

Lee Pooley 00:00:13

Hi Welcome everyone and welcome to the British Canoeing Awarding Body Coaching Podcas. My name's Lee Pooley, I'm the director of Coaching and qualifications for British Canoeing. And I'm delighted to be joined by Georgina Xaxwell and Dan Wilkinson, who are both members of the British Canoeing Whitewater Technical Group.

And this podcast focuses on decision making, exploring concepts and what impacts and informs our decision making. So hi Dan. Hi, Georgina. What I wanted to do is probably before we actually get into the subjects of, of decision making, I think it'd be really good if you provide a little bit of background to yourselves so the listeners can actually make some links as we, as we talk through over the next 30, 40 minutes.

So Georgina, do you want to go first?

Georgina Maxwell 00:01:02

Yeah. Good morning. Or, good afternoon. Whatever time you're listening! So I'm Georgina Maxwell. I've been involved in the outdoors since I was sixteen and now I'm 38, where's the time going and and I've done a breadth of activities throughout that whole time. And now I kind of specialize in whitewater kayaking and mountaineering.

That's where my work takes me. However, in my own time, I continue to go ski touring, climbing in the Alps and sea kayaking. I've done a few biggish expeditions across the Aegean sea, which was one of my highlights and and yeah, I'm outside the whole time, so I'm pretty, pretty active and that's, that's me.

Lee Pooley 00:01:44

Yeah. Georgina You know, listeners can't see obviously, but looks like you're in a wonderful, wonderful setting there. Whereabouts are you based?

Georgina Maxwell 00:01:52

So I'm based up in the north northeast of Scotland and up near the Murray Coast. It's beautiful up here. My local Whitewater River is the Findhorn and my local mountain range is the Cairngorms. And for the sea there I've got the whole of the Murray Coast, which has about 200 resident dolphins in there. And, and I've got a little croft with two pet sheep, a dog, a cat and a husband in that order.

Lee Pooley 00:02:17:12

Yeah, I was just going to ask that! But you, you said it quite clear. I'd imagine there's a lot of people listening to this, including myself. I'm extremely jealous of where you're located and the event is right on your doorstep. So thanks very much for that. Georgina. Dan

Dan Wilkinson 00:02:33

Hi everyone, I'm Dan. I grew up in London. I started paddling at a youth project on the canal and failed my A-levels spectacularly, resat them and moved to the lake district, to do a degree in outdoor leadership which exposed me to the wider outdoor world. I haven't been there, hadn't really seen from my childhood. That degree in outdoor leadership then took me to live in North Wales for a decade before moving back to the lakes with my wife and our two young children who keep us on our toes for sure.

I have been fortunate enough to paddle white water across the world, done some first descents and things in different places. I've done a load of different canoe trips, both open water and white water. Canoeing highlights, being paddling in Canada and doing the more crossing last year, which was in exceptional conditions, which was great. And I've also done a fair amount of sea paddling.

I deliver a lot of British canoeing awards as well. So I work half time for myself and I work half time for the MOD and all. A lot of my work focuses on developing people to be instructors and taking other people out into the environments that we're lucky enough to go and play and work in ourselves.

Lee Pooley 00:03:46

Brilliant. Okay, Dan. A lot of boating, paddling lots of different places. So what's on your tick list.

Dan Wilkinson 00:03:52

I've got a tick list that's much longer than my time allowance at the moment.

Lee Pooley 00:03:57

You're only allowed two.

Dan Wilkinson 00:03:59

Okay. The Karnali in Nepal, that's an absolute iconic river. I remember that I was inspired to go and do that from reading Many Rivers to Run, by Dave Manby one of our pioneers of our sport and it's on the front cover of that. And I remember reading the stories about the descent. So that's really high up on the list and I'd also really like to go paddle round the Shetland Islands by Sea kayak. A friend went up there a couple of years ago and just sent the pictures they sent back were amazing. So I'd like to go and explore up there.

Lee Pooley 00:04:26

Cool. All right. Well, thanks very much for the introductions, both of you. And I think it just, you know, provides a bit of context for for listeners as you as we go through this particular subject around decision making. And so to get the ball rolling really is and, you know, throughout throughout all of our lives we are constantly making decisions.

But also this this is around, you know, based around paddlers. So Georgina and Dan, you know what, you know, in terms of decision making, what the different approaches that that that we might be taking. And can you give us give us a bit of a background about, you know, what what makes us make decisions.

