




Decisions

	We argue about projects or even hide them from each other	We don't even know how we make decisions		My partner does projects and doesn't wait for us to decide together
We need a new frame of mind to promote harmony on our team				How can I get my partner to listen to both sides?
We can't start projects - it gets so annoying		My partner always has to be right and I hate giving in		
	We even have trouble picking out appliances together		We have so many stalemates & dead ends	

Decisions

Now sit at your Communication Table with some time and paper in front of you and call your meeting together.

State the topic and ask for ideas about how to address the issue – any issue – from what sort of addition to build, to whether to have 14-foot vaulted ceilings and bay windows.

These steps can be taken at your own pace & fashion, as you determine when to stop & start this process, over hours or days. Do not worry – this will not lengthen the preparations, but will organize them and prevent arguments and hard feelings.

Sharing and imagination come together

You have just accomplished a lot – you have taken some internal visions and ideas and made them part of the family's shared reality. As you elaborate, you are building a structure in front of their eyes. You all share the imaginary picture together – like children listening to a story together. You see the same thing – even

if it is not physically there. The muscles to do this take some developing. Inside you will notice your mind and emotions stretch.

That is good. This may not seem familiar, but it will become easier with practice. It can seem odd to separate an idea from your



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own self, but that too will come more easily as you gain perspective and delight in this new skill. This takes us out of our self-centeredness and brings us new perspectives from another vantage point. The advantage to this is that ideas can be judged objectively on their own merits, and all can then make contributions. Now, on to the next steps – where the puzzle pieces are put together!

Competing ideas

Now you have some ideas that are customized to your own values and situation. Probably well-developed ideas, hopefully blended with the input from the perspectives of the whole team. (If not, go back to above steps.) Yet we cannot carry out all of the good ideas we generate. The team must choose. Do we build a garage or a dining room? Do we renovate or sell? Do we paint it green or blue? It takes talking, thinking, and refinement of ideas – to develop all the alternatives to the point of acceptability. This is truly important so that your decision making is not a battle of win-lose or a competition of needs, but instead can be viewed as parallel realities – each of them leading to loving outcomes. If that is the case – are you ready to go on? (It is also OK to go back above and work more on the previous steps.)

Getting started.

List all the suggestions on a piece of paper.

Go through the communication ground rules and get consent to begin from everyone who will be included in the decisions making .

Agree to take breaks and re-open the discussion at a convenient time for all of you.

Take a few minutes together to recall the family's priorities and the goals of the project.

The Pitch. Let everyone “pitch” their ideas – taking turns. That is when they share positives about the options they suggest.

Respectfully listen even about differences.

List each idea. Not as owned by a certain person, but as a freestanding proposal that can be viewed on its own merit.

Look at where each proposal brings you – closer to the goals? Do some steps or proposals take you further from your goals?

Make note of positives and negatives for the proposals.

Take a break and replenish your team.

Get refreshment (not alcohol or you will be poorly equipped for the next steps), joke around, play a game, do something with the kids, whatever – to disconnect you from the attachments you may have constructed to YOUR ideas. Let ‘em go.

Take a Break. Get up and move around. It is time to insert another activity here. This activity is done and everyone needs time for this to settle.

Now - back to the table?

Discuss the ideas that were pitched.

Listen. Be sure to listen to each other as you hear the pros & cons of the various ideas. It will be more of a challenge to hear the negatives about

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ideas you have generated, but you will grow in the process. This is called “critique.” It is not meant to be “critical” of us personally on an emotional level, but it is an important part of decision making. Gaining the skill of receptivity to feedback can help you to be open to constructive input, and this will profit you in many areas of your life. (See the Deep Talk chapter). Remember that this is about ideas and not about people. If it starts to get personal, redirect the conversation to the list.

Acknowledging positives. Start with positives about each other’s ideas and suggest some concessions you have mulled over in the back of your mind since the last discussion. This does not mean you are settled on them, but that you can see the merits of the other ideas. Each person takes turns speaking up about how they see positives in the proposals that work toward your goals. This is a sharing and understanding time.

Gentle Negatives. Now – GENTLY evaluate the negatives, or aspects of the proposals that detract from progress toward your goals.

It is so, so important to be tactful and respectful in how you word these comments. If you are, the discussion can remain focused on the topic in front of you. If you blame and make broadly negative statements about each other, your conversation will turn into an argument and will not stay within the room, but will taint other parts of your home life.

Reward yourselves for the rewards – but again, no You will feel the effects of this approach to talking about decisions for several hours

- just like other exercise. You will slowly come to understand each other better and develop a pace that complements the unique blend of people you are.

doing that last step. Be creative in alcohol – as it defeats the process..



Creativity with Love added will blend ideas and needs – in TWO steps.

1. Brainstorming time.

Now that you understand the various ideas and their strengths and limitations, and are relaxed with each other, your team can shake loose some new ideas or variations on ideas that address the issues that have been shared. Write down as many as come up and keep the creative doors open at this time. All ideas are fair game. Letting even far-fetched ideas land on the table can often open the door to unique solutions that solve many of the quirks you have encountered. This doesn't mean you will implement each brainstormed idea as-is, but these ideas can help you to develop more realistic applications in the following steps.

