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WELL-BEING

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# Choose: Pick the Path to Health and Happiness

When choice feels scary, remind yourself that changing your life doesn't have to mean a big leap. Small steps actually work better.



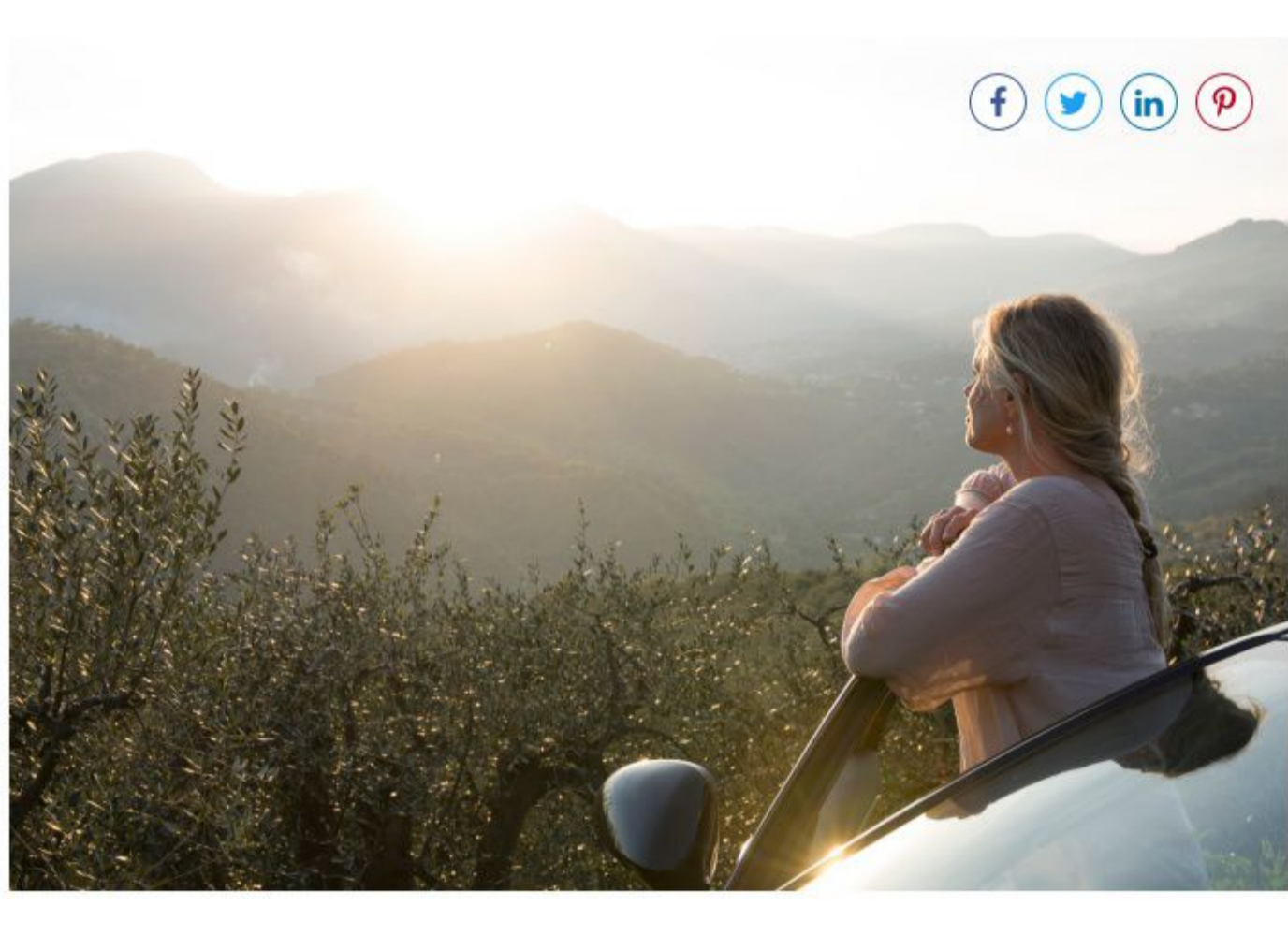
by RICH FELLER

Life is full of options. Every day, you make countless choices...whom to spend time with, what to eat, what to buy, what to believe. One of the many benefits of living, working and building community is the opportunity to choose. The right choices can lead to health and happiness.