Georgina Maxwell 00:05:01

Okay, I'll start. And so when I think about decision making, particularly if we're in charge or if we're not in charge, if we're a member of group either or. When it comes to decision making there's a few different ways. So quite a lot of it happens during the planning, which we have a lot of time to make these decisions and do our research and chat to others.

And the other one is in the moment when suddenly something changes and we have to make a really quick decision based on the information that we already have. Now these do feed into one another. So it might be that we've mitigated against a lot of these unforeseen issues by choosing the correct venue or choosing something that's appropriate.

And so, yeah, we can put a bit of a pin onto that and to how to help us make these decisions, but we'll come on to that. So that's my take on the fast and slow decisions, Dan do you want to add to that?

Dan Wilkinson 00:05:56

Yeah, decision making is really interesting as a topic. This is huge amounts of work and research done into decision making and good decision making and things and different people give it different titles that some people talk about naturalistic and classical decision making. Some people talk about fast and slow decision making or type one and type two, they all refer to similar processes where we've either got lots of time to consider multiple options, or we're having to make a decision in the heat of the moment.

So like breaking out into that naturalistic and classical decision making off my classical decision making process. I'm thinking about going paddling tomorrow. I'm having a look at the rainfall and then having a look at who's available. I'm having all those different things. I've got loads of time to consider that from the comfort of my home and then a much more naturalistic decision would be my friends just fallen in, in this situation I need to do something about it. What am I going to do about it right now? And I end up I don't have time to look at all those different options, so I just end up taking an option.

Lee Pooley 00:06:53

Dan and Georgina is there such thing as an in-between of those? You know, the fast and slow? Because, you know, let's go to your mountaineering example, your mountaineering background Georgina is, you know, the there could be things that you are you're absorbing as you as you approach but that's not fast and it's neither slow is it? So it's almost, you know, where does, where does that fit in.

Georgina Maxwell 00:07:20

Yeah, that, that fits in with how aware you are as well and how restricted you are. And by pinning yourself into decisions that you've already made. So an example of that would be and walk it walking into the mountain, having already made your plan and things aren't quite as what they seem, but you push on anyway and or somebody in the group may be having an issue, but they're not going to say anything.

And you can maybe recognize that, but you're just going to carry on anyway. So there's things that inform our decision making, that actually isn't very fast, you know, you still have the time to make these decisions, but it might be during your planning phase that you've decided to flag that up at some point or or create and create a space for.

Okay, this is the last bit before we drop into this gorge. Does anyone want to get off or and or we can take another route here, which means we don't have to do the full original plan. So yeah, there's definitely space for, for that sort of medium term decision making that happens.

Lee Pooley 00:08:18

And Dan have you got anything else to add to that particular area of.

Dan Wilkinson 00:08:22

Yeah, I definitely view decision making as a continuum from I've got all the time in the world, so I've got no time at all. And it's recognizing how much time I have to consider my options. It's really important to me and I can, as George Georgina says, I can frontload some of that kind of option thinking about by going, Oh, I know there's a hard bracket coming up.

I know that as I go round this headland, the swell is going to change direction. I'm going to be exposed to those. And considering what that might mean for me in the team and with the aims, we've set for the day and stuff, so I'm not kind of going, oh my gosh, something's just happen in front of me and I'm not going I'm sitting at home with my cup of tea thinking about what might happen.

I've got a little bit of time just to consider a few options and pick the best option that I have. It's really important to recognize those option moments I talk about a lot. So I've got options here I either go round the headlands, I could go around the headlands as a controlled small pod. I could go round the headland, and just put my nose out, and see what it feels like. Or I could just carry on blindly, not consider what I'm about to do or the change I'm about to experience what I'm going to do about that before I've got to that environment.

Lee Pooley 00:09:32

For me, you know, we're all we're all in that position that we could put our hands up and say, yeah, we've made some great decisions. And also we've not made particularly good decisions when we've been out on the water or whatever activity we're doing. And so what are the influences of good decision making and, not have good decision making?

Georgina Maxwell 00:09:52

Yeah, we could we could tackle this from a facilitators point of view or we could tackle this from a as a member of a group point of view. So I'll start with from a facilitators point of view, you may have made some decisions and you're working for an organization and the decisions you're making, you might be thinking, Oh, the organization doesn't usually doesn't, you know, doesn't usually go to this venue.

So perhaps I'll go to the venue that they usually go to. And in your head you're thinking, I know that's not entirely what I would do, but I feel I can I'm expected to go to this place because that's what that's where they usually go. That might be an example of something that interferes with your decision making. And I find personally that once these added factors and you're not quite in control of it and you're doing it as an expectation, you start to second guess quite a lot of the things that you're doing.

