



The decision-maker's survival guide

Relationship meltdown? Career crossroads? Brain fog? Dr Claire Kaye shares her 6-step decision-making framework to help you pause, find clarity and move forward with calm confidence.

You can't decide. Whether to stay or go. Say yes or no. Change everything or leave it all exactly as it is. Welcome to one of life's most universal challenges: decision fatigue. Whether you're facing a change at work, questioning a long-term relationship, juggling caring responsibilities or wondering whether a new dream is worth the leap, the pressure to "get it right" can feel overwhelming.

'So many women tell me they're stuck,' says Dr Claire Kaye, a former GP turned career and confidence coach who specialises in career development for women and self-coaching tools. 'They feel exhausted, confused, and like they've lost their ability to trust themselves. But decision-making is a skill. You can absolutely learn how to do it well – and when you do, it changes everything.'

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knowing yourself'*

She adds: 'I believe that good decisions don't come from having all the answers. They come from knowing yourself. When you get clear on your values and purpose, you can move from a place of grounded confidence, not panic. That's when even the big life stuff starts to feel more manageable.'

Claire's practical, compassionate style blends her medical background with powerful coaching tools. At the heart of her approach is a deceptively simple six-step framework called Pause, Prep, Proceed. Whether you're considering a major shift or just trying to get unstuck, these steps offer a clear route through the fog.

And there's science behind the method. Research from Nobel Prize-winning psychologist Daniel Kahneman, author of *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, highlights the difference between impulsive, emotion-driven decisions (System 1) and slower, more reflective ones (System 2). Claire's framework is rooted in helping women pause long enough to engage in that deeper, wiser decision-making process.



Dr Claire Kaye is a career and confidence coach and founder of #CareerInspiration, a social media series spotlighting inspiring women and how they made their own brave decisions. For lots of free resources and more self-coaching ideas, sign up to her newsletter and download her FREE values guide at drclairekaye.com

‘Decisions aligned with who you are, those are the ones that stick’

Studies on values-based decision-making, such as those by psychologist Shalom H. Schwartz, also show that choices grounded in personal values are more likely to lead to long-term satisfaction and wellbeing. In other words, decisions aligned with who you are – not just what looks good on paper – are the ones that stick.

STEP 1: PAUSE

Create space. Take a breath. Step back. Don’t leap straight into action or panic-Google.

‘We’re often so desperate to get out of the discomfort of indecision that we leap into something – anything – just to feel in control again,’

says Claire. ‘But that rarely ends well. Pausing is powerful. It puts you back in the driving seat.’

- **Self-coaching question:** What’s really going on here? Am I reacting or reflecting?

STEP 2: PREP – GET THE FACTS

It sounds obvious, but so many of us make decisions based on assumptions or outdated fears. This is about objective information. Research. Ask. Assess.

Example: Thinking of leaving your job to start an Airbnb? Research demand, finances, legal obligations. Ask others in the industry. Look at your current bank balance. Don’t assume – ask.

- **Self-coaching question:** What information or resources do I not have that would help me?

STEP 3: GUT CHECK – KNOW YOUR VALUES

‘This step is about getting to the heart of who you are,’ says Claire. ‘Your values are the

essence of who you are, what matter most.

If a decision doesn’t honour those, it won’t feel good – no matter how shiny it looks.’

Example: If your top values are kindness, creativity and freedom, will running that Airbnb offer those? If it means 14-hour days and constant stress, maybe not.

- **Self-coaching question:** When have I felt happiest and most myself?

STEP 4: ZOOM OUT

Take the long view. Ask yourself not just how this decision affects you now, but also what the implications might be in the future. ‘This is where I encourage people to imagine their future self,’ Claire explains. ‘What would she say about this choice? Would she thank you for it, or wish you’d held off?’

- **Self-coaching question:** If I imagine my future self looking back at this moment, what would she thank me for?

How not to make a bad decision

Claire warns against making decisions when you’re depleted or emotionally volatile. ‘The worst time to decide is when you’re hungry, angry, or utterly exhausted,’ she says. ‘That’s when we leap out of fear, not choice.’ She suggests using a “wellbeing scale” from -5 (burnt out and weepy) to +5 (clear and calm). Aim for at least a 0 before making big calls.

IS IT FEAR OR WISDOM?

‘It’s a big question,’ says Claire. ‘Sometimes what looks like fear is actually your gut saying, “No thanks”. Other times, it’s just nerves.’ To tell the difference, Claire suggests two checks:

- 1 Does it align with your values and purpose?
 - 2 Can you handle the worst-case scenario if it goes wrong?
- ‘If the answer to both is yes, then it’s likely wisdom. If the answer is no, or unclear, sit with it a little longer.’

STEP 5: TEST DRIVE

Try before you leap. Don’t just dream – experiment. ‘A small action can help you test the waters and reduce the fear,’ says Claire. ‘You don’t have to quit your job tomorrow. Maybe just talk to someone who’s done what you want to do.’ Thinking about retraining as a therapist? Book a short course, read a book, volunteer for a helpline. See how it feels.

- **Self-coaching question:** What micro-step can I take today to explore this path?

STEP 6: BACK YOURSELF

You’ve paused, prepped, gut-checked, zoomed out and tested the waters. Now it’s time to decide – and own it. ‘This is the part where you trust yourself,’ Claire says. ‘A good decision isn’t a perfect one. It’s one that feels aligned, informed and doable. Even if it’s a bit scary.’

- **Self-coaching question:** What would I do if I trusted myself completely?