

Decision-Making: Combating Analysis- Paralysis



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I am delighted to participate in my second entry in the Genparenting blog and share my experiences with my fellow sister bloggers. I look forward to creating a dialogue with our readers to unravel some of the mysteries and bear witness to the miracles of being a grandparent and parent. I have four adult children, three of whom are now married. My oldest, my only daughter and her husband are the parents of my grandchildren, a 3.5 years old girl and a 1.5 years old boy. I have three sons: two of them are married and all are with wonderful partners. Together our family is a mini community within an extended community of family and friends. We have been privileged to hear about the journeys of this larger community and have been greatly enriched by these experiences.

In Silicon Valley, where we raised our children, there is a great deal of pressure to excel and this includes

in the realm of parenting. Parents are faced with constant small and large decisions regarding the impacts that jobs, finances and time management have on our children's welfare. Many parents feel bombarded with information, but have insufficient time to discuss and determine the best options.

I'd like to propose some tools that I've seen as useful in my experience as an educator, as well as with my children and grandchildren. We may discuss these tools in future blog entries, but for today, let's use them to help choose kids' summer activities.

Summer offers a wide range of activities for kids: educational and recreational. Each comes with a price tag, in dollars, in time and in the alternatives we give up. It is important to weigh these various costs and benefits by considering the following:

In making a choice of summer school or camp, it is important to get your children's input. They are the ones participating, after all. Have your children make a list of all the positives and negatives for competing choices. Examples of some of the questions they should consider include:

Do I have any friends going?

How difficult is it for me to wake up early in the morning?

Do I enjoy being outside?

Will I get bored by the same activity all day?

How much do I enjoy learning new things?

Compile your own pro-con list. It may be helpful to

encourage your children to choose only one sport, or to choose a school that is close by or an afternoon activity that will allow you to drop off your child during lunch and pick them up after work. If your children will take summer school, help them choose classes with other benefits. For example, review or buy your children a prep period during the high school year by satisfying a distribution requirement. Ultimately, it is important to evaluate what is manageable financially and time wise for you as a parent. It is important that the choice of a summer activity be the outcome of a careful discussion with input from your children rather than what you might hear about at the little league field.

Summer should be a time for rest and rejuvenation, exploring something new and creative play. There will never be any perfect choice. Rather, think of summer as a time for your children to practice decision-making, to explore their hearts and ignite their interests. Other questions to consider include:

Are any of these activities only offered in the summer?

What is the refund policy for cancellation?

How might these activities enhance my children's self-esteem?

I would like to conclude with an example from one of my student's experiences. John (a sophomore in high school with auditory memory problems and ADHD) needed to fill-in one class during his second semester. Due to a failing grade, John had to drop the second semester of

geometry. The only class available that would fulfill his distribution requirements was ceramics. As an added bonus, at his high-school, glass blowing was included in ceramics. For the next two years in high school, John went on to become a teacher's aide in glass blowing that also included paid work in the summer. Best of all, John won a scholarship to study glass blowing in Italy at a post-secondary school. Our teaching staff would never have predicted that John's decision to take ceramics would lead to this life-long passion and occupation. Analysis of various decisions need not lead to paralysis.

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