And because would they expect us to do that and as time passes and as you work more in that role, you begin to trust your own judgment a bit more instead of thinking about the the expectation from them places. That would be one example of working for an organization as a facilitator. But another one might be if you're working in isolation and you don't have that and decisions to bounce off other practitioners.

It might be that you you actually go, Well, I'm just going to use this venue because I know it works and or I'm going to go back here because I don't have to think too much about that. And that buys me time to think about other things later. So you fall into a bit of an acceptance or a commitment into using using a venue which maybe might not challenge the individual.

So, you know, you you might find something easier in one place, but it starts to take away from things in another place. I hope that makes sense.

Lee Pooley 00:11:36

No, it does. And I just you know, as you were talking there, you know, you gave an example of organizational pressures or expectations, but also that the paddlers could influence your decision making by their expectations that they want to do this or they want to do this particular descent or they've not run this river before? So there are it's not just an organization. It can be other people that influence.

Georgina Maxwell 00:12:04

100%. Yes. So you might get pressures from the group and expecting to be on a certain type of water, but maybe the conditions aren't great for that type of water that day. So you have to go somewhere else. And that has a direct effect on their motivations for the day. So they may suddenly be a little bit deflated or maybe not even trust you as a as a leader anymore because you've made a decision which they they wouldn't have wanted and so it's how you get that back is it's a skill in itself.

And I suppose when you have tricky characters. So I've worked for the military of defense as well for about seven years. And to me, if I give them too much adrenaline too soon, they want more and

more and more. And there's only so far you can go with their skill level within that environment. So you have to be very careful about how you structure a week's course with them.

And so yeah, you definitely do get some people why we are we not going here is that, well, we can maybe go there another day or yeah, it's a tricky, tricky balance, but it's easy to manage once you actually become less task focused. When you when you start to be comfortable with how you talk to people, that that could be just one thing that somebody's focusing on is just how they actually get their message across to people.

Or it might be that they're even thinking about their own personal paddling or performance within that environment. And so, you know, they're not going to be that focused on reading individual members of the group and how stressed they might be looking or how calm or an and maybe they're not very stimulated in that environment. So yeah, it's a challenge, but once you get comfortable in yourself, I find it so much easier to cope with.

Lee Pooley 00:13:44

And Dan, would you would you have any other areas of stuff that we as coaches, leaders need to be need to have a raised awareness of what might impact our decisions.

Dan Wilkinson 00:13:55

A whole list of lots and lots of things. And if you just rewind to this impacting our decisions. Working commercially, we're always under some pressure, organizing a club trip, always under some sort of pressure to kind of go out, even just going out paddling with our friends. We're always under some sort of pressure to do something, to perform, to go to an exciting place, to go to a new venue, to go to somewhere, to pick a river that's got the appropriate conditions on it for the team for their aims for the day and things.

And it's just we've got a real triad of different things that we should be considering before we make our decisions of to where we go, which should then support us further down the line. It's the kind of triad of areas that I think about the what is the environment actually doing. So that's, that's going to really impact me.

I live in the lakes. We're really fortunate. We've got loads of fantastic white water rivers, but quite a lot of them are rainfall dependent. So people might want to come up for a weekend and they've got to put that weekend in their diary six months in advance because people have got children, they've got commitments, they're coming up from London.

They need to lift share with people, you know, all those different things. So we've kind of already committed to a date and then we're trying to fit the environmental conditions to our aims and our ambitions for that for that trip. And and that doesn't matter if it's me working with them or I've just got friends coming up paddling for the weekend.

So we're going, okay, the people are coming up. We want the aim and this is why we got to start breaking down into what are the aims of the team before we start finalizing locations that we go into. So what do we actually want from our day out of, you know, that might be a there's lots of different things we can take into that.

But I've found the thing that's helped me most with solid decision making before I choose a venue is understanding the motivations of the people I'm going out with. I think that for me that's huge. I go paddling with people who just like being on the water, so they just want to go out and be in nature and have a nice time.

Yeah, I think back to when I was working through one of my coach awards and I had some long term students and things at that point I hadn't quite cottoned onto this idea that different people have different motivations for paddling, I just thought everyone wanted to get better and better at paddling. Whereas very much at the other end of the spectrum now people enjoy paddling for lots and lots of different reasons and understanding that different people have different reasons for wanting to come paddling and balance and consider all those different reasons that people might want that day out will then really help me pick where I'm going to go for that day out with them.

