



OUR STORIES, OUR SHELVES

MLA • DLA Conference 2026

Don't Miss!



50/50 RAFFLE

Tickets are \$1 each and can be purchased from **Conni Strittmatter** or **David Dahl!** The winner takes home half the pot.



PUB QUIZ

Thursday, May 7
8:00 – 10:00 p.m.
Choptank Ballroom



SILENT AUCTION

Visit the Silent Auction in the exhibitor hall to place your bids **before 10:45 a.m. on Friday, May 8th.**



KARAOKE

Thursday, May 7
8:00 – 11:00 p.m.
Windjammer



OUR STORIES, OUR SHELVES

MLA • DLA Conference 2026

Make Good Choices: Decision Making Under Duress

PRESENTERS:

Amy Dickinson

Amy Ford

Brittany Cornish



May 6-8, 2026 | Cambridge, MD

Making Good Decisions

This is an interactive session so get ready!

At the end of this training participants:

- **will learn how to avoiding cognitive traps**
- **learn how to maintain focus when time and stakes are high, and**
- **will learn techniques for managing stress.**

Every decision we make involves a chain of events.

The bigger the decision, the more life-changing the chain of events will be for the decision-maker and others around them.

The impact can be positive or negative, but there is always a consequence.

Elements of Good Decision Making

- I am **clear** on the problem that I am solving
- I have identified what I truly **want**
- I have generated a good set of **alternatives**
- I have gathered the **relevant information** needed
- I have **evaluated** the alternatives in light of the information to find the one that gets me the most of what I truly want
- And I am committed to **follow through** on my choice



Decision making in high-stress situations

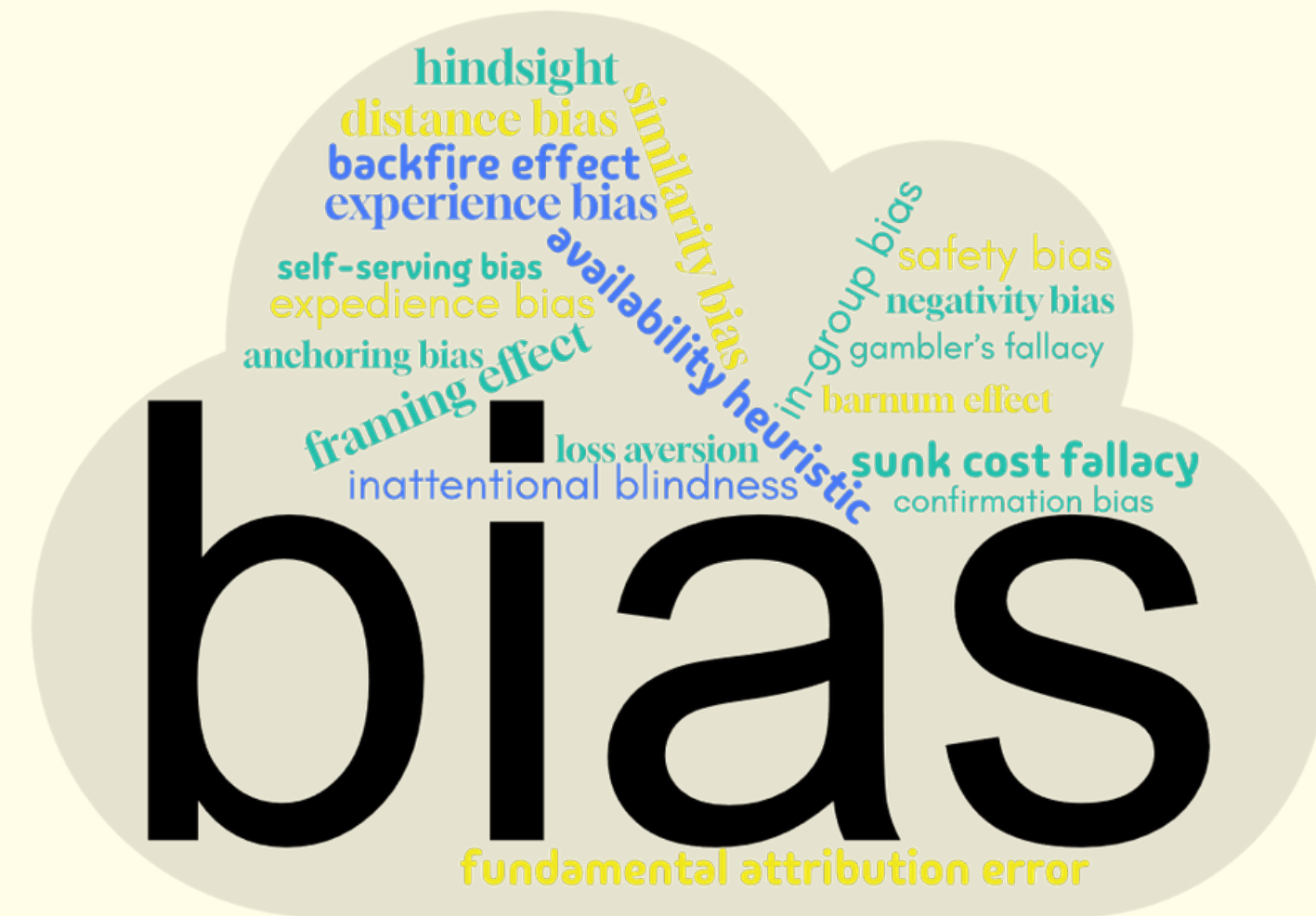
- 1 High stress vs. high pressure
- 2 Stress tolerance
- 3 Control the controllables
- 4 Uncover hidden options
- 5 Persist, pivot, or quit
- 6 Opportunity/sunk costs
- 7 Overcome cognitive biases

