

Dilemmas by Ella Scheinwald ©

We all face various dilemmas in life. Some dilemmas are straight-forward and require an easy and clear-cut decision: Do I put a formal suit on or should I dress casually? Do I buy the Dell PC or an Apple? Should I eat Chinese, Mexican, maybe French? Other dilemmas are more complicated, for example, do I take a job offer, or not? The decision-making process for these dilemmas is more complex because more factors come under consideration: Does the job match my talents and capabilities? Will it challenge me? What is the company's culture? Who will I report to? Who will report to me? What will my responsibilities look like? Can I be satisfied with the salary, benefits, and bonuses? Do I have opportunity for growth?

Sometimes dilemmas constitute an excuse not to decide. I recently worked with a client who wanted to change his career from Wall Street stock broker to economics professor. We created a plan to ease his transition, yet he hesitated to go forward. He felt he had an unresolved dilemma, still. Another client negotiated a merger for nearly a year. On the eve of the contract signing, she called me in panic to say she wasn't sure what to do, and that her dilemma was overwhelming her.

Each of these clients faced a pseudo-dilemma, or what I define as a "post-decision dilemma." The post-decision dilemma is like getting cold feet or having stage fright and often comes not as a result of a real struggle to make a choice between a few options, but rather as a result of having made a choice. In other words, the dilemma arises after the choice was made and serves as mechanism for second-guessing oneself and undermining one's decision. The purpose served by a pseudo-dilemma is to cover for the fear of moving from the familiar to the unknown. Such "dilemmas" are really a subtle form of self-defeating behavior. They represent hesitancy about risk, withdrawal to the familiar, reluctance to become proactive and fear of change and failure.

When you are faced with this type of dilemma, it is important to recognize that you:

- have made a decision and your struggle results from it;
- know the right answer and need to regain trust in yourself;
- check your inner compass for fears and self-limitations;
- redefine your objectives;
- will recognize the value of your decision when you follow through;
- need to abandon self-serving mind games;
- must step out of your comfort zone with the familiar; and,
- have to make a commitment to your dreams in order to achieve your goals.

The next time you think you have a "dilemma," be honest. Identify your choices, evaluate how simple or complicated they appear, and be truthful with yourself about whether you are undermining a decision that you already have made. Don't cover-up or fool yourself. Once you recognize a post-decision dilemma, you will be able to move forward with your plans and dreams.