unsafe or worried you might hurt yourself, call or text 988 in the US, call 911 in an emergency, or find a free line near you at findahelpline.com.

When choosing is hard most days, for a long stretch, it can have more than one explanation. One hard choice doesn't tell you why it's hard. You needn't try to match a morning of yours to a condition on the strength of a few examples in a book.

It's worth taking seriously what it costs you. That might be time you keep losing, things you need to do that aren't getting done, or how distressed you feel while you're trying to decide.

There's no exercise you ought to be doing instead. You can leave the whole business here.

WHO TO TALK TO

Consider talking with a mental health professional about what's been happening. It's all right if the first thing you want from the conversation is help making sense of it.

If your next thought is "Who do I even call?" a primary care doctor or nurse practitioner is a sensible first stop. You can tell them what's been happening and ask where they'd send you. If you have health insurance, the number on your card can tell you which providers are covered. None of these is the one right door. Any of them can be the first.

If you ever feel unsafe, the safety note above applies here too.

SENTENCES TO START WITH

> **"I spend so much time trying to feel sure that I'm missing things I need to do."**

> **"Even small decisions have started to feel too heavy, and it's affecting my day."**

> **"I'm a bit embarrassed telling you this, but we were there for quite a while."**

My own words: _____

NO LABEL NEEDED

If you're wondering whether to bring this to someone, you don't need a label first.

> **"I'd like to make a call after breakfast. Could you sit with me while I make it?"**

MONEY OR A LEGAL MATTER

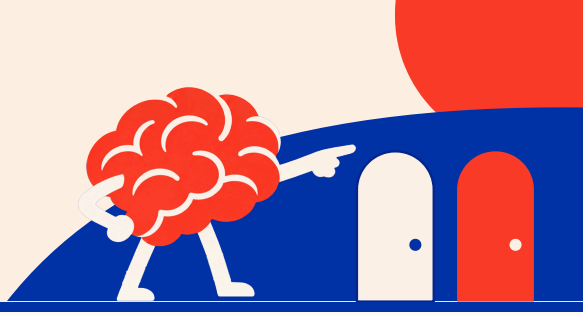
If a decision involves a large sum of money or a legal matter you don't understand, take the specific question to a qualified professional.

Struggling to choose isn't a character flaw. You don't have to get worse before you're allowed to ask for help.



to close · keep this page

Size it, Set it, Seal it



Give a choice the time it deserves, not all the time you have.

SIZE IT
The Fact-or-Guarantee Question and the Size It worksheet.

SET IT
Three Options, Then Two, Advice Is Not a Vote and the regret test.

SEAL IT
The closing line card, the six stages map and a place in the line.

THE KIT PAGE, FREE

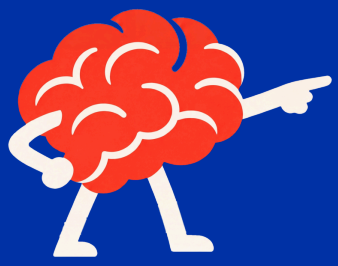
kalderno.com/justpick

Scan it to get this kit again or to print a fresh copy for the next choice.

You look at the shelf. There are two clean towels on it.

"I've got one for you."

Mariah

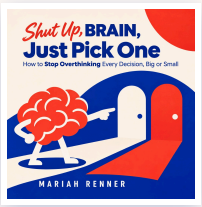


Your next choice, start to finish

What's waiting for an answer: _____

Size it. Its pace: _____ **Set it. My finish:** _____

Seal it. My closing line: _____



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