Lee Pooley 00:16:39

Yeah, it's a really interesting one isn't it, that light bulb moment. But it's such a, such a reality check as well isn't it, when you go, okay they're not here to be coached and not here to get better. They're actually here to absorb and to experience and all these other things and socialize. It almost puts you back into it, back into the box where you know what we're here for really, isn't it? It's about those people on the water.

Both of you talked a lot about external influences, all your all your examples there. I would suggest are external influences and I'm wondering whether there's there's a there's a discussion to be had on this podcast about is there anything that we need to understand about ourselves?

Dan Wilkinson 00:17:29

Yeah. As I said at the start, I've got two young children, both under three at the moment. My wife and I both work. So our leisure time is quite limited. So if I've got the chance to go paddling in and there's water around, I've got, I find that I'm like, okay, there's, there's a few rivers in Cumbria that I haven't done yet that I really want to do.

They're all probably quite manky ditches. Yeah, it's just that's the nature of the things I've not paddled around here and so just thinking about going, okay, I've got the opportunity to go and do Borrow Beck, for example, which is the one that goes from Shap. It's got the longest shuttle in the world on it and have I really want to do that.

Is this the right day to go and do that river to take off that that thing that I really want to do? And it never has been yet because the availability of the people or the availability of my time is so limited that we don't have time to go and explore that sort of environment and just rationalizing that internally is actually really help me to just go and have a nice time on the water as much as anything else, but appreciate the time I've got out rather than having to do the things that I feel like I should be doing because I've got these pressures from different people and different things.

Georgina Maxwell 00:18:39

I'll talk a bit about external influences that lead to that sort of long, longer decision making that we've got time to do. So that's more the planning phase, and I've been using it in the mountains for

a long time with avalanche aware and but yeah, you can, you can look at it in this setting as well. So thinking a bit about the people or the party that you're going with the conditions and the venue and or the grade of water that you're then going to go and paddle.

I'll do this in a white water context. And so the people that I might be going out with, I might be considering, and I'll do this from a facilitator point of view, then I might have a look at it a little bit from me going out with mates. So from a facilities point of view would be the ability of the group and the big one for me, the ability I might have a really high ability group, Lee Valley paddlers and but they might not have an awareness on the river.

So the awareness of the group as well is quite important to me and the group past experiences, good or bad. So I might choose a venue which they've had a terrible swim on and they're really worried about it, whereas I'm thinking that's perfectly within their grade, but there might be some history there, so that might affect how they're going to be on that day and and how much you know, they trust me in my decision making as well, and but how much of a collaborative approach I can have with them.

So I might say to a certain groups, you know, where do you want to go? What river do you want to paddle? What do you want to get done this weekend as we're going out? And then, of course, finally done talking about the motivations, which is I think I've put that finally, but it's a big point to me is what about what are we doing for the day, which is trying to get a picture of one drop?

Or are we just going to go 30 kilometers down on a big long Findhorn, you know, and then next onto there might be and you can add in any gaps here, Dan, if I've missed any, but the next one would be the venue. And so that might be based on the grade of water or it might be how committing it is.

So it could be going into a gorge or it could be, you know, four kilometer hike up the mountain to get to. The length of the journey and some people might be only ready for a two kilometer journey where others want a big full day out in it on a big, big river. Is it roadside? Have you have you left the cars dotted down the river so that we can get out and we're not fully committed to the whole journey and and then the type of water as well, which is quite important.

These are all parts of the venue selection. And so whether it's a big volume or whether it's pool drop or whether it's Shaun Baker style and Welsh Rivers and and then yeah, that's, that's the venue side of things I think then into that feeding all into that is the conditions as well. So it might be like, oh, I choose to go to this one but it's really high, oh I'll get on anyway and that's going to cause issues isn't it.

So. And do we have any alternative to the venue venues because the conditions dictate that. So outside temperature as well? That's all part of the conditions, you know, are you going to commit into something without the appropriate equipment? Is there more rain due? How saturated is the ground, is it going to spike whilst you're on it?

And also as we're using a lot more electronic gauges these days, you know, how updated are they? You know, do we know the timescales? Do we know the lags on the rivers? And that's all really feeding into that big part of the decision making, which is your venue selection for the day. And so if we've got that pretty much dialed in and we can think about that a lot, then when we're on the river, we might be able to and know a bit more about what's going to happen because we know more about the group, we know more about that nature of the river for example.

