

Making difficult decisions

Sometimes it can be very difficult to make decisions, whether they are life changing decisions or comparatively small decisions. We sometimes lie awake at night, get pulled this way and that, find our mind racing from one thing to another, go over the same issues time and time again, receive conflicting advice from friends, find ourselves thinking only of the negatives (or positives) regarding a decision, etc. Even when we make a decision, we can be deeply troubled that we have made the wrong decision, or feel very differently once we have made the decision. People have found filling in the enclosed sheet and using the following technique helpful:

1. In your own words, write the 'changed situation' (e.g. 'leaving home'; 'drinking less alcohol'; 'going to college') and what 'carrying on the same' would involve (e.g. 'living at home'; 'drinking lots'; 'being unemployed').
2. *Brainstorm* the good things about the changed situation e.g. write down as many things as you can think of that would be good about 'leaving home'. Write them as they occur to you in your own words.
3. Then *brainstorm* the bad things about, for example, 'leaving home'; then the good things about 'living at home'; then the bad things about 'living at home'.
4. If you think of something that goes in another category (e.g. a bad thing about leaving home whilst writing a list of the good things about leaving) write that down in the other column, but then return to your original list until you can think of no more things.
5. At the end, read through your lists and add anything that comes to mind.
6. If appropriate, talk it through with people you trust and modify your lists if you need to.
7. Try and weigh up whether the good things/advantages of, for example, leaving home outweigh the bad things/disadvantages, and whether the bad things/disadvantages about living at home outweigh the good things/advantages. If so, on balance, it indicates that you want to leave. If not, on balance, it indicates that you do not want to leave.
8. Before going ahead with any decision, try to reduce any bad things about the changed situation, if at all possible.
9. Realise that you have to live with the consequences of any decision, and that if that was easy then you would not be so troubled by the situation.

The changed situation:

Good things/Advantages

Bad things/Disadvantages

Carrying on the same:

Good things/Advantages

Bad things/Disadvantages