

Decision Fatigue

I love it when a new label is dropped into my reading to describe something I experience.

I learned recently that decision fatigue describes how I feel when I look into my tie array to make a selection for the day.

Steve Jobs, Mark Zuckerberg and former President Obama shared a common solution to eliminate at least one decision in their day. They limited their wardrobe inventory to only one or two choices. What an interesting but boring coping mechanism! At least, it is cost effective.

Decision fatigue progresses throughout the day. The quality of decision-making seems to model the law of diminishing returns. Apparently, we have a finite capacity to make choices before the brain suggests it's time to chill. I wish I had coffee beans or tiger-eyed marbles or even a pocketful of pennies to throw at every decision I make. Perhaps then, I'd know when it's time to stare blankly into a hard question like "Would you like fries with your salad?"

If I could chart the poor decisions I've made in my life, assuming I could locate a gigantic chart, I'm sure a scatter-plot would appear in the late hours of a day.

My good decision inventory approaches zero as the day progresses.

Note to self: Don't make big decisions with limited reserves.

I've also learned the power of trusting an external brain. My analog planner stores details needed for full-brain decision making. The more I off-load throughout the day—the more inventory I have remaining for deep work activities. Focused work is diminished by an urgency to decide "right this minute."

Better decisions are made during deep work—undisturbed by time tyranny.

When I pinball my way through a day of knee-jerk decisions, only the jerk is revealed.

“Who is the man who fears the Lord? He will teach him in the way He should choose” (Ps. 25:12).