That that was from a facilitators perspective. But from in an individual going out with a group of mates, it's fairly similar as well. But we might end up going to the river that we know best. And you

know, if we've always done that loads of times, you don't have to think too much about it and it's really high and we like it, so let's just all go there.

I do find it harder to make a decision about venue selection within a group of mates because somebody and maybe me, will go, Oh, do you fancy this or someone will say, Oh, do you fancy that? And then we'll all go, Yeah, that sounds awesome, and let's go. The psych is so high that it doesn't seem to be too much of an issue.

And the tricky thing is, is when you get there and it might not be doing what you expect it to be doing, so it's higher or lower. You might end up going to a new venue off the cuff and, you know, a really solid group of mates with the same motivations. It doesn't seem to cause too many issues and a nice, safe group as well. That's really important. Sorry about the information dump.

Lee Pooley 00:23:17

No, no, no. Not at all Georgina. And I think, you know, when you you when you talk about that and it's about also creating the appropriate climate within the group, whether it's facilitated or as a group of friends, is the ability for them to feel that they can say no or go or put their hand up and ask a question.

And I think that's a that's something we've all missed on occasions, not, you know, not seeing those triggers or those signs that people aren't 100% happy and we almost get carried away with our own, you know, our own wants and needs isn't it.

Georgina Maxwell 00:23:49

And so that's a really big trap that, that we can fall into like oh I must teach them how to take a bearing. That's my aim for the day. And then you start to forget about all the other things that are important. So if we're in the Winter Mountains and you teach them to take a bearing and they're all freezing and someone's at the back, you know, you're not really adjusting to the environment and what we could do better and maybe do that in a different location.

And that's more about facilitation. But for sure with, you know, choosing the right things to focus on at the right time will definitely help us and be more of an open group and social. A socially open group is so important to me because we might miss signals from each other and if we're not happy there or you might feel, I can't say anything, so I'm just going to drop into the gorge anyway because I daren't do that.

In what, 2006? That's a long time ago now. I dropped into a gorge in Norway. Didn't say anything. I didn't have any integrity. I was like, Oh, I daren't say anything now. And I paddled a rapid and swam and went under this undercut and it was horrible just because I wasn't being honest with myself but honest with the group.

And so, yeah, I would encourage everybody to be really open and honest and have that collaborative approach which allows and lots of discussion, but not too much because we do need to get things done and but also, you know, just allows the open atmosphere to share practice as well, which is quite important. You can't just sit there and think, Oh, I know it all. You know, you learn from one another all the time.

Lee Pooley 00:25:21

And I wonder I wonder, you know, if you know, the listeners are going, right. Okay. Yep. Planning, you know, probably a lot of coaches and leaders are used to the planning stage, but it's always good to highlight. But the thing that might be less, less obvious or less clear is the in the moment decision making. And I wondered if we could have a bit of time to explore that, because it's you know, it's an area that is probably less familiar for people.

Dan Wilkinson 00:25:51

Yeah, I'd like to take up on that one, if I may Lee. So what Georgina was just talking about noticing what's going on in our team and that's a really important concept for us because we can not only notice what's going on in the team, we can notice what's going on in the environment we're in. For a paddler, that might mean I'll be in my canoe on the loch and I can see some white caps coming down the road or I can see the school coming down. So I'm going to adjust my trim as that happens.

It might be that for a paddler, I'm coming up to a horizon line and then I'm going to this. This all links, this really important thing concept for us as partners, situational awareness.

So our situational awareness is going to feed into our decision making process. Because if I haven't seen something that's either changing or is about to change, I'm not going to then make a good decision about what's about to happen next, or my journey or my day out. And so I think about situational awareness having three, three different factors to it, just noticing the environment and the environmental changes that might just be that the tides change. And I can notice that by the swing of the boats on their mooring buoys as I'm paddling out into the harbor, I didn't expect the time, the tide to have changed. So what do I need to do about that? It might be the people I'm with is somebody paddling. Not as well as I'm used to than paddling on that day.

My mate Lee, he paddles really well all the time, but he's gone. I don't know that he's had a really rough night. He's been up with the baby all night. He's not had his breakfast. He was rushing to get out the door to come paddling. So he's perhaps not performing to his best. And I have not adapted my what we're doing as a collective for that and also the impacts of me on the rest of the people.

So am I being too boisterous? Am I the one that's driving this agenda going? I really want to go and get this photo of me going off this waterfall today, or this is all I care about and I'm just being blind to everything else around me. So those these three factors feed into my decision making process, the environment, the people, and my impacts on the people and what that has.

