**Don’t Listen to Shakespeare**

You know how it is. You make a stupid decision, and that stupid decision causes a whole mess of other bad choices and problems, and you sit there moping about and wondering how to escape the whole jumbled state of affairs. There are two alternatives that could possibly solve the problem. Alternative one is changing your name and moving out of the country, but that's a little extreme. The easier and more practical way is to listen to my simple advice for problem solving and decision making. I know what you're thinking, "Oh gosh, not another one of these articles," and I know you don't want to analyze every single individual step of choosing a peanut butter or ham sandwich for lunch. But hey, look at Romeo and Juliet. They made a bunch of bad decisions and they both ended up dead. Moral of the story, don't be an impulsive teenager. That, or actually think about what you're doing. Okay? Please? Let's keep the suicide rate from going up. These 5 simple steps in decision making will without a doubt help you make the right, or at least close to right decision.

   **Step 1: Think about why you have to make the decision in the first place.** Is it really necessary? If you're choosing between a ham sandwich and a peanut butter sandwich and you're out of peanut butter, the decision has pretty much already been made for you. Analyze why the decision has to be made, and that could also help you think of other alternatives. And don't be afraid to ask around your inner circle of friends (or your outer circle, it doesn't matter to me, I’m just the author) but be sure that you're asking the Sandy Cheeks of your group and not the Patrick Star. You wouldn't want to end up as a fry cook living in a pineapple, now would you?

   **Step 2: Look at your possible choices and your alternatives.**As for the peanut butter sandwich or the ham sandwich, what if you want a BLT instead? In the Shakespearean play Romeo and Juliet,Romeo and Juliet get married, and when things get complicated with the marriage and the promise of Juliet to a man named Paris, their choices are to either accept an incredibly risky plan of a potion and sleeping and deception that Friar Laurence concocted, or in their cases, since they're both incredibly suicidal, ending their own lives. However, there was the alternative that involved telling Juliet's parents and that may have solved all of their problems and perhaps Romeo and Juliet could've lived to see their grandchildren.  Juliet is already afraid of the potion not working, she had an entire soliloquy about it! "What if it be a poison which the friar subtly hath ministered to have me dead, lest in this marriage he should be dishonored because he married me before to Romeo?" (IV.4.24-27) Notice how telling her parents never even crossed her mind. I know that as teenagers we want to do everything on our own, but seriously guys, sometimes it's best to go to the people who raised us.

   **Step 3: What do you want? What's important to you?**Even though decision making when you're a teenager is difficult and kind of confusing, your opinion is still just as important as any of these steps. If you come to a verdict that makes you completely miserable in the long run, then what was the point? Your opinion and what you want are important in any decision, you just have to make sure you take precautions beforehand. Had Juliet told her parents that she was in love with and had already married Romeo, there is a chance that her parents would understand and call off the marriage to Paris. Within the brain, an immature prefrontal cortex is the main cause of bad decision making and impulsiveness in adolescents. Juliet chose not to tell her father of her undying love for Romeo, despite the fact that her father admitted to Romeo being a good kid.  "He bears him like a portly gentleman, and to say the truth, Verona brags of him." (I.5.66-67) In Shakespearean talk, Lord Capulet commented on Romeo's good reputation, yet because of the feud she still refused to tell him.  Our desires and opinions are important factors in making decisions as long as we aren't impulsive about it.

   **Step 4: Narrow your options down to the two best ones.**After much deliberation, you've been able to narrow down your alternatives to the two best choices. You've thought about why you have to make the decision, you've thought about all your options, you've taken your opinion into consideration, and you've gotten down to the nitty-gritty, nail-biting, hold-your-breath part. Okay, I know it's not actually that exciting. Even though you've gotten to the two last choices, don't be afraid to go back and reconsider. Juliet's two alternatives were an unnecessary plan or suicide. She could've gone to her parents, but no. Make sure your choices you're choosing between are the right choices. A premature prefrontal cortex can slow a teenager down, but it's not impossible to make the right decision! Careful thought and a delicate problem solving technique will defeat any cortex.

   **Step 5: Take a deep breath and make your decision!**You've done everything right so far, the only thing left is the easy part! Go with your gut! Either both your alternatives are good and either one will turn out well, or one is clearly better than the other one, making your decision easy. That's all there is to good decision making. It's a tedious process, but why risk making the wrong decision? You are where you are today because of decisions you made yesterday. Hopefully you make the right decisions today to put you in a good place tomorrow. And when it comes to relationship drama, don't take advice from Romeo and Juliet. The world is better off without a bunch of “Thus with a kiss I die." (V.3.120) and "This is thy sheath; there rust, and let me die." (V.3.170). It would make the world a lot less drama filled. Take it from me, just be careful and don't let your prefrontal cortex get the best of you. I wish you luck as an impulsive teenager!

Works Cited

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