

## Ep #7: Making the “Right” Decisions in Your Divorce



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**With Your Host**

**Lauren Fair**

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You're listening to *The Sensible Split* podcast, Episode 7. Today, we're talking about when not knowing if you're making the right decision has you stuck in decision making in limbo.

*The Sensible Split* is a podcast for smart but overwhelmed women in search of a roadmap to a successful separation and divorce. If you are looking for guidance in navigating the practical, legal, and emotional aspects of divorce with confidence, this is the show for you. Here's your host, Master Certified Life and Divorce Coach, Divorce Attorney, and Mediator, Lauren Fair.

Hey there, friends. It's great to be back with you. I actually just got back from my trip back east with my kids. It was a rough trip in, shall we say? Yikes! Aircraft mechanical issues, adverse weather conditions, and flight delays made that a very challenging trip back home.

Far too long of a podcast episode to share all the details with you but suffice to say it did not look like it was supposed to, at all. We couldn't even check bags because of the adjustments that we had to make. My husband had to overnight a huge box of clothes us. It just was quite the debacle.

We finally touched down at 5:30 in the morning of the memorial service. We're leaving mid-morning for the memorial service, and we get in at 5:30 that morning. So, that was fun. Upon landing, my kids who had been really great up to that point, had been real troopers for what we had been through, my poor son vomited on landing. So, there was that.

Yeah, have you ever had a trip like that, just a disaster from the get-go all the way up to the end? That was this trip for us. So, we slept about two hours, we headed out to the service, we made it, and it felt right to be there with family. So, I'm glad we made the trip.

The kids skied for the first time during our trip, which was really fun to witness. So, all in all, it was great to spend some quality time with family. The service in getting us there, not so great. But it happens, right?

Anyway, I also just wanted to take a moment to acknowledge the power of coaching, and how it allowed me to show up as the person that I wanted to be

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for my grandmother's memorial service. I was the family member who delivered the eulogy for my grandmother at the service. There was a time when I don't think I would have elected to take on that role.

When I was first asked to do it, I noticed I had resistance to doing it. I got curious about what that resistance was about. It became clear to me when I did that, that one of the primary reasons I resisted it was because I did not want to feel the feelings I would have to feel in order to take a trip down memory lane and relive the good times with her, in order to generate the material for the eulogy.

They were things from childhood and from earlier in life, that I knew I had there in my memory, but having to go there and really think about these things in detail I knew was going to bring up a lot of feelings, like sadness, grief, vulnerability, maybe even powerlessness, that I didn't really want to feel.

We tend not to like those feelings or want to put ourselves in positions to experience them, and I definitely felt that come up when I thought about what to write in a eulogy. I also noticed myself thinking I wouldn't know what to say. I was able to pick up on that and realize that that was just a thought I was experiencing but didn't have to keep if I didn't want it. I reminded myself that even if I might not right away know what to write, that I could figure it out.

And so, I just decided to get started. I told myself I would just start writing, see where it went, and I opened myself up to feeling those emotions I wanted to avoid, really. Knowing that they were temporary, I could weather them, and they would flow through me. And so, I just started to write my notes on my phone. It all just came through to me.

I coached myself, similarly, about the delivery of it. I was overtired, having gotten there late beforehand, having barely slept the night before, and was becoming a bit emotional as it became so real, when we got her service, that she was really gone. I could have easily told myself at that point, I was too tired to do it. I was too emotional to do it. Maybe all these people sitting out there wouldn't like what I had to say.

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Instead, I got up there and I confidently and vulnerably delivered a eulogy that I think beautifully honored my grandmother. I couldn't help but feel proud of coaching myself through achieving that goal for my family, but also for how much I took care of myself from beginning to the end of that process.

So, it was really just something that stood out to me as a shining example of how much coaching has helped me develop the skills over the years, to help me evolve as a person. I just wanted to share that with you.

Today, I want to talk to you about decision making. When you're going through divorce, you're faced with so many decisions along the way, some big decisions, some smaller decisions, and making decisions can be hard enough for us during calmer times. But especially when emotions are running higher than usual, as is often the case during divorce, making decisions can be extra challenging.

So, what do we do when we're having trouble making decisions? Thinking that there's a “right” decision and fearing we will make the “wrong” one, we get stuck. We poll our friends and family on what they think we should do. Maybe we endlessly research the topic. Sometimes we even abdicate our decision making to other people.

Okay, so what is the consequence of doing that? We either end up stuck in decision making limbo, where we don't make decisions at all. Or we make decisions that we ultimately regret, because they weren't the decisions, we made for ourselves based on our own values and desires.

Being stuck in indecision is very costly. Unmade decisions can be a source of stress and confusion, and just keep us in a limbo state. Continually debating what the right decision is takes up a ton of mental space. That creates that stress and confusion, and also takes up brain bandwidth away from focusing on other things in our lives.

Making decisions based on other people's opinions, can create outcomes in our lives that we don't want. And then, we tend to blame the other person whose opinion we onboarded as our own in making that decision, which can also create stress both in your own mind and in your relationship with others.

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So, today, I want to offer you a way of thinking about decisions that can free you up to actively work toward making a decision on whatever it is that is on the table to be decided for you at this time. Whether it is to stay or go, which attorney to choose, what parenting plan to accept, how much spousal support to settle on, where to move to after your divorce, etc. This shift can help you move forward.

