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# The PACKARD PRESS

A collection of thoughts and stories to educate, entertain, and inspire.

## PARALYZED BY POSSIBILITY

### How to Quiet the Noise and Just Decide

Each of us has hit that point where making a decision feels impossible. Sometimes, it's because we have too many options. Even after the decision is made, buyer's remorse or FOMO (fear of missing out) can make us wonder whether we missed something better. This reinforces the fear of making the wrong choice.

We think that more options will make us happier. But studies show the opposite. When we walk into that aisle loaded with every type of deodorant imaginable, our brains have difficulty processing it all. When option overload gets so overwhelming, it actually leads to anxiety and dissatisfaction. (This phenomenon is called "The Paradox of Choice.") Having too many choices can ultimately reduce our satisfaction and well-being.

As a kid, my dad would come home from the video rental store with just two movies. We had to choose between just those two, and we were all excited to watch the one we chose! Compare that to what we have now. Think about the countless movies available on streaming. My wife jokes that I spend more time trying to pick a movie than actually watching it.

To battle this, we go through this weird selection process we call the "veto route." We each add a couple of options to the list of movies, and then take turns picking one to eliminate. This technique is also helpful in other situations, like choosing a restaurant or deciding on a board game.

Indecision doesn't always come from having too many options. It can also come from perfectionism or the fear of failure. This fear can cause us to delay making a choice, so we push the decision down the road. But as it turns out,

not making a decision is still a decision! It is deciding to postpone. This inaction can lead to missed opportunities, stagnation, and unnecessary stress. And as the unmade decisions build up, we begin to feel overwhelmed and fatigued.

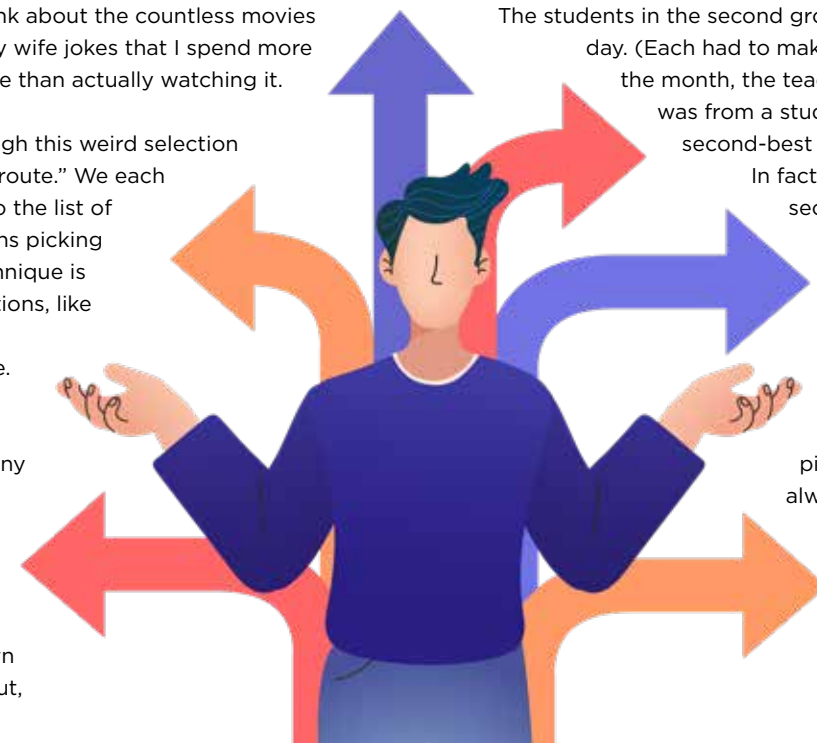
There are a few ways to overcome decision fatigue. Relying on recommendations from others you trust lets you skip to the end of the decision-making process. Another way is to just go with your gut. This tactic is particularly helpful when all the options are about as good as all the others, so just make a choice and move on. Remember, making more decisions is better than making a single "perfect" decision. Yes, you will need to make occasional course corrections, but things will be much better overall.

Sometimes, you need to practice making decisions. I heard a story about a pottery teacher who split his class into two groups. Each student in the first group was to work on a single pot for 30 days. The students in the second group had to make a pot every single day. (Each had to make a total of 30 pots.) At the end of the month, the teacher judged the pots. The best pot was from a student in the second group. So was the second-best pot. And the third, fourth, and fifth.

In fact, the 10 best pots all came from that second group. They had learned from their mistakes and improved day by day, pot by pot. Like the pottery students, our decision-making will improve as we make more decisions.

