

WHAT ARE RATIONAL DECISIONS?

A rational decision, which is based on sound evidence, contributes the most toward achieving your goals. When you decide something rationally, you follow a reasonable process to make a decision. As the decision-maker, you collect and support your choice with specific information related to a question or a problem.



To make a **rational decision**, you first must decide what you hope to accomplish. Once you determine the end result, you can begin to gather information concerning the issue. The thought process continues. Next, you determine the pros and cons of each available option. Which ones are the most likely to produce the results that you want? Which ones are you most able to complete successfully? When you have made a correct estimate of the benefits and drawbacks of each possible course of action, **the one that contributes the most toward the accomplishment of your goals is the rational decision.**

What are the characteristics of a rational decision?

You can recognize a rational decision by the following characteristics:

- The decision is made through an orderly process from start to finish;
- The decision is considered the best of all possible alternatives;
- The decision agrees with who you are and what you believe;
- The decision is objective and based on facts;

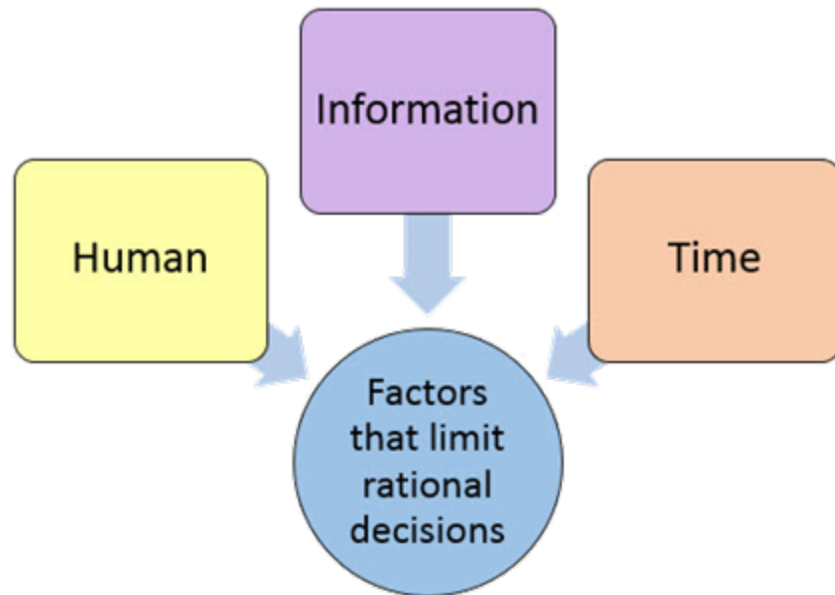
- The decision is based on adequate and true information;
- The decision reflects the careful consideration of the consequences of each option;
- The decision results from self-questioning and deep thinking.



Are there any problems to trying to make a decision this way?

There are three areas that could lead to problems if you make a decision rationally.

Human limitations: Humans are limited. You can collect and process all the information you are able to get about a decision, but you cannot know everything. You can only collect what you know to collect. What about the information you don't know to collect? When obstacles get in the way, humans are usually okay with a decision that is acceptable but not necessarily the best. Humans also have biases (prejudices for or against something) that keep decision-makers from accurately predicting the consequences of their actions.