Understanding Cognitive Bias

Irrational Decisions

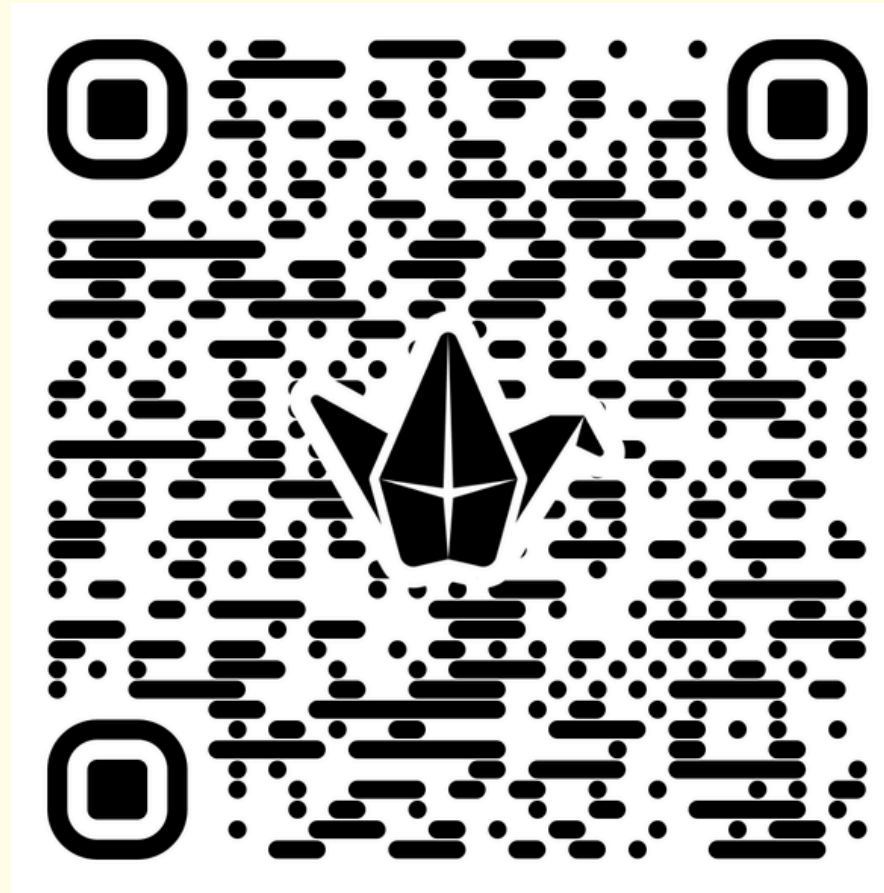
Quality Standards

Project Implicit



Making Decisions

How do you personally make decisions?



Scan the QR to submit your answer.

What gets in the way?

- Decision fatigue
- Distraction
- Emotions
- Analysis paralysis
- Not taking enough time
- Not involving everyone who needs to be involved, OR
- Not taking ownership of a decision
- Only trusting your gut feeling
- One solution/one decision

Decision Stress

Stress comes from not taking action over something you can have some control over.

--Jeff Bezos

https://www.inc.com/jeff-haden/25-years-ago-jeff-bezos-said-this-is-the-best-way-to-deal-with-stress-science-says-hes-still-right/91316277?utm_source=newsletters&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Inc+++Top+10.2026-03-22+-+10322&leadId=449415&mkt_tok=NjEwLUxFRS04NzIAAAGgtIP5XbWGc4oL3zRK57viWnnGaT-ksj9o81jgCIBWffU3FfZGxzYRTwnj-r8p2iHazovaO4gGPx5Kqv2M3m2PR10N-2ELhCQ707srb0QDF2E

When we experience an emotion, the physiological response—triggered by a stimulus—lasts about 90 seconds in the body before it dissipates...If we continue to dwell on the triggering event or keep thinking about it, the emotional experience can be sustained or re-triggered. In that sense, while the initial emotional surge is brief, the way we respond mentally to the emotion can either allow it to pass or make it last much longer.

Critical Thinking Steps

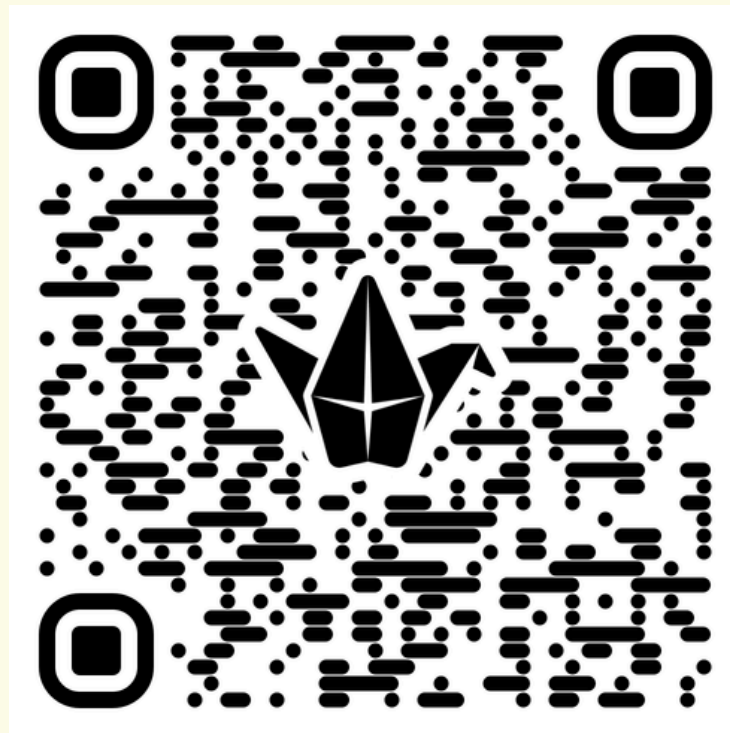


- Commit to the act
- Avoid decision fatigue
- Take a minute, if it is automatic it's not critical thinking
- See the perspective of the other side
- Keep your emotions out of it
- Make sure you have all the information needed
- Be prepared to follow through

“When making decisions, the Library considers its mission, operational needs, programs, customers, other Library employees, and the precedent set”

Making Decisions

How does your library make decisions, explicitly or implicitly?



Scan the QR code to submit your answer.

CHECK IN

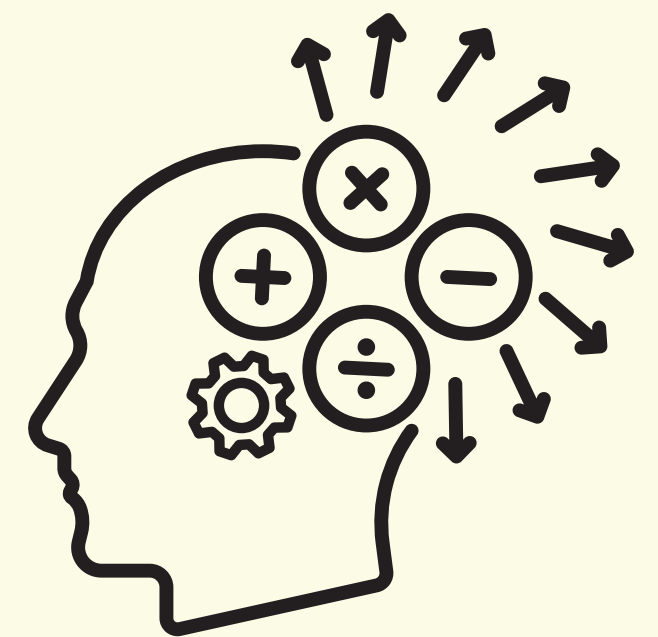
Some things may have been challenging so far.

