

Familiar with the phrase

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I remember that as a child, I didn't have difficulty making choices. My first vivid memory of a situation where I clearly had to make a conscious decision, something which was imprinted in my mind forever, came with a visit to a toy store at a mall.

Familiar with the phrase, like a child in a candy store? It was the same thing- but obviously with toys in all shapes and sizes; some were mechanically animated with blinking lights, amusing music and sounds and moving parts. You would have expected a child of about 4 (I think I was four or five) to have simply sat there and insisted on living in the store if mom and dad didn't buy everything in sight for them to take home.

But things didn't turn that way. I did spend a substantial amount of time browsing through the shelves, holding this, admiring that and generally wishing we could buy everything I wanted and fretting a little bit like any typical four-year old. But in the end, I knew what I really wanted from among the bewildering array of choices. It was a choice that had been made with a combination of facts (I saw an ad on television), common sense (I knew it was a toy my other siblings wouldn't be so interested in), and most importantly, it was an object that I was happiest with.

The toy by the way was a Lego set- I was four and I was in a building phase plus the fact that the Lego pieces were nice to chew on when no one was watching. As years passed by and the Lego was replaced with various other toys, contraptions and amusements, choosing became more complicated and even tedious.

Could it be possible that a four-year old be more adept and actually be more “matured” in making decisions and choices than a fifth-grader who was actually already taking high-school level Algebra, or an eighth-grader who suddenly showed an aptitude for music and was playing the piano like a pro?

For some reason, that incident at the toy store became nothing more than a memory. The older I got, the more I got confused and distracted even as my intellect had grown by leaps and bounds. In fifth-grade, I was the school nerd who took high-school Algebra lessons for the fun of it. But when it came to making choices about summer-camp, or something as trivial as what type of breakfast cereal to eat, I was a wreck; an annoying, back-tracking, undecided 11-year old. In eighth-grade, I could read sheet music as if they were comic books.

But I caused my father agony when I hemmed and hawed at what high-school to go to; special music high school, regular high school? - I couldn't make up my mind. My mother told me to my face quite bluntly; “you're a genius at a lot of things, but it's sad that you can't even master the basics.”

So when faced with college and what career path to take, I set aside the memory of last year's fiasco of a vacation (didn't know whether backpacking to Europe, or Mexico, and ended up missing an important loved one's birthday because of my indecisiveness) and focused on that lovely summer's day at the toy store when I was four-years old.

I closed my eyes and opened my heart and my mind. I shut out all distractions, biases, fears and pretensions. I was again a four-year old, innocent and guileless, a child who was at the edge of knowing what he

wanted and knew that he had a family who would always support him. But more importantly, he knew what he truly wanted, what made him happy, and that never changes even if you were four or 90 years old.

And so I made a choice that had been made with a combination of facts (I had an incredible aptitude in math and science), common sense (it was a hot-career and most in-demand), and most importantly, it was something that I was happiest with simply because having made that decision almost ten years ago, not a day passes that I don't thank the fates, God and myself for having made that decision.

That choice by the way, was deciding to go to medical school and later joining the United Nations medical corps for special missions to places in the world where crucial medical and surgical procedures were urgently needed.

Fifteen-hour work days, lack of equipment, threat of civil war, the pains and aches of the sick and a child's smile thanking you for saving her life- yes, I am like a child again in a toy store.

Work Cited

CareerPlanning (2007) Career choice of change. Retrieved January 1, 2007 from http://careerplanning.about.com/od/careerchoicechan/Career_Choice_or_Change.htm