Yet, when it comes to making a choice, you can be paralyzed by fear—fear of the unknown, of what you might miss out on, what others will think, or what's possible. You can put so much weight and pressure on a single decision that you freeze. When you're feeling stuck, remember that you rarely make a decision for life. More likely, a series of decisions build upon each other, allowing you the opportunity to choose, re-choose, possibly even change direction yet again.

See also: [Set Your Thermostat For Happiness](#)

The power of choice is that, once you choose, you can fully commit, taking steps toward making your choice a reality. That's when the fun begins. You've gathered years of information, lessons, experiences. Now, more than ever before, you have the data necessary to narrow your options and choose happiness. You get to choose your heart's desire.



Here's a simple formula for considering a choice: Is your desire for X greater than your fear of Y? Whatever decision you face, this calculation will help you choose.

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Now consider this: What might you choose that will enhance these various parts of your life?

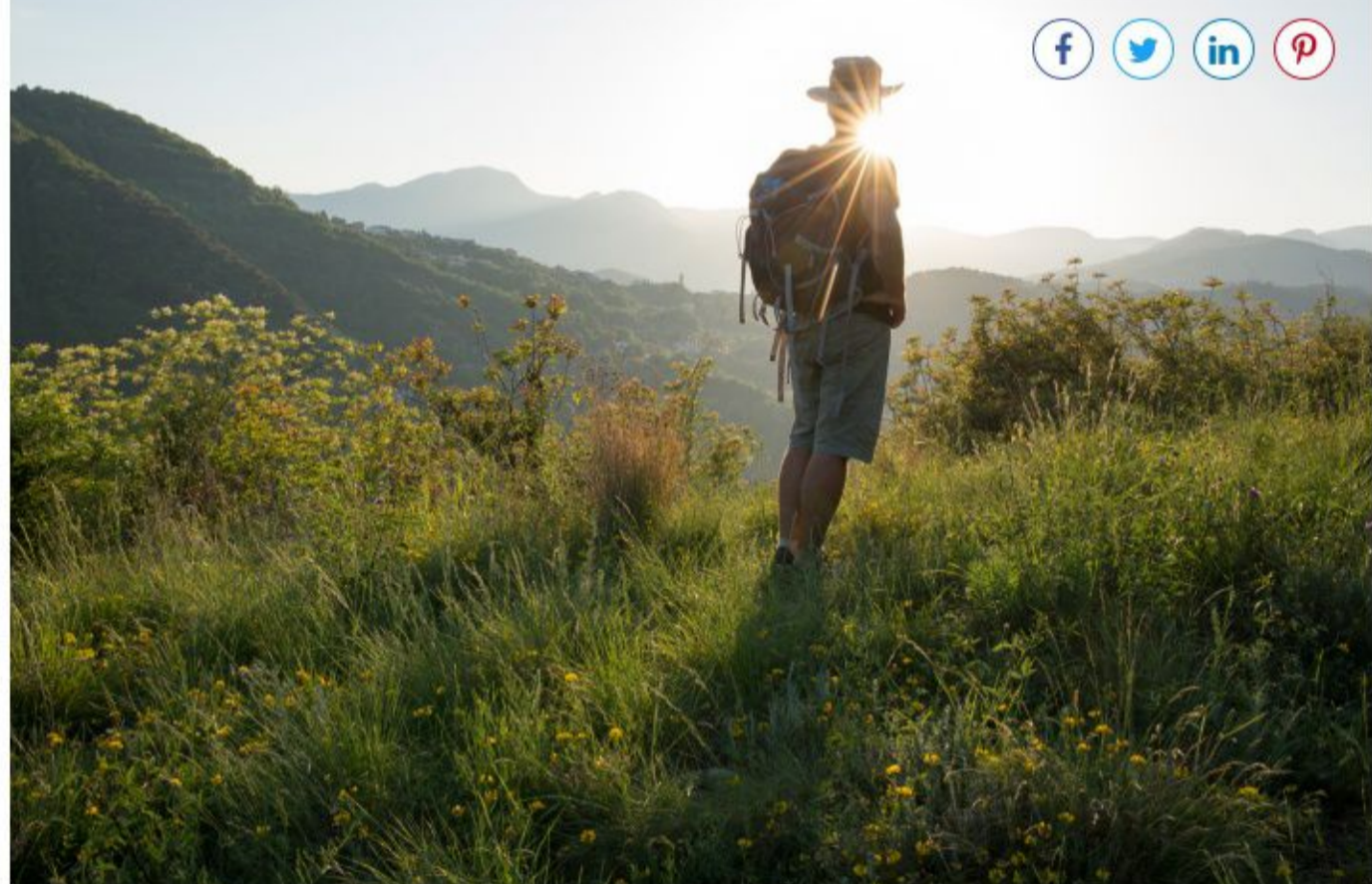
**Relationships:** You could join a new organization or volunteer in the community.