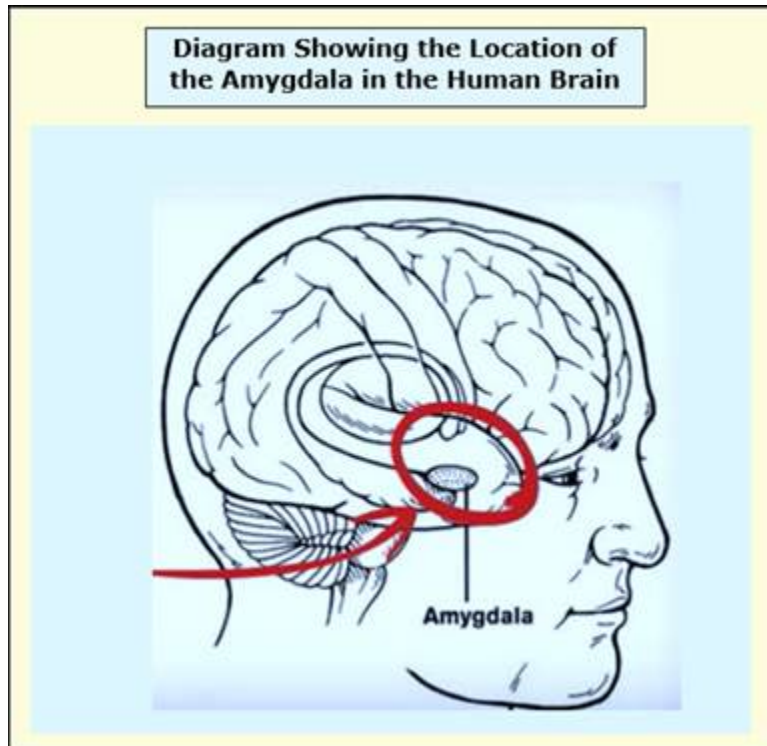
Information limitations: Although you can collect the best knowledge available through the decision-making process, there are limitations. For example, there may be simply too much information to analyze in a reasonable amount of time. Some items that you thought were accurate may prove not to be.

Time limitations: While you are in the process of searching for the best solution, you can miss one of the best options. Researching answers takes time. In that time, one of the alternatives could have come and gone. When this happens, you no longer have access to that idea. .

You and Your Brain

Have you ever said to your parents, “I’m old enough to make my own decisions!”? Have your parents responded by saying, “No you’re not!”? They may be right! However, that doesn’t mean that you cannot make good decisions. All you need is some practice and conscious thought Whew!

Researchers have compared the responses of adult brains and teenage brains in a number of situations. When adults are processing emotions, their brains have greater activity in their **frontal lobes**. They also have lower activity in their **amygdala** (the part of the brain that deals with emotions, emotional behavior, and motivation) than teenagers. As teens move into adulthood, the overall focus of brain activity seems to shift from the amygdala to the frontal lobes.



What happens in the frontal lobes? It's the part of the brain that helps you control emotions and impulses. Through the activity in the frontal lobes, we recognize right from wrong and connect causes to effects. To make a long story short, this part of the brain fully develops during adulthood. During your teen years, it is a work in progress. Therefore, you are a work in progress. While your brain is still in this stage of development, it is important to protect it. Things like stress, substance abuse, and a poor diet can result in serious damage. You want to keep all parts of your brain in good working order! Click on the icon below. The video explains how damaging alcohol can be to the developing brain

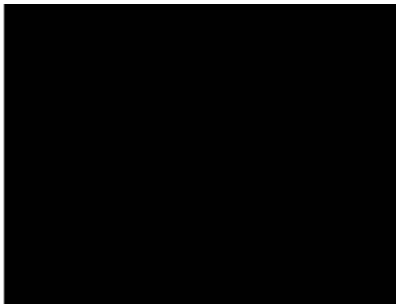


Research also shows that adults use rational, decision-making processes when facing emotional decisions. Teenage brains have not matured enough to perform this same

task easily. Dr. Yurgelun-Todd, an expert in the area of brain research, told U.S. News, “Good judgment is learned, but you can’t learn it if you don’t have the necessary hardware.” Your brain will probably be developing until you are well into your twenties.

Does that mean you are always going to make irrational decisions? No, it does not. Again, it means that you are a work in progress. With the right guidance, teens can control impulsive, emotional reactions and make good, rational decisions.

Take another look at how the brain works when you are in your teen years.



Below are additional educational resources and activities for this unit.

[Unit 8 Advance Organizer](#)

[Unit 8 Scramble](#)

[Unit 8 Scramble Key](#)