

What happens to your brain when you sleep on it?



Did you ever have to make a tough decision with no easy answer? One of the most common ways to solve such a dilemma is the famous Benjamin Franklin list, or now more commonly known as the pros and cons list. Take a piece of paper and draw a line down the middle and on one side list all the reasons for, or benefits and on the other side list all the reasons against or negatives. The premise is that by the time you finish your list, the choice will be self evident.

That sure sounds easy, but in today's complicated world there can be a wealth of factors to consider. Take the example of Marissa Mayer a Stanford University graduate who switched her career major from a pediatric neurosurgeon to an engineer.

In the later 90's Marissa had 14 different job offers to consider. She described the process of one ending in tears as she relied on friends, including an economist, to chart and graph all the variables. Marissa's primary problem was any of the offers could have been a good choice. Wise counsel from friends suggested that she "sleep on it" and make her decision in the morning and commit to it.

What is it that magically happens in the brain overnight?

Most commonly the brain is offline from having to interact with all the daily conscious awareness that demands attention. Despite being asleep, your brain is still working. It's continuing to process information – it's turning significant short term memory events into longer memory records as well as attending to different kinds of problem solving.

That's why you may have an Eureka moment sometimes when you wake up first thing, sometimes in the shower which seems to be the most common place, or anytime when you least expect it. Some people have even mastered the skill of setting intention with the expectation their brain will produce

the solution or insight as needed.

But back to Marissa, which one did she choose?

She did not choose the major consulting firm McKinsey & Company, known to be supportive of women and a source of future Fortune 500 CEO's. Instead she chose a small firm of 20 people where she would be the only woman engineer. As she describes in her interview with Bianca Bosker of the Huffington Post, in the morning she knew what she wanted and made the commitment.

What Marissa wanted was to work with smart people and wanted to work in an area that she was unprepared for. So, Marissa Mayer in 1999 accepted the job offer from a new start-up called Google, which she gave a 2% chance of success. Today, she is a senior executive overseeing major Google products and services.

Sometimes we try so hard to make the right decision that we let all the logical pros and cons get in the way. Not to say that we should ignore them. **However, by letting some time pass and allowing your brain to sleep on it can make all the difference in the world.**

Source:

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/07/06/google>