

# **Become a More Powerful Leader: Five Steps to Achieving Clarity in the Face of Difficult Decisions**

By Luda Kopeikina

Every day, business leaders make decisions that impact hundreds, even thousands of people. While this seems like a daunting task, the good ones make it look easy. These leaders can make million dollar decisions based on the information presented to them and their own gut feelings. What you can't see behind these seemingly effortless decisions is the discipline to continuously scrutinize their decisions and the commitment to continuously improve from what they've done in the past. These leaders, through practice, possess a clarity that allows them to make powerful decisions with ease.

Recent research shows that you can learn to reach clarity with similar ease by relaxing your body and clearing your mind so you can focus on the issue at hand. By shifting to a higher level of coherence, you can sweep away all the thoughts that limit your decision-making skills. Plus it makes you a more powerful leader. Clarity enables you to project your commitment to a chosen path and eliminate confusion within your management team. It saves time by focusing your energy on moving forward with implementation, rather than stalling you in decision-making mode—a frustrating state that drains energy.

You can improve your leadership and decision-making skills by achieving the Clarity State with the following five-step process.

## **1. Prepare**

First, eliminate distractions by turning off your radio, telephone ringer, and computer monitor. Get in a comfortable seated position, but not too comfortable. You want to relax, not fall asleep.

Next, clear off your desk. Put everything away except a clean sheet of white paper and a pen, in case you want to write down any interesting thoughts you have during the exercise.

Then, tell yourself you are ready to experiment and have fun with the clarity exercise. At first, you may find it easier to focus when you close your eyes and tilt them up about twenty degrees behind your eyelids.

## **2. Physical Relaxation**

The first part of this step is to relax every muscle in your body. Start at your toes, and slowly release all the tension in every muscle in your feet, ankles, legs, abdomen, chest, hands, arms, and back. Progress slowly, working your way up to your neck and face. As you do this, say to yourself, “The muscles in my \_\_\_\_\_ are becoming relaxed and heavy.”

The second part of this step involves deep breathing techniques similar to those used in yoga. Inhale with your abdomen first. Then as your breath is pulled in, inhale with your chest and shoulders. Don't try to hold your breath, but exhale in the reverse order. Start with your shoulders and chest, and then allow your abdomen to relax at the end of the cycle. Assume a breathing rhythm that is comfortable for you, but try to make your exhalation two times as long as your inhalation.

Allow your mind to focus completely on the rhythm of your breathing, and take as many breaths as necessary to feel completely relaxed. If you are already calm and focused, you may only need a few breaths to relax. But if you are tense, you will probably need many more.

### **3. Calm Your Mind**

To calm your mind, pick a word or phrase that has meaning to you to repeat as your mantra. For example, in Hinduism and Buddhism, people use the word “om.” But you can choose any word you like. Then repeat this word silently to yourself as you breathe naturally. When other thoughts come to your mind, passively dismiss them and return to your repetition. Again, continue this practice for as long as it takes to reach a calm state of mind. You may need anywhere from five to twenty minutes.

You may also want to try the countdown method to achieve a calm state of mind. This technique is simple enough, just countdown from a specified number to one and allow yourself to focus only on your counting. At first, you should practice this exercise when you first wake up in the morning or right before you fall asleep at night, because reaching a calm state is easier at those times. But after you get the hang of it and can achieve a calm state in a shorter countdown, you can practice this technique at any time during the day.

Start at one hundred and count down to one. After a week or so, cut it back to fifty, and then twenty-five. Soon you’ll be able to reach your calm state after only a countdown from five.

### **4. Clear Your Mind**

You can clear your mind by acknowledging your thoughts and with visualization. To acknowledge your thoughts, propose to yourself, “I feel totally fine and joyful about how my life is going.” Inevitably, an unresolved issue will pop into your mind to discredit this statement. When this happens, acknowledge the thought, but don’t expand on it. Just acknowledge it and set it aside.

Then say to yourself, “Besides this issue, I feel totally fine and joyful about how my life is going.” If another contradiction pops into your mind, repeat the process of acknowledging it and setting it aside. Eventually, you’ll have an imaginary stack of unresolved issues that you’ve cleared from your mind and plenty of space to devote to the issue at hand.

To clear your mind with visualization, imagine you are surrounded by a large sphere of light. Every time a thought pops into your head, put it outside the sphere. Continue doing this until you reach a state of no thoughts.

### **5. Charge Up**

This step builds on your relaxed state by shifting your coherence level up the emotional scale so you can focus on the issue at hand. You can achieve this greater focus by recalling a time when you felt great exhilaration and satisfaction after achieving something. Perhaps you felt exhilarated after running a marathon or completing a large project. Whatever you choose, make sure it is among the most exciting, most satisfying achievements of your life.

Now imagine that this event is happening again, and recall all the thoughts and feelings that were going through your head at the time. If you were running a marathon, think about the rhythm of your feet hitting the pavement and visualize the other runners around you. If you were working on an important project, think about the calm silence in the office after everyone went home for the day and the taste of the coffee that kept you going long into the night. Use these images to reignite your feelings of excitement, self-power, and success.

### **Clarity for Your Future**

After following these five steps, you will feel mentally and physically relaxed. Your mind will be clear, focused, and ready to take on the rest of the decision-making process.

Reaching clarity in decision making is a tremendously positive experience. It fills you with excitement and gives you the confidence to move forward. As a leader, you demonstrate your commitment to a vision and eliminate post-decision doubt.

The inability to make decisions can paralyze an entire organization. So as a leader, you must reach clarity in the decision-making process in order to attain success. When you practice this five-step process for achieving clarity on every decision, over time it will become an instinctive part of your process. You will see the issues facing your organization and your options clearly, and become a more powerful leader as a result.

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