And those three things help me make in moment decisions as well. So we've gone to the river, we've got to the river. I'm paddling down, my friends fallen in, swum already. We're about to start a 30k Gorge. He forgot his dry trousers today, so he's only got his cag and a pair of trousers and a wetsuit on. And it's December.

Is this the best thing to carry on with here? Because I'm already on the river. I've already got changed, I've already set the shuttle. Should I be carrying on and making those decisions to carry on or stop, the really hard ones? Because we've already committed to everything but not not carrying on and then not letting somebody get cold, they get colder, their performance drops off, they fall in more.

We end up in this cascading effect of what was a easy to make decision 20 minutes ago was all of a sudden become quite a serious decision because now four K from the vehicles and so all of a sudden aborting the trip is much harder challenge in prospect.

Lee Pooley 00:28:56

But over the time as well Dan is over time as coaches and leaders we build up experience, don't we? And we start to, you know, certain things start to have, you know, patterns and patterns. We have scripts, you know, so, you know, some people will know about heuristics, you know, and it can we explore that area? Because I think, you know, there is a danger, isn't there, that we we quickly jump to a solution.

Now, that might be the right solution. I don't want it to sound negative. It might be the right one. But also, we need to make people aware that we we do have snap judgments and it's based on something.

Dan Wilkinson 00:29:32

Yeah, I've got I've got a story I'd like to tell really quickly about something that's titled Recognition Primed Decision Making that fit into this. And then we'll explore that idea of heuristics afterwards. So as we do more, and I'm sure we'll talk about this later, we probably get we definitely get better at making decisions. The idea of recognition primed decision making came from fire chiefs turning up at fire scenes.

So they look to the differences between somebody who just been promoted to being a fire chief. So they turn up at a scene of a major incident and they're like, Oh, I don't know where to put the fire engines. Takes them two days to out the massive factory fire. They look at a similar incident with the fire chief that's been a fire chief for 20 years.

They turn up and they go just go and put that engine there, start firing the water on that specific spot and the fire's out within 4 hours. That's what triggered a lot of this research and decision making is how did that person know to go and do that when this other person who has got the same level of qualifications, didn't know to go and do that straightaway.

And that just comes down to the experience making decisions, seeing lots and lots of various situations and going, Oh, I recognize aspects of this. I'm just going to go and focus on this area here. Now, just solve all this. And that would literally put the fire out and they've that. So that's a really healthy decision making process.

It's a really unhealthy decision making process, if we fall into one of these heuristic traps where we're basing our decision on something that isn't as rational as that level of experience that person has. So there's loads and loads of stuff that's been written about these. This idea of heuristic traps. A heuristic is a shortcut to decision making process. But I talk about this with people.

I talk about what did you have for breakfast? I know that I had for breakfast every morning for the last week a bowl of cereal with milk on top. That's what I do every morning. I don't take into account what I'm about to go and do that day. I'm about to go climb Ben Nevis in winter conditions. It's going to be a 5000 calorie day.

I'm going to go and try and do three rivers, my friends. It's going to be a 4000 calories. I don't even pay attention to. I just have the same breakfast to leave my house, to go and do a variety of different things. And that might be dropping the kids at nursery through to climbing Ben Nevis I've just made a decision really quickly because I haven't got time to consider all those things.

So I've got two kids. I want to go out the door and I want to go adventuring. That short cut in decision making pressures can be really healthy, stops my brain getting overloaded. But when we're in adventurous environments, the short climate decision making process can be quite unhealthy because I'm not making my decision based on all the facts. So we've talked a bit about commitment.

One of my least favorite things to do at the moment is meeting people at the put in for our journey because we're already committed to that venue. So I get there and it's really high or it's really low, but my mates have taken the boats off the cars and done the shuttle, so I'm running late and so I'm like, Oh, we're getting on this.

We've not had time to think through the actual is this the right place to be at the right time with the right people sort of process?

Georgina Maxwell 00:34:08:11

So with that, I think it's so healthy to go and continue to push yourself if you're a facilitator or practitioner. It's really important to go and push yourself in your own time with your with your friends to see which areas Well I'll use the word weakness, but which one do you end up falling into? And with a group of really strong friends, same ability, whatever it is, generally, it can be the expert halo where you go, oh well Dan's made that decision to do that. I'll be fine. I'm not going to question Dan, am I?

You know, or it might be that. Okay, well, actually, if I do this, I'm going to get a little bit more credