



What to Do When You Don't Know What to Do?

First, are you so busy that you have conflicting priorities? Or do you feel like you are at a dead end and don't know which way to turn? This distinction is important to know because one can lead to the other.

My area of expertise is finance so I will use some examples that have financial implications, but it's important to know that the ideas I put forward to help you answer the 'what do you do when you don't know what to do' question will work for other life areas too.

What if you are busy working on several business projects at the same time? The deadline for each of these is a week away and the financial rewards for completing them are significant – meaning they are worth doing and worth doing well. At the same time, you have your day-to-day work activities that occupy 90% of your working day, and your family commitments in the evening? You can push really hard to 'squeeze some extra time out of your day' for a short while, but for how long? If you keep running the treadmill faster and faster while simultaneously learning to juggle many different projects, you will sooner or later find yourself at the dead end, unsure which way to turn.

What's the answer to being too busy, or not sure where to go from wherever you are?

Start where you are.

I know this seems obvious, but it's actually the hardest thing to do. The reason we get stuck is because we are always living in the future of 'what if' or in the past of 'if only'. There is a strength and calmness that comes from right here right now. There are many tricks you can use to bring yourself into today – one of them is simply to take a deep breath.

Next, you need to know what your ideal scenario is. If you have conflicting project deadlines, the ideal scenario is likely not just to complete the project rather it's to receive the rewards from the successful completion. This step is your goal. In the case of being stuck, you actually need a series of very small goals: the next 5 minutes, 30 minutes, 1 hour, 1 day, 1 week, 2 weeks, 1 month, 2 months, 3 months, etc.

Take out your paper and pen and write your small goals at the top. In my case, I use a series of 3 x 5 cards and keep the current one on top and with me at all times: on my desk, in my purse, at meetings, etc.

Those extremely valuable tools called paper and pen are what you need for your third step to help you answer the 'what to do now' question. Start writing: pro's, con's, priorities, who can help, what are some consequences, what are some options? If your questions are around 'where you'll get money' for a project, for life, or for something special then there are many tools to help brainstorm answers, but the most important one is the cash flow projections that you can do on paper or with your checkbook. Here's how:

Start with everything you know about any income that will be coming into your home or for your project. Next, write down all the expenses you know are coming or associated with the project. Now you will have a current 'picture' of what you have available to put towards the situation or project. When you put these three things together, you will have the basis of a cash flow sheet: total income, minus total expenses, plus any current available access to money equals a positive or negative bottom line.

When you have this information, you put it together with your first two steps (starting where you are, knowing where you're going) and now knowing what you have to work with. When you put these three things together, you have everything you need to start asking: How? Who? What? When? Where?

And these are the three simple, but not easy, steps to take to answer the question "what to do when you don't know what to do?"

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