

Decide



Head and Heart

A self-help tool

Introduction

Sometimes our intuitive side and our analytical side can pull in different directions. Psychologists argue that we have two distinct decision making systems. These are commonly referred to as 'System 1': which is immediate, intuitive and subconscious; and 'System 2': deliberate, effort-full, analytical and conscious (Kahneman, 2011, pp. 19-30).

This tool is designed to help make these differences stand out for you, so you can see which way your heart leans and which way your head wants to go (Yates, 2019, pp. 144-148).

When using this tool remember that both feelings and facts are real. Both are ideas we have about ourselves and the world. Each is a form of data or information about something that is potentially important for us to know. For instance, if you have looked at a career and identified a number of apparent problems with it, that is important information to consider. But if you have looked at the same career and thought 'yeah, but I'd really like to give it a go' that too is important information.

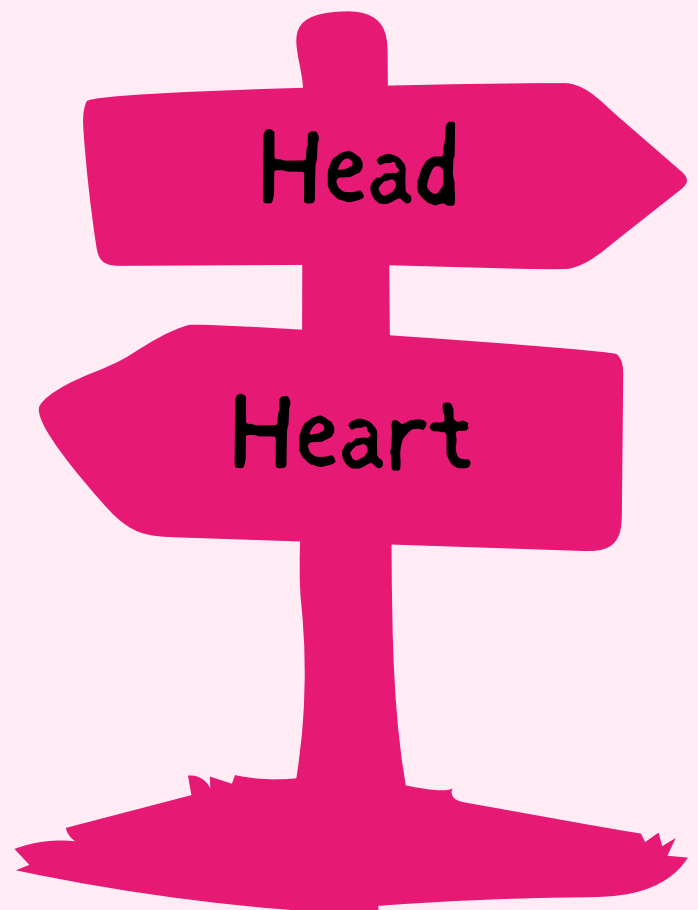
This tool has three exercises which each stand alone. So, you can do them in any order and choose to use them all or just one.

This tool is designed to...

- Make differences between your intuitive and analytical sides clear to you.
- Enable you to make sense of a two-way choice quickly.
- Reflect on your preferences.

Consider using this tool if you...

- Feel your head and heart are pulling you in different directions and you aren't sure which to choose.
- Like imaginative approaches to career decision making.
- Feel stuck between two choices you've researched and which both on paper look suitable.



How to use this tool

First, consider what your 'head' and 'heart' mean to you

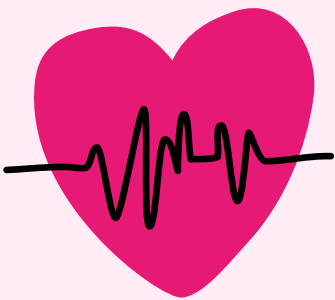
When you think about your 'head', what comes to mind?

- What words or images?
- How do you go about making decisions when you are led by your head? Perhaps you carefully weigh up the pros and cons and try to calculate the costs and benefits.
- Do you naturally favour rational, analytical decisions based upon the facts made 'in the cold light of day'?



When you think about your 'heart', what do you associate it with?

- Do you associate your heart with your emotions, dreams and hopes, for example?
- How do you go about making decisions when led by your heart? For instance, do you use your immediate reactions, or perhaps have a heart to heart with a dear friend?
- Do you naturally favour choices that feel 'right', that honour your values and that 'go with your gut reactions'?



