



Personal Decision Guide

Adapted from the Ottawa Personal Decision Guide © 2006
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This guide is designed to help you make important decisions about your health and wellness. You can complete this on your own or work with a professional helper like a counsellor, a teacher, a support worker etc.

You will be guided through four steps:

1. Clarify the decision.
2. Identify your decision making needs.
3. Explore your needs.
4. Plan the next steps.

Clarify the Decision

What decision do you face?

What is your reason for making this decision?

When do you need to make a choice?

How far along are you with making a choice?

Are you leaning toward one option?



Identify Your Decision Making Needs

Do you have enough support and advice from others to make a choice? Yes No

Are you choosing with pressure from others? Yes No

Do you know which options are available to you? Yes No

Do you know both the benefits and risks of each option? Yes No

Are you clear about which benefits and risks matter most to you? Yes No

Do you feel sure about the best choice for you? Yes No

People who answer “No” to one or several questions are more likely to delay their decision, change their mind, feel regret about their choice or blame others for bad outcomes.

Therefore, it is important to work through steps three and four that focus on your needs.

Explore Your Needs

People in your life can influence your decisions.

Think about who is involved in the decision you’re trying to make.

Who else is involved?	Name:	Name:	Name:
Which option does this person prefer?			
Is this person pressuring you?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
How can this person support you?			

What role do you prefer in making your choice?

I prefer to share the decision with _____

I prefer to decide myself after hearing the views of _____

I prefer that someone else decides. Who? _____

Every option that you make has benefits and risks.

Fill out the chart below and identify what they are.

- Use stars to show how much each benefit and risk matters to you. 5 stars means that it matters “a lot”, no star means “not at all”.
- Circle the option with the benefits that matter most to you and are most likely to happen.
- Avoid the option with the risks that are most important to avoid.

	BENEFITS Reasons to choose this option	How much it matters	RISKS Reasons to avoid this option	How much it matters
Option #1 For example: Choose natural remedies to manage anxiety	I believe it's healthier for me	★★★ ★★★★	Not covered under drug plan	★☆☆ ☆☆☆☆
	I think there are less side effects	★★★ ★★★★	Risks are unknown	★★★ ★★★★
	Don't need a prescription	★☆☆ ☆☆☆☆	My doctor might disapprove	★☆☆ ☆☆☆☆
Option #2		☆☆☆ ☆☆☆☆		☆☆☆ ☆☆☆☆
		☆☆☆ ☆☆☆☆		☆☆☆ ☆☆☆☆
		☆☆☆ ☆☆☆☆		☆☆☆ ☆☆☆☆
Option #3		☆☆☆ ☆☆☆☆		☆☆☆ ☆☆☆☆
		☆☆☆ ☆☆☆☆		☆☆☆ ☆☆☆☆
		☆☆☆ ☆☆☆☆		☆☆☆ ☆☆☆☆
Option #4		☆☆☆ ☆☆☆☆		☆☆☆ ☆☆☆☆
		☆☆☆ ☆☆☆☆		☆☆☆ ☆☆☆☆
		☆☆☆ ☆☆☆☆		☆☆☆ ☆☆☆☆

Plan the Next Steps Based on Your Needs

Choose which of these make the decisions difficult for you	Choose which of the following you are willing to try
<input type="checkbox"/> You feel you do NOT have enough support	<input type="checkbox"/> Discuss your options with a trusted person (e.g. health professional, counsellor, family, friends) <input type="checkbox"/> Find out what help is on hand to support your choice (e.g. funds, transport, child care)
<input type="checkbox"/> You feel pressure from others to make a specific choice	<input type="checkbox"/> Focus on the opinions of others who matter most. <input type="checkbox"/> Share your guide with others. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask others to complete this guide. Find areas of agreement. When you disagree on facts, agree to get information. When you disagree on what matters most, respect the other's opinion. Take turns to listen, mirror back what the other has said matters most to him or her. <input type="checkbox"/> Find a neutral person to help you and others involved.
<input type="checkbox"/> You feel you do not have enough facts	<input type="checkbox"/> Find out about the chances of benefits and risks. <input type="checkbox"/> List your questions and note where to find the answers (e.g. library, health professionals, counsellors)
<input type="checkbox"/> You are NOT sure which benefits and risks matter most to you	<input type="checkbox"/> Review the stars in the balance scale to see what matters most to you. <input type="checkbox"/> Find people who know what it is like to experience the benefits and risks. <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to others who have made the decision. <input type="checkbox"/> Read stories of what mattered most to others. <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss with others what mattered most to you.
<input type="checkbox"/> Other factors making the decision DIFFICULT	List anything else you need: