

When to Be Decisively Indecisive

I'm a big fan of agnosticism. I don't mean the orientation to theological questions, but something much broader. For me, the greater the number of things about which I am agnostic, the happier I am and the more powerful and productive on the very few things about which I have passionate belief.

One of the challenges is that this can leave broad swaths of human experience in indecisive limbo. When it comes to the vision for Praxis, I am clear as crystal and willing to fight to the death. When it comes to what color to paint the master bathroom, I am agnostic. That means when my wife asks my opinion, I have to work hard to conjure something, and whatever I say shouldn't be taken too seriously, because I'm not that committed to it.

I hate indecision, so the way I have squared these two valuable orientations – broad agnosticism and decisiveness – is to be clearly and immediately decisive about my agnosticism. The sooner and more firmly I can say, “This I care about, here's my opinion on that, and these three things I am completely neutral and I want you to choose”, the better.

Just because someone expects you to have an opinion doesn't mean you need to. If you waver, it will make them mad and burn social capital. But if you definitively state your indifference and suggest another person/process to decide, you get the benefits of not being cluttered with concern for everything and not being an annoying flip-flopping bottleneck.