

Here's how to make the very best decisions



Making decisions can be harder than we realize. (Photo: Getty Images)

Making decisions is a normal part of life. And whether you realize it or not, you're constantly making choices. Some, like what kind of coffee you want to drink today, are pretty insignificant, while others, like whether to accept a new job offer, are kind of a big deal.

It can be intimidating and a little scary to make those big-impact choices — what if you decide wrong? Now new research published in [*Nature Human Behavior*](#) has found a way to increase the odds you'll make the right choice — and here's how to do it: You should talk to people about it first.

For the study, researchers analyzed data from Holland Casino promotional campaigns that ran during the last seven weeks of 2013, 2014, and 2015. For the campaigns, visitors to the casino could take part in an estimation contest — the person who most accurately guessed the number of pearls in a huge champagne glass won more than \$117,000. Over three years, 1.2

million people participated in the contests.

Here's what scientists discovered: The average estimates that people made on their own were pretty accurate. But, they concluded, polling other people before you actually make a decision should help you reach an even more accurate estimation. "We find that combining judgments from different people leads to better estimates, and thus decisions," lead study researcher Dennie van Dolder, an assistant professor of finance at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, tells Yahoo Lifestyle. "The reasoning is that error in judgments cancels out." This is called "the wisdom of crowds."

While the study was conducted on a casino game, van Dolder argues that it applies to other decisions in life as well. "Consulting people may help you make a good decision because they will bring different perspectives to the problem," he says. "Combining their judgments with yours will thus lead to a 'bigger picture' judgment that is less likely to be biased in a particular direction."

Licensed clinical psychologist [John Mayer](#), PhD, author of *Family Fit: Find Your Balance in Life*, tells Yahoo Lifestyle that it just makes sense. "Consulting people is good in decision-making because it provides us with more data or facts on the decision," he says.

Still, who you talk to matters. "One of the biggest dangers of consulting others before you make a decision is that those you consult may not be reliable, intelligent, and insightful sources to help you make the decision," Mayer says. It makes sense that you'd turn to people close to you to help you mull over a big decision, but that might not be helpful because they may share your biases, skewing the overall decision, van Dolder notes.

If you're faced with a big decision and you have time to mull it over, van Dolder recommends talking to several different people and taking all of what they say into account before making your final decision. If it's not possible to talk to several people about it (for example, with something really personal or highly specialized), he recommends making multiple judgments yourself over time and combining those to get your answer.

“This works best if the decision maker has a bit of time to make the decision, so that she can sleep on it, and change perspectives between estimates,” he says.

Ultimately, you know what’s best for you, but bringing a few other people into the mix when you’re stumped should be able to help you make a decision that feels right.

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