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Decision-making:

What science tells us about approaching ethical dilemmas
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2 DISCLOSURES

Financial	Nonfinancial
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3 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will ...

- Explain the science of decision-making
- Identify the influence of biases, willful blindness and “group think” on responding to ethical dilemmas
- Identify strategies for mitigating the negative influences on decision-making when approaching ethical dilemmas

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A STORY FROM HISTORY



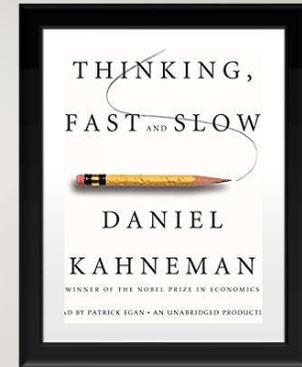
5 CHALLENGES TO RESOLVING ETHICAL DILEMMAS

1. Limited cognitive capacity
2. Personal predispositions and preferences
3. Dunning-Kruger effect
4. Comfortable being comfortable
5. Homogeneity in our lives

6

How do we decide the importance of an issue?

From the work of Daniel Kahneman
(Nobel Prize in Economics for
pioneering work in decision-making)



7 Influence of Bias and Intuitive Thinking: Two Systems in our Minds

SYSTEM 1

- Operates automatically and quickly
- Little or no effort
- No sense of voluntary control

SYSTEM 2

- Allocated attention to effort mental activities
- Associated with choice and concentration

8 SYSTEM 1

- Sound location
- Automatic speech
- Detect emotions
- Automatic math and reading
- Driving on empty road
- Understand simple speech
- Associations between ideas
- Source for beliefs and choices of System 2

SYSTEM 2

- Focus attention on action
- Attend to speech in noise
- Search memory for information
- Complete physical activity that isn't natural
- Compare items for value
- Complete your tax forms
- Check the validity of a position
- Requires attention and are disrupted when attention is diverted

1st Task: Go down both columns, calling out whether each word is printed in lower or upper case.

9 2ND Task: Repeat and say whether each word is printed to the left or right of center.

LEFT		upper	
	Left	lower	
Right			LOWER
RIGHT		upper	
	RIGHT	UPPER	
	left		lower
LEFT			LOWER
	right		upper

10 Humans tend to be overconfident

- When System I is involved, we tend to draw conclusion and then look for the arguments that support it.
- It is easier to stop thinking than to continue to explore information.

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If primed to find flaws ... you will

12

“This is your system I talking. Slow down and let your system 2 take control.” Daniel Kahneman

For our best abilities – especially under stress – the two systems must work together.

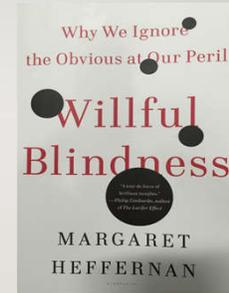
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DECISION-MAKING NEEDS TO BECOME AUTOMATIC



WILLFUL BLINDNESS

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You are responsible if you could have known, and should have known something that instead you strove not to see.



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Photo: content.time.com



Homogeneity

17



Photo: glitter-graphics.com

18



Comfortable being comfortable

19



Photo: business2businesscommunity.com

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Too often we... Enjoy the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought.

JOHN F. KENNEDY

Personal Predispositions and Prejudices

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Photo: answers.com

22

Too many people have full opinions, with half the facts.

TONY GASKINS, JR.

23 WYSIATI* explains

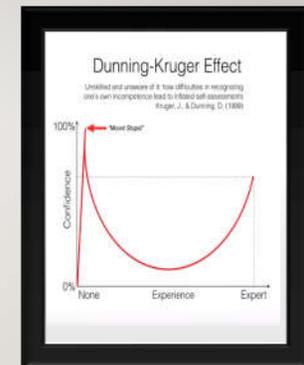
- Why we assume limited info is all there is to know
- high level of confidence (by ignoring what isn't known)
- Failure to allow for possibility that evidence is missing
- How we frame information (90% fat free vs. 10% fat)
- Our ability to ignore our own ignorance

* What You See is All There Is

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Dunning-Kruger Effect

- Cognitive bias in which people of low ability have illusory superiority and mistakenly assess their cognitive ability as greater than it is
- SLPs without training in dysphagia services felt more confident than those who did have training (O'Donoghue and Dean-Clayton, 2008)



A common bias: the halo effect

25

- We have a tendency to like (or dislike) everything about a person
- We are inclined to view all qualities of a person based on our judgement of one attribute

POTENTIAL SOURCES OF BIAS

26

- Salient events that are easily retrieved from memory
 - Repetition has strong influence
- Dramatic event (floods, crashes, terrorism)
- Personal experiences
- Our tendency to overestimate our own effort

27 System 1's influence on decision-making

- Generates impressions, feeling and inclinations
- Operates automatically and quickly, without voluntary control
- Infers and invents causes and intentions
- Neglects ambiguity and suppresses doubt
- Is biased to believe and confirm
- Exaggerates consistency (halo effect)
- Focuses on existing evidence and ignores absent evidence (WYSIATI)
- Generates limited set of assessments
- Frames decision making narrowly, isolating information

28 “Any time our left brain is confronted with information that does not jibe with our self-image, knowledge, or conceptual framework, our left-hemisphere interpreter creates a belief to enable all in coming information to make sense and mesh with our ongoing idea of ourself.”

Michael Gazzaniga, 2005

29 Tendency toward “group think” ... and the failure to speak truth to power

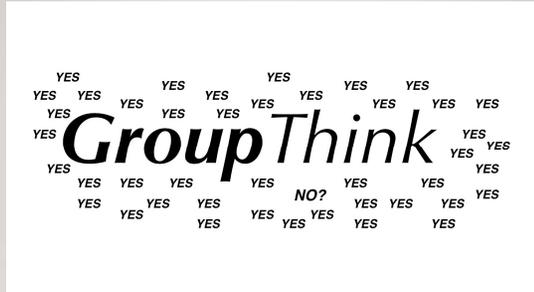


Photo: personal.osu.edu

30 Madness is the exception in individuals but the rule in groups.

NIETZCHE

Limited Cognitive Capacity

31



Photo: lifehacker.com

People easily believe falsehoods

32

- Through frequent repetition, as the information becomes familiar
 - Familiar information is not easily distinguished from truth

33 Cognitive strain is affected by the level of effort and presence of unmet demands

- Being in a good mood promotes cognitive ease.
- Cognitive strain is induced by listening when in a bad mood, in difficult situations, to complicated information, or to a presentation that is hard to read

HOWEVER ...

34

- When in a good mood we tend to be more intuitive and creative
 - But less vigilant and prone to logical errors
- When in a bad mood – we revert to a sense of threat
 - Vigilance is often increased

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“The human brain is built in a way that ensures our past memories are faulty.”

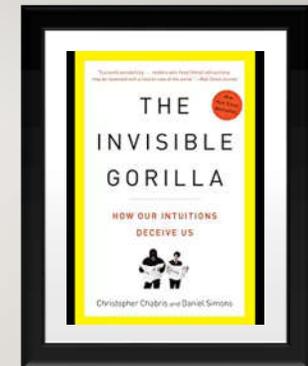
Michael Gazzaniga

36

Intense focus on a task can make people blind (the invisible gorilla)

Blind to the obvious

Blind to our blindness



37

You can do several things at once,
but only if they are easy and
undemanding.

Daniel Kahneman

38

Humans tend to make judgments and
decision by emotion, trivial details, inadequate
sensitivity to factual information

Do I like it? Hate it? How strongly do I feel about it?

“The emotional tail wags the rational dog” (Jonathon
Haidt, as quoted by Daniel Kahneman)

39 WHEN WE ARE COGNITIVELY BUSY WE ARE MORE
LIKELY TO ...

- Make selfish choices
- Use sexist (and other inappropriate) language
- Make superficial judgements
- Same effect comes from
 - Lack of sleep
 - Few drinks
 - Fatigue
 - Hunger
 - Anxiety

40

Improving our Decision-Making

- Recognize the homogeneity of our lives
 - Put more effort into heterogeneity.
- Avoid groupthink by encouraging questions, dissent, minority opinions.
 - Realize that silence can be dangerous.

- 41
- Have confidence that uncertainty facilitates independent judgment.
 - Don't rush to make a decision
 - Learn from the past

- 42
- Seek opinions of a person who does not know the answer but will think it through with you
 - Use organizations and systems
 - Don't let your desire to be entertained cripple your need to be informed

- 43
- Be comfortable changing your position.
 - Remember that essential issues are not resolved quickly.
 - Develop the courage to intervene when worried about what you see.

- 44
- Be wary if there is only one available option.
 - Understand the limits of our cognitive capacity.
 - Minimize reliance on technology for communication.

45 Using our Two Systems: Intuition?

- “The situation has provided a cue; this cue has given the expert access to information stores in memory, and the information provides the answer.”
- Herbert Simon, referred to chess masters, as quoted by Daniel Kahneman

46

“As all wisdom does, seeing starts with simple questions: **what could I know, should I know, that I don't know?** Just what am I missing here?” (Hefferman, 2012)

47 REFERENCES

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- Hefferman, M. (2011). *Willful blindness: why we ignore the obvious at our peril*. London: Walker Books.
- Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, fast and slow*. NY: Farrar, Straus and Girous.