

## **From Yard Games to Life's Intersections: Honing Your Decision-Making Instinct**

### **Introduction: The Power of a Split Second**

As a teen I had a friend named Bryan. Bryan was a big boy. At 14 years old, he was 6'4" and weighed about 240 pounds. There were a bunch of us in the neighborhood that would play football in my yard. This wasn't touch football either. This was full tackle football, no holds barred.

One day, we all got together for a game. It was my brother, John, three other friends and me against Bryan and four of our friends. On one particular play, I was the quarterback and in the shotgun formation. John snapped me the football and I began running forward as fast as I could. Bryan had already gotten past my friends, who were my offensive line, and was coming at me like a runaway train. Knowing he was gonna absolutely destroy me, I decided to preserve my life by pushing my brother into his path. He crashed into John and they both tumbled to the ground. I ran to the end zone and scored a touchdown. John? Well, he broke his arm. That was the last time mom and dad ever allowed us to play football in the yard. That childhood moment, while perhaps not my finest, was an early lesson in how quickly we react under pressure. But what if those split-second decisions didn't have to be desperate?

### **The Unseen Decisions We Make Every Day**

We make decisions every day. Most of those decisions are not life threatening, but some must be made in a split second. For example, if you are driving down the interstate and see a piece of debris in your lane, you only have a split second to react. What do you do?

### **Training Your Instinct: The Power of Reflection**

Our split second decisions do not need to be desperate, unthinking decisions. We can develop our thinking to make quick and yet intelligent decisions by conditioning ourselves in our basic, daily decision making. If we are thoughtful in our basic decisions, especially reflecting after having made the decision, we develop an instinctual technique that will be vital in those split second decisions. After making a decision, ask yourself these questions:

What factors influenced my decision?

Why did I decide that this was the best choice?

Were there any unexpected consequences or unintended results of my decision?

### **How Daily Practice Translates to Crisis Control**

Let's take a simple decision we have all made. After a long day, you want a burger for dinner and don't want to cook it yourself. You ask yourself, what restaurant do I go for my burger? You decide on a nearby fast food restaurant. You get a burger, fries and a soda and bring it home to eat. Most of the time, we would not think much about that decision. We were hungry, a burger sounded good so we went out and bought one. However, if we ask ourselves the questions above, we will discover there was much more in that decision than simply wanting a burger.

What factors influenced my decision? Notice that there were unconscious factors that influenced your decision, specifically that you had had a long day and didn't want to cook yourself. Why did I decide this was the best choice? Because of these factors, you choose a *nearby* restaurant that was a *fast food*

restaurant. Unconsciously, you wanted a restaurant that was close and was quick. What were any unexpected consequences or unintended results of my decision? You might realize that, while you only wanted a burger, you ended up buying fries and a soda as well. Maybe that was because of a meal deal, which is a whole different decision you can explore later.

As this example shows, there are many elements that do into our decision making that we are not aware of unless we purposely reflect on our decision. When practiced consistently, you will train your mind to begin to contemplate these questions *before* making decisions. These questions will become a natural part of your decisions making to the point that it will become an unconscious action whenever you make a basic decision.

### Conclusion: The Future of Your Decisions

This refined mental process, cultivated through daily reflection, becomes your automatic guide in high-stakes situations. It helps you assess threats on the interstate, perhaps allowing you to find a clear lane or safely pull to the shoulder, avoiding potential accidents like a broken axle. And who knows? It might even have saved my brother's arm back on that football field.