



Monkeys Sometimes Fall Out Of Trees

Well adapted to their environment, highly skilled with tons of real world experience, super keen instincts and yet they are still capable of making poor decisions that result in negative experiences for them and their clients, colleagues, organisation..... Sorry did you think I was talking about monkeys?

Those negative experiences can sit anywhere on a wide spectrum from the thankfully rare physical injury/negligence cases through to just being upset, dissatisfied or disappointed to name a few. If monkeys can make bad judgements then we certainly can too - So what can we do about it?

This is a question that I had and so I set to work researching why people make mistakes, what can influence our decision making and essentially what I (we) can do about it. From that research along with my own experiences I've carefully structured a process that I honestly believe can provide greater clarity of thought and help us consistently make sound judgements, I've certainly seen the benefits in my own work and I hope that by sharing just a section of it, that it can assist you as you continue providing safe, enjoyable sessions for your clients and gain personal fulfilment from doing so.

The 7A's

1. Acquisition

Of knowledge and background information - a look at the science and psychology behind decision making and the factors that influence them.

2. Acceptance

Of the fact that it can happen to us all - novice, expert, employee or employer - individually or organisationally.

3. Awareness

Of how/when/where it could manifest in your role/sessions/organisations - and maybe where it is or has already...

4. Assumption of ownership

Def: the action of taking on power or responsibility.

5. Add/Amass

Real world practical skills, techniques, hacks, strategies to reduce or remove the likelihood or impact of poor decisions.

6. Application

Of the amassed skills. All the info in the world is pointless without considered and consistent application.

7. Accountability

Def: The readiness to have one's actions, judgments, and failures to act to be questioned by responsible others; to explain why deviations from the reasonable expectations of responsible others may have occurred; and to respond responsibly when errors in behaviour or judgment have been detected.

Accountability, a critical component of professionalism, is closely related to the principles of morality, ethics, and legal obligations.

It would take many pages to go through the entire process and there are many factors that could be discussed (Heuristic Traps, Normalisation of Deviance, Closed Loops etc) but to start you off on the **Acquisition** of knowledge I'll introduce one area that can influence our decision making capabilities, **Triggers**.

You then need to be honest with yourself and **Accept** that it can happen to you so that you can enter the **Awareness** phase more openly. If it helps to look at where it might happen (**Awareness**) 1st and then go to **Acceptance** then that's fine - it's merely a guide.

For full effect take a pen and a piece of paper and apply this to yourself - You can probably work quite well through the other 4 on your own but if you have questions then feel free to get in touch...

Triggers

'Triggers' are what I like to call certain factors that can have a detrimental influence on our ability to think clearly, calmly or rationally. They are often just the start point that leads us down the path to a poor decision and more often than not it's because they reduce the time we have between the '*event*' and our '*response*' (decision). Knowing what ours are, being able to spot when we've started down those paths and having counters or 'antidotes' at the ready make it far easier to avoid them or limit how far down the slippery slope to poor decisions we go...

Below are a just a few, take a look and see how many could or do apply to you during your working day. The key here is honesty, as only when you can identify your triggers can you begin to counter them;

- **Being poorly hydrated, hungry or suffering from caffeine overload or sugar crashes.**
- **Suffering from illness, feeling run down, hung over or tired.**
- **Frustration, annoyance or 'issues' with a group, client, colleague, working conditions or the management.**
- **Difficult personal issues.**
- **Delivery of repetitive sessions.**
- **Working beyond your levels of competence or experience.**
- ***Bias towards a group or an individual due to their difference in social standing, ethnic group, religion, age, gender or perceived popularity?*** *This is difficult one to accept. This doesn't mean that you actively discriminate but there are conclusive studies that show that bias does exist to varying degrees between the different groups shown above and that bias can be preferential as well as detrimental. When talking about bias in this context it's more of a nudge of opinion in a certain direction - often tiny and countered by professionalism and the conscious acceptance of our respective differences but sometimes they can be larger and more negative than we might like to admit or even be aware of.*

This list is not exhaustive and is merely here to demonstrate some of the many triggers that can lead to a poor decision or a lapse in our usual good judgement and clarity of thought... I can with some certainty say that we've all been affected by some of these at some point in our work.

What this also means however is that you're human and that's ok -the real issue comes when those **Triggers** start to stack up. In effect it's marginal gains in reverse - marginal losses, small things each barely noticeable and in isolation rarely an issue but all chipping away at the otherwise solid standards that we usually, or used to, have. Stack things up in the other direction however and we have a much better chance of making good decisions and can this be summed up by one of my favourite sayings;

Put yourself in a position to be lucky but don't rely on luck.

Let's be realistic here. I know we can't counter all of our triggers and be the 'perfect' instructor but we have a choice -there are factors that are well within our control, that if we attended to them would stack things in our favour (marginal gains principle) or we can just leave it more to chance?

Here's your task:

*What are your potential **Triggers**? Do you need to step up **Assume** ownership of these and decide to do something about it? What strategies, habits or techniques can you **Add** to your work (or life) to counter them? Now when are you going to **Apply** these strategies etc (put them in the calendar on your phone to remind you before you next start work)? Finally who can you tell about this that can hold you **Accountable**? The power of being accountable to someone, of sharing your intentions to reinforce your good habits or eliminate bad ones (like hydrating well or getting to bed sober and at a decent time) is huge and is often the difference between success and failure..*

This can only serve as a taster, a start point, but I truly hope that you find it of benefit and as a result that it helps you create a better client experience, improve your risk management skills and, here's the real motivation, maybe enjoy your day (even) more by making small gains in your decision making skills and stacking things in your favour...

Copyright - JP Edgington. The Outer Edge August 2017.