**Work:** You could pursue an opportunity or move to a new field or tasks.

**Well-being:** You could increase your daily activity, or eliminate sugar or TV.

**Finances:** You could up your 401(k) contributions, or stick to a budget.

**Spirituality:** You could practice meditation or join the church choir.



## How Nadia Chose Health and Happiness

Yoga kept popping up in Nadia's life. Walking to the post office, she spotted a new yoga studio in town. Then she overheard a couple talking about yoga's benefits. She had always thought of yoga as something that "other people" did, yet she was drawn to it. It seemed...interesting.

Nadia, who was 50, felt unsure, wondering (and worried) whether she could do it. Would she make a fool of herself? She was out of practice on the exercise front, so she hesitated. But she kept thinking about yoga and wondering what it might be like.

Finally, she asked herself, "Is my desire to try yoga greater than my fear of looking foolish?" Her answer: "Yes!" Nadia decided to choose well-being and engage in a new activity that she was curious about...knowing that she could always choose differently. But she never did. Nadia has been practicing for 14 years and recently completed yoga instructor training to share the gift of yoga with her community. Nadia took a risk and made a choice to fulfill a desire that turned into a passion.

Empowered by her choice to better her health and well-being, Nadia next chose to quit drinking soda (a habit that she had been feeding twice a day for 30 years), taking just one less sip a day, and working up to treating herself to one diet Coke a month. Wow, the power of choice and the rewards of choosing fulfillment can be contagious.

See also: [Find Out Where Happiness Lives](#)

With choices and options all around, how do you, like Nadia, narrow things down to make a thoughtful and heart-felt choice, and take steps forward toward your goal? Start by asking yourself these five questions:

1. What grabs your attention and makes you say "I want more of that"?
2. What makes your heart sing, and you feel joy when you do it?
3. What change are you excited to pursue? This could be either something you want to say no to, or something you're eager to do.
4. What small step will bring energy to your life, and encouragement to the lives of those around you?
5. What do you want more than the regret of not having or doing it?

You have the power to make a change, but you need to commit. Here's how. Weigh your options, decide on a new direction, and then outline small steps that allow you to move forward in a way that feels doable and sticks. Don't worry that you are not making a giant, heroic leap. In fact, many studies show that taking one small step at a time often results in a stronger commitment to change. When something grabs your attention, when you see a clue, let your curiosities play, and give yourself permission to choose.

It's better to be on the playing field of your life than passively watching from the stands. You're up. What will you choose?

*Life Reimagined thought leader Rich Feller, Ph.D. teaches at Colorado State University. He is a licensed counselor and certified coach with scores of publications in academic journals and awards.*

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