If you're hung up on whether you are making the “right” decision, I want to offer you this. There are no objectively right or wrong decisions. There are just decisions you make. And how you think about the decision you made afterward is what determines whether it was right or wrong. You have the power to determine that.

It's not something that objectively exists outside of you. You get to decide to support your decision or not. And that comes from how you choose to think about the decision that you made. It's the fear of thinking in ways about the decision you made that would produce feelings like regret, embarrassment, shame, disappointment, something like that; a feeling of that flavor that you're trying to avoid.

But whether you feel those feelings about your decision is within your control. So, I want you to think of a decision that you need to make through the lens of this framework.

First, ask yourself: What do I want to do here? Most of the time, we know deep down what we want to decide, and then our fears about making that decision to creep in. But we often know what actually we want underneath it all.

Second, ask yourself: Is there anything else I need to know, that can be known, in order to decide? Obviously, we want to do our due diligence here. If there is information that is material to this decision that we don't have, get that data for your consideration. That might mean talking to a professional, or an expert of some sort, to get answers about a process or about the likelihood of success on a particular claim. Things of that nature.

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Do your due diligence and get the data that you need in order to close those gaps between where you are and being able to have enough information to make the decision.

Recognize where there may be things that we'd like to know, but we just can't at that point. Because there are going to be those things, too. Things we'd like to know, but there are answers or guarantees that we can't be given. Just recognize those for what they are.

Consider your reasons in favor of opting for one option versus another, and how you feel about those reasons.

Then you just decide with the best information you have available. And here's the key part, you are going to decide ahead of time to have your own back about the decision that you made, regardless of the results it produces. What does it mean to have your own back? It means you are going to make an intentional decision to speak to yourself with kindness, support, and compassion, regardless of the results of the decision.

This is easy to do when the decision produces the result that we want, right? It's when the decision doesn't produce all of the results we intend and desire that it becomes more difficult. Regardless of the results produced, you're going to decide in advance, and honor that commitment to yourself, to have your own back by treating yourself with kindness, support, and compassion about whatever the results are.

You're not going to judge yourself or be mean to yourself about it. It might feel like you don't have control over that, but you do. And it comes from recognizing the fact that you're having a thought about the decision that you made, and intentionally choosing another one.

So, notice your brain wanting to go there, to judge yourself for the decision, or otherwise be mean to yourself for what you decided. The first step of that is awareness and seeing that that's what's happening. Then you get to interrupt it. Remind yourself, “We're not doing that. We're not going there.”

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And remind yourself of the thought that allows you to be in a space of self-compassion, rather than self-judgment. One that I love, that you can borrow if it works for you, is, “I made the best decision I could at the time with the information I had available to me.” That allows me to be compassionate toward myself. And from that space, I move on, and I make the next best decision that I can or take the next best action toward my goal.

If I'm being mean to myself about my decision, telling myself, “I made the wrong decision. I can't believe you did that, you're so dumb,” whatever it is, that's going to create an emotion that is likely to keep me stuck and not have me moving forward toward my goal. Or to any place that is useful for me at that particular time.

So, sometimes you're going to make decisions that lead to the results you want, and sometimes you won't. And when you don't, allow that to happen without judgment. Because it's really the judgment that we fear the most.

You also get to change your mind and course correct based on new data, right? That kind of goes back to the thought that I offered you, “I made the best decision I could at the time with the information I had available to me. And if that information is now different, I give myself permission to make a new decision.”

I want to share an example with you, and this is the example that stood out most clearly in my mind as something that I wrestled with in recent history. It was about elective surgery that I was considering having. I wore myself out with this decision, seriously. I think I wore out my closest friends with it, too. I went around and around with whether to do it. I polled friends and family. I researched it. I joined an online discussion group about it.

I wanted it, but I had so many fears about having it. I had questions I wanted to have answered, so I consulted with three surgeons, and I got the answers to those questions. I also had concerns about outcomes that could not be answered. Things that could not be predicted, about whether they would happen or not. I recognized those and I realized no one could guarantee me a specific outcome.

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Then I decided to proceed with it, even though I had doubts and open questions that could not be answered, because that's what I believed I really wanted. And I knew I could decide in advance that I would make this decision right by the way I talked to myself about it, regardless of the outcome.

It was a good outcome, but not exactly as I wanted. I also have some lasting physical pain, actually, in one of my incisions; physical pain almost daily from a nerve issue that may or may not ever resolve.

So, that actually gives me an opportunity almost every day to revisit this decision. It's like a reminder that I made the decision that led to that, and I have an opportunity for that every day to decide it was wrong; to be mean to myself about having made that decision. Like, “You wouldn't have this pain if you hadn't made that decision.”

I don't do that. I make a conscious decision not to go there, and I honor it to myself. Because I think there were many positive effects from the decision. I think I am overall better off for having done it, despite some of the negative consequences of it.

And because there is no upside, at this point, to telling myself it was the wrong decision. That does not help me in any way. Right? I also could have just as easily decided against the surgery and made that the right decision by the story I tell myself about that decision.

I hope that makes sense for you, in whatever context you may be making a decision. The key takeaway is, there is no objectively right or wrong decision. There is the decision that you make, and that you then make right by the way you think about it.

So, figure out what you want, do your due diligence, decide, and then have your own back about the decision that you made. You have the power to make your decision the right one, regardless of the results it produces. Okay, I hope this was helpful for you. If you're making a decision, and you're running into difficulty, this is a great opportunity to get some coaching on it. Okay?

Alright. I'll see you all next time.

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