- What emotions are coming up for you?
- What are you surprised by?
- What questions do you have so far?
- What challenges are you expecting?



What is Stoicism?

Stoicism is an ancient philosophy that originated in Greece and later gained popularity in Rome. It teaches self-control, rationality, and virtue as paths to true happiness. It's not about eliminating emotions but rather learning how to manage them to live a fulfilling life. There are four pillars of stoicism: wisdom, courage, justice and temperance.



Stoic Decision-Making

Applying Stoicism:

- Rational Evaluation
- Ethical Considerations

Dealing with Tough Decisions:

- Acceptance of Outcomes
- Continuous Learning



Control the controllables

Mistakes are learning experiences

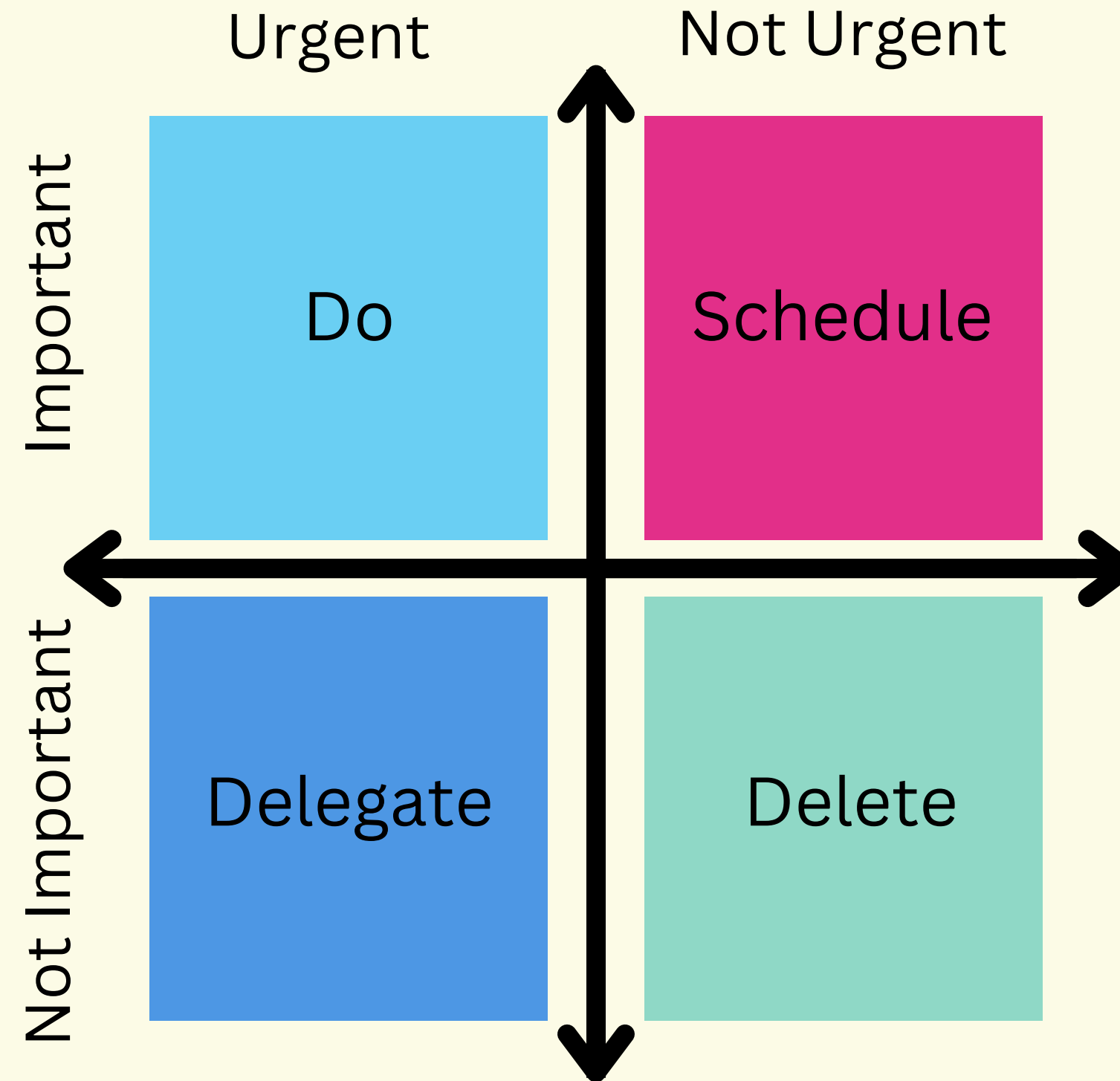
But I need to act quickly!!! Right?