Making a choice, any choice, keeps us moving. So, stop overthinking, pick something, and trust that you can always course-correct along the way.

-Michael Packard



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## FROM SKY TO SAVANNAH

### The World's Most Remarkable Animal Migrations

Across the globe, animals of all shapes and sizes embark on extraordinary journeys that defy the imagination. Whether by flying, swimming, or running, these migrations are nature's way of balancing survival with the ever-changing world. Some of these trips cover thousands of miles, while others involve climbing mountains or crossing rivers, but each demonstrates resilience, instinct, and the interconnectedness of life on Earth.

#### A Record-Breaking Traveler

One of the most remarkable travelers is the Arctic tern, a small seabird from the icy North Pole that flies to the far reaches of Antarctica and back, logging up to 25,000 miles! That's the longest migration of any animal on the planet. For a bird weighing less than a smartphone, it's an incredible feat.

#### Journey Across Generations

The monarch butterfly tells a different kind of migration story: one of teamwork across generations. Starting in Canada and the northern U.S., monarchs head south

toward central Mexico. Along the way, they breed and die, passing the torch to their offspring. By the time the journey is complete, 4-5 generations have passed over the span of the trip.

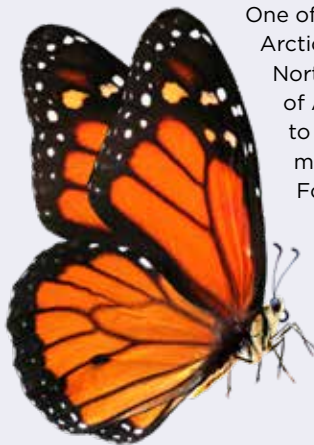
#### The Great Wildebeest Migration

On the savannahs of East Africa, over a million wildebeest, accompanied by zebras and gazelles, follow the rains in what's known as the Great Migration. Their route forms a massive loop across the Serengeti and Maasai Mara, filled with dangers, from predators like lions to perilous river crossings guarded by crocodiles. Despite the risks, this spectacle continues each year.

#### Altitudinal Migration

While some species traverse continents, others take shorter but equally vital journeys. Many animals, like Red Pandas, spotted owls, and snow leopards, practice altitudinal migration and climb to higher elevations in summer when food is abundant. Then they descend in winter for shelter and warmth. Though smaller in scale, these seasonal shifts are just as critical for survival.

Migration is a survival strategy shaped by millions of years of evolution. Nature's great migrations are living reminders of resilience and interconnectedness. Every journey, whether by bird, butterfly, or wildebeest, shows how far life will go to endure.



# Freedom in a Deck of Cards

## The Secret Tools of War

James Bond gets the movie credit, but real spies in World War II were pulling tricks long before 007 hit the screen. Their work wasn't flashy; it was desperate. The British intelligence agency MI9 and later the American MIS-X program were tasked with helping Allied soldiers escape Nazi prisons or avoid capture. That meant turning everyday objects into tools.

Take the button compass. It looked like part of a soldier's uniform, nothing more. But inside sat a tiny magnetic needle. Line it up on a string, and suddenly you knew which way was north. Hairbrushes carried folded maps or money. Monopoly boards weren't just for killing time; they came with real bills mixed in, and if you saw a red dot on "Free Parking," chances were good there was more than a game in the box.



A few companies, including the U.S. Playing Card Company, also did their part. Soldiers could peel away the top layer of a card to uncover silk escape maps. Cigarette packs from the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company carried radio parts. Gillette even made razor blades that acted like a compass if you balanced them on a stick. What's remarkable is that the companies involved never asked for recognition or payment. Gillette, R.J. Reynolds, and the Playing Card Company volunteered and helped.

And the gadgets kept coming. Radios hidden in suitcases. Hollow heels in boots with maps tucked inside. Even Ping-Pong paddles had secret compartments. Guards saw these items and didn't give them a second thought. That was the point.

Most of the devices were destroyed when the war ended. But enough stories survived to give us a glimpse. Clever doesn't even begin to cover it. For many prisoners, a deck of cards or a shaving kit wasn't just a distraction. It was a shot at freedom.



# Get Smart About Sugar

## ELIMINATE THIS HIDDEN HAZARD FROM YOUR DIET

Most Americans know that too much sugar in their diet is bad for them, increasing the risk of heart disease, cancer, obesity, Type 2 diabetes, and other chronic conditions.