2. Brain Stretching.

Now, with a fresh frame of mind you begin. (Are you ready? Rest and start again if need be.) Consider the list generated by the brainstorm. Can you stretch or modify any of these ideas in such a way that they compensate for any limitations encountered with the original proposals of the day?

This may take some time and conversations, which can be done during other activities and even over a few days or longer, as you let the inner parts of your brain solve the problems and seek inspiration. It is nice if there is no time limit. And it would be good to move on to other aspects of the job that are not in question so that progress or preparations continue while the decision-sharing and decision-making process comes to a conclusion.

You can repeat the mulling-over process by sharing ideas and listing strengths and limitations, repeating the steps pertaining to this above. Yet it is important to register the team's eagerness to conclude and move on. At some point, you conclude as a team that it is time to decide.

You can ask for outside help if you run out of creative solutions. This can be a great boon to the process. Sometimes a fresh point of view breaks a mental logjam and the ideas gush forward again!

Many, many times, your team will come up with new ideas or blends of ideas that are agreeable

by consensus and you all say, "So, let's do that!" This is great and is a normal result of this process.

Yet, there are also occasions in the home when competing ideas just don't blend at all and one must be chosen over the other. So, see the next steps.



Decision Time – with actively competing preferences

If you have sorted through all of the above and you are still on different pages, you will need to take further steps as a team to resolve the question harmoniously.

Your personal challenge: come to the table with your personal investment in particular options aside. Doing this will stretch you emotionally – but relax, these are just emotional growing pains as your character matures and strengthens.

Ready? A big letting-go inside.

Now breathe. OK? Let's go on.

Recap the **Home Team's** goals and the family's priorities in the project. List the ideas and their pros and cons.

Now it is time to cross off impossible items. (Ouch. But keep breathing, you will live and love again, and with these people.)

Reassure yourself and the team about the priorities and goals.

Look over what is left. Share: a) your feelings, and b) your understanding of how they line up against the goals & priorities, even if your favorite is a real loser in those terms. (Your team members need to know if you have put all your money on the underdog in the race.)

Each of you shares your opinion of the best bets for the outcome.

Now your informed proposals are on the table.

There may be differences. It is time for love.

It is also time for a break. Love is the way you will win as a team. You care about these other people. They care about you. Understand them, look at their opinions through their eyes and you will see why they hold to their ideas. Even if they know the idea may have major limitations.

If they are holding fast to an unrealistic idea that compromises budget, the time limits, or even safety, it may be that they need your help to accept the disappointment. Perhaps it is important to extend sympathy and acknowledge their loss. Perhaps a loss or longing must be faced. It is time for loving talk.

If they are being practical and you are the one longing for the unrealistic option, remember – you can meet your emotional or creative needs in other ways than by winning this decision. Let there be room in your head for turning around. Don't park yourself in a corner in your mental parking lot – you can get stuck in there. Give yourself some time and space to change your mind and open up some talk about it by inviting the others to talk with you about your feelings.

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**Decision Time –
with actively competing preferences**
continued

You all can have practical but different preferences. If so, you can find a way to choose one or the other.

You can measure which one of you feels most strongly about their preference, and then see if you can live with implementing some form of that preferred option.

As a compromise, you can even divide up the final decision by having one person choose the colors, for example, while the other chooses the form.

You can decide to be generous and let someone else fulfill their desire. After all, if you have come this far in the discussion and the options are all practical and meet the common goals – why not? There is no loss if another's proposal also achieves the goals.

You can make a deal to go one way this time and the other way on another decision. Trading can be fun - try using toy money to lighten the negotiations.

You can make a category decision and place certain types of decisions into each person's hands according to roles you agree will work out well for the home.

You may need some time for other activities so that inner problem solving and loving healing can occur. Allow for this inner process, and then gently ask again about the issue.

Many issues resolve themselves through this process. In any case, the steps above can be repeated a number of times as you progress through the decision process.

For YOUR Home Team ~ You will use your developing emotional and mental muscles to do this activity. Just stay with it - yes do rest and take breathers, but don't give up on the process that will help you understand each other, and make decisions that span your perspectives and experience. If it were simple they'd let kids get married in gradeschool. This wonderful additive process is what makes a strong **Home Team** such a great asset to your family.

Notes from Decisions

Some ideas to start with in making decisions together~

A. Getting Started

Think up some possibilities - when is it a good time to talk about ideas?

B. Now prepare to address the ideas

Name 3 ideas your partner has shared in the last month about the project? ... why do they like each?

Idea:

& Why they like it (-- be nice!):

1.

& why -

2.

& why -

3.

& why -

Now, pick one of your ideas and blend it with one of theirs -

(It is fine to get silly here. It is good for the brain even if not practical)

C. And the process - of your Home Team's decision making

Rewards are an important part of Teamwork. Come up with 5 different rewards for your team that do not involve substances or too much money.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.