Things to consider....

- Who should be involved in making a specific decision.
- What is the actual problem that needs to be solved.
- How will this decision impact the organization as a whole?
- Has the decision been made clear to all parties? Has it been documented?
- How long do you have to make this decision?
- Is this decision equitable to the party receiving it?
- Goals of the library!

Eisenhower Matrix



Scenarios

Using the matrix, determine how
you would rate
the following scenarios.

Scenario #1

Using the matrix, determine how you would rate the following scenario.

Your boss comes to you with a request to talk to your direct staff about an updated policy that should be implemented immediately. However, you are about to go to lunch.

Scenario # 2

Using the matrix, determine how you would rate the following scenario.

You run a team of five employees. Your boss comes to you upset about the disarray of the supply closet and how it is impossible to locate anything or keep adequate stock. She expects it to be resolved promptly.

Scenario #3

Using the matrix, determine how you would rate the following scenario.

A patron is parked crooked in the parking lot. They are not blocking any entrances nor is their parking impacting other spaces. A patron complains to you about its appearance.

Scenario #4

Using the matrix, determine how you would rate the following scenarios.

An employee has made the announcement that they are resigning from your system to abandon the library life to live in the wild. They will be leaving in 6 months and are a valued member of the staff. You need to prepare a going away party for them that involves cakes, celebrations and a didgeridoo.

Discuss

Using the template, pair up with someone about a work-related decision you made recently and walk through the decision-making process you went through. What would you do the same? What would you do differently?

Decision Notebook Guide

Decision:

Date/time:

Mental/physical state:

for example, tired, rested, confident, excited, rushed, focused, relaxed, frustrated, accommodating, hungry, full, anxious, annoyed, hopeful)

How I'm framing the decision:

Context and key variables influencing decision:

Options considered:

Safe assumptions:

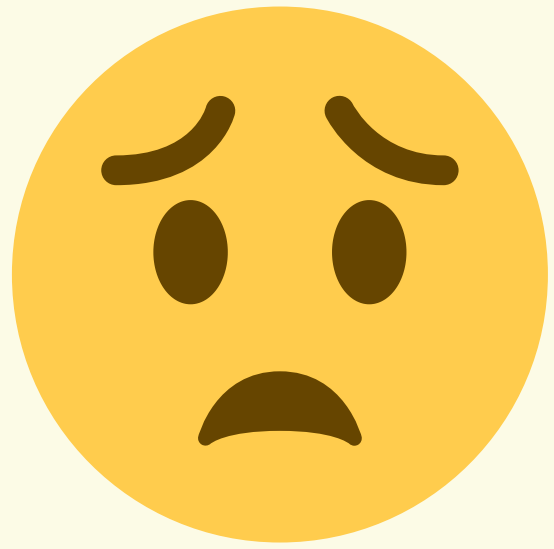
Potential biases:

Potential fallacies:

Expected outcome:

Actual outcome:

What I learned:

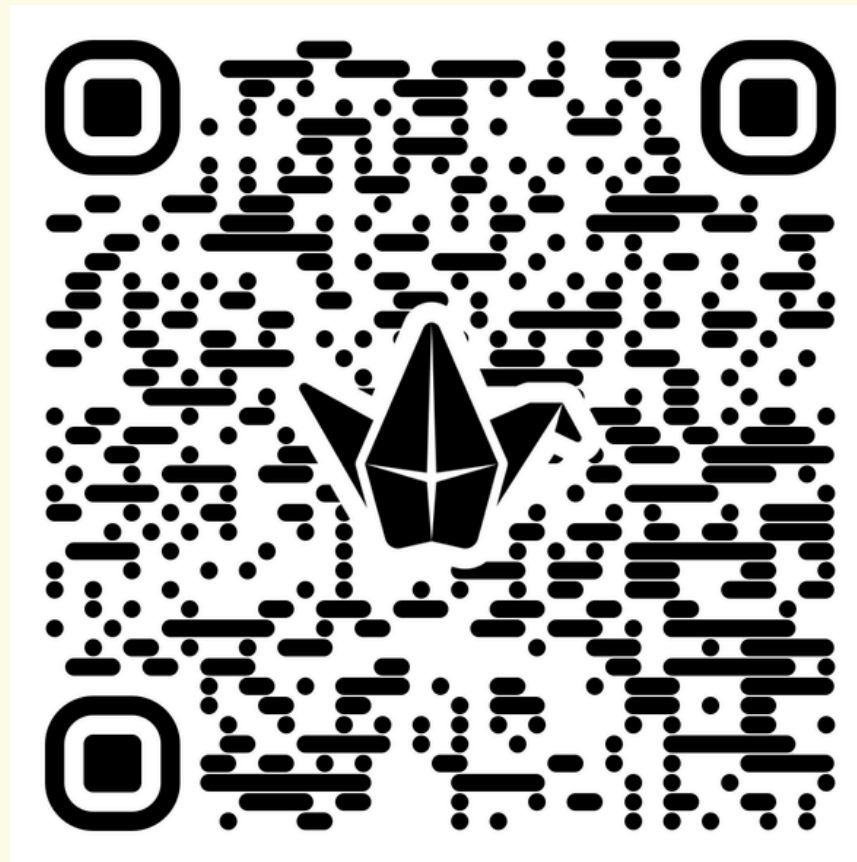


I've Decided....Now What?

- 1. The precedent has been set.**
- 2. Stress or relief may set in.**
- 3. You get to ask yourself “Did I Do The Right Thing?”**
- 4. Review the outcomes--after-action review.**
- 5. What trade-offs happened as a result?**
- 6. Remember, it's not a requirement to feel great about making a tough decision.**

Making Decisions

Have you ever had to make a decision you didn't feel great about? What was it and how did you navigate that situation?



Scan the QR code to submit your answer.

What if I make the wrong decision?

Recognize that you made a bad decision.

Get good at it! It's going to happen.

6 actions to take after making a bad decision:

1. Forgive yourself.
2. Determine how you can move forward.
3. Evaluate what happened.
4. Consider how to improve your decision making
5. Review the decision-making process. What can you do to establish a decision making process that works best for you?
6. If an apology is in order, make it. Take accountability for a wrong decision.



Role play
time!



Things to Remember

- Clarity on the problem presented
- All relevant info
- Bias/emotions
- Alternative solutions
- Evaluation and taking the time needed
- Follow through
- After action review



Scenario 1

A patron approaches the desk with a flyer for a free community PRIDE event that will be happening in the coming weeks. Your policy clearly states that a phone number must be included on all announcements, but this only has an email. A staff member who has never openly indicated any issues with the LGBTQ community but you suspect might be unsupportive of them, simply throws it away. The customer who provided it is a regular and you see them daily. What do you do?



Scenario 2

A customer comes in and notices a display for Black History Month. They loudly go on a rant about the “woke” agenda and that the display is not appropriate for the public library. They demand that the display be dismantled before they leave the library, or they will contact the county commissioners and give them your name. You are currently the only staff member at the customer service desk right now. How would you proceed?



Scenario 3

Two staff members come to you with a conflict. Jim frequently brings conflicts to you, but Tricia, one of your senior employees, rarely does. Jim says that Tricia asked him to move his book display and he says that she doesn't value his time and effort. Tricia, the gallery coordinator, says that Jim's display is in the art gallery space and the next artist is bringing sculptures to go in the display case. How would you resolve?



Take care of yourself

6 STEPS TO MINDFULLY DEAL WITH DIFFICULT EMOTIONS



1

Turn toward your emotions with acceptance

Become aware of the emotion and identify where you sense it in your body.



Identify and label the emotion

To stay mindful, say to yourself, "This is anger" or "This is anxiety."

2



3

Accept your emotions

Don't deny the emotion. Acknowledge and accept that it is there.

Realize the impermanence of your emotions

Even if the emotion feels overwhelming, remember that it will pass.