While avoiding candy, desserts, and sugary drinks may be the first thought that comes to mind when you think about reducing sugar, that may not be enough. You may be getting hidden sugar in other foods that masquerade as healthy choices, such as granola, processed snacks, and smoothies. Hidden sugars are a major reason 12%-16% of most Americans' daily calorie intake comes from sugar, instead of the recommended 5%-10%. Here are three ways to eliminate hidden sugars from your everyday diet.

### Read Labels

Did you know that ketchup is more sugary than ice cream? Marinara and other sauces are sugary culprits as well. Some canned foods also contain large amounts of sugar. A consumer's best defense is to read labels. The most prevalent ingredients are listed at the top. Also watch for its many other identities, including high fructose corn syrup, maltose, and dextrose.

### Choose Full-Fat

Nonfat or low-fat foods might seem like a healthy choice, but they often contain more sugar and calories than the full-fat alternative. Also, full-fat foods tend to be more satisfying. For a pleasing dessert, try combining a full-fat dairy topping with fresh fruit. The natural sugar in fresh fruit doesn't rocket straight into your bloodstream in the same harmful way the sugar added to processed foods does.

### Increase Protein

Not only are protein-rich foods good for you, but they also curb your appetite and carb cravings. In fact, they have the opposite effect as sugary foods, which tend to *increase* cravings and weight gain! Protein-rich meat, fish, eggs, avocados, and nuts can all be tasty allies in reducing hidden sugars.

Don't tackle all these dietary changes at once. Choose one at a time and stick with it until it feels natural. Embracing new habits gradually makes them more likely to stick!

# IN A TOUCH-STARVED WORLD

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE EMBRACE EACH OTHER

A hug speaks a universal language. It says, "I'm with you." From my son's football team gathering around him after he made a defensive touchdown to a quiet hand on someone's shoulder when they need comfort, physical touch reflects the connection we have as humans. Let's Hug Day is on December 3rd, and at a time when it feels like we have a physical touch deficit, it's even clearer how simple touch, like a high-five or a handshake, can bridge the gap between us. Science backs it up. A hug releases chemicals like oxytocin that are good for us. But beyond biology, hugs affirm our human needs to belong, to be seen, and to stand together.



A well-documented connection between humans and physical touch has existed since the very beginning of our species, when you literally had to stay close to survive the elements. Physical touch can comfort people when grieving, like the hug you get at a funeral, or bring romantic partners closer together, like when they hold hands. Touch can also signal solidarity and camaraderie, like warriors touching foreheads to say, "We are going into battle together."

Biologically and emotionally, humans need appropriate physical affection. Some studies have found that newborns require skin-to-skin contact to develop properly. Touch is fundamental in the development of the brain, nervous system, healthy weight gain, and even in regulating a baby's heartbeat. In a famous case of orphans in Romania, the babies left in their cribs without being rocked or held simply failed to grow at the right rate, despite receiving the basic care they needed to survive.

Physical touch is more scarce nowadays, but we need it to the core. Obviously, we always have to respect personal space, comfort, and health, but a hug or a high-five can make a huge difference for someone. We may have overcorrected as a society. Maybe it's time we find our way back to a simple, genuine connection that doesn't come from a screen, but from another person, a hand on a shoulder or a warm embrace.

A small touch or a hug can remind us we are not alone in the world, and everyone should feel like that.

## TAKE A BREAK



Cardinal	Gifts	Pinecones
Cookies	Menorah	Sagittarius
Frosty	Mittens	Snowball
Gingerbread	Peppermint	Yule

## Baked Feta, Tomato, and White Bean Skillet

### Ingredients

- 2 pints cherry tomatoes
- 2 (15-oz) cans no-salt-added cannellini beans, rinsed
- 4 medium cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 2 tsp Italian seasoning
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 6 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 6 oz feta cheese, packed in brine, cut into 4 pieces
- 1 tbsp hot honey
- Basil leaves, for garnish
- 4 slices toasted whole-wheat country bread, optional, for serving

### Directions

1. Preheat oven to 450 F.
2. In a large, oven-safe skillet, combine tomatoes, beans, garlic, Italian seasoning, and salt.
3. Drizzle with 5 tbsp of olive oil and stir gently.
4. Add feta pieces 2 inches apart in the mixture and drizzle with remaining olive oil.
5. Bake for 30-35 minutes, or until the tomatoes have burst.
6. Remove from oven and drizzle with hot honey. Garnish with basil leaves, and serve with toast if desired.

Inspired by EatingWell.com