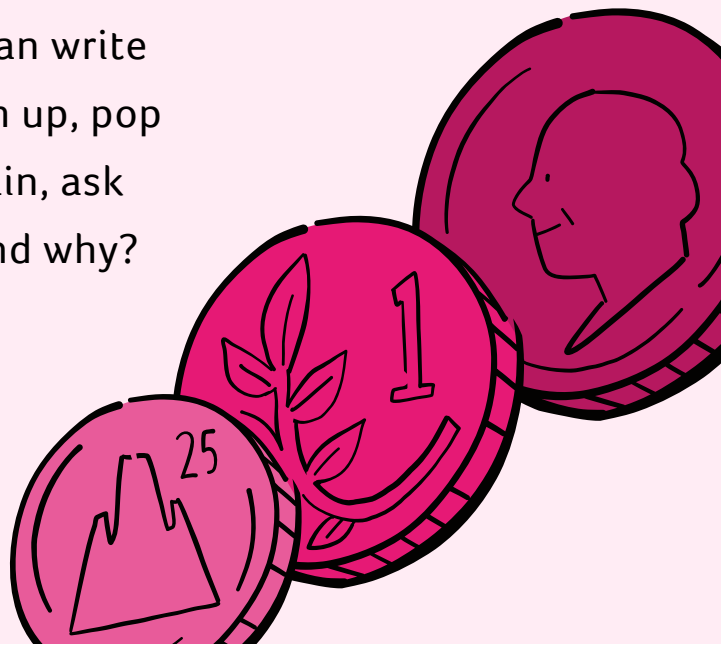
This should help you see which mode of decision making you typically prefer. Also, ask yourself this question: 'when I'm at my most positive and confident, how do I behave?' In that situation do I go naturally with my feelings or the logic?

Second, try flipping a coin

Yates also suggests an ingenious technique to use if you are trying to choose between two occupations and still feel stuck. She suggests you assign each to the face of a coin (heads or tails) and flip the coin. But before you look at which side is 'up', ask yourself, which do you hope it has landed on?

This is a simple trick which may help reveal which outcome is most important to you.

If you have more than two ideas, you can write these on pieces of paper, scrunch them up, pop them in a basket and pick one out. Again, ask yourself: which do I hope I've picked and why?



Third, see which has the most 'weight'

We sometimes talk about 'gravitating' to a particular activity. That is, we feel drawn to it. It attracts us. We all have preferences. Some people like sweet things, some like savoury. Some people want to be an Accountant; some want to be an Acrobat.

This exercise asks you to use the metaphor of gravity to sense which choice you feel most attracted to. Imagine each career is a pebble you picked off the beach. Imagine holding one in each hand. Which feels weightiest? Which feels it has the most about it? Which feels most comfortable in your hand? You could stretch your arms out as though you were a pair of scales and see which 'tips the scales' in its favour.



Or alternatively...

Put a chair in one corner of a room with one career choice displayed in clear letters on a card, and put another chair in a different corner with a card with the other career choice on.

Leave the room and imagine that a conference is taking place. It's a comfort break and the delegates are getting tea, coffee and biscuits.

In one corner are a group of people who work as Accountants, for example. In the other corner are the Acrobats. (Swap these for the two careers that you are considering). Through the door, you can hear the noise of them talking. Take a minute to visualise them standing together.

- What are they wearing?
- What do they look like (clothes, body language, etc)?
- What are they talking about?
- How are they behaving (are they animated, formal, friendly, intense, or chilled)?

Open the door, enter the room and without thinking walk toward one corner.

- Which corner do you find yourself heading towards?
- Which group do you naturally feel 'at home' with?
- What is it that attracts you to their company?

Reflect

Finally, ask yourself:

- What is my Heart telling me to do?
- What is my Head telling me to do?
- What have I learnt from the activities in this self-help sheet?
- Which do I need to put first in this situation; my Heart or my Head?

Because everyone is different, no one solution on its own is a magic bullet. Please also look at our other self-help tools to find the ones that you feel most comfortable using.



References and Resources

- Kahneman, K. (2011). *Thinking Fast and Slow*. Allen Lane.
- Yates, J. (2019). *The Career Coaching Toolkit*. Routledge.

If you are a member of staff from another educational organisation and want to use a limited number of our self-help tools with your students, we'd love to hear from you and share good practice. We'd ask that you retain references to University of Huddersfield as a matter of courtesy and acknowledge the other sources we've used. Thank you.