4



5

Inquire and investigate

Ask yourself, "What triggered me? Why do I feel this way?"

Let go of the need to control your emotions

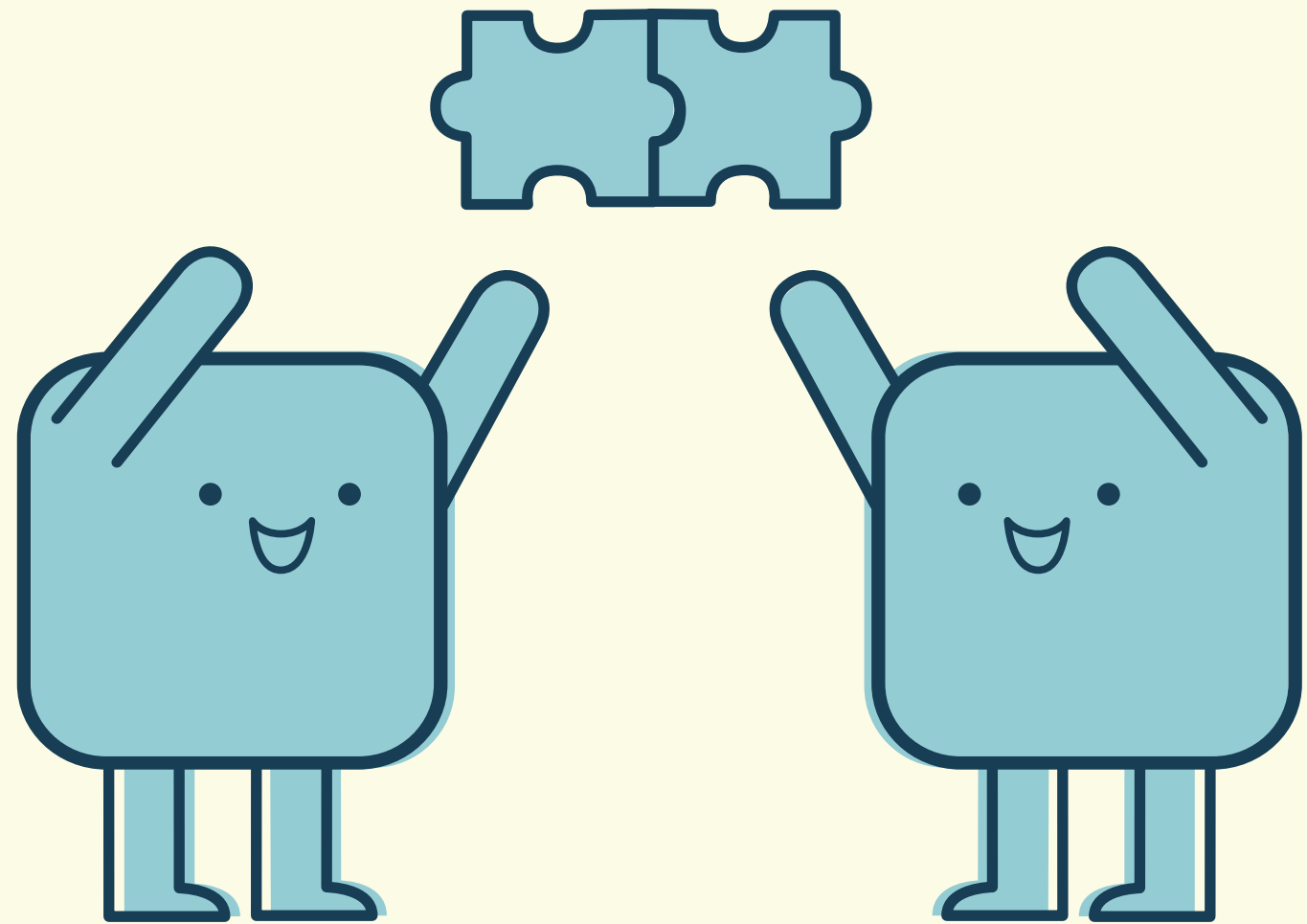
Be open to the outcome of your emotions and what unfolds.

6



The Gottman Institute

Wrap Up



- **What did you learn?**
- **What helped?**
- **What more would you have liked to learn?**
- **How to support your colleagues.**

**Please take a moment to
complete the program survey.**



SCAN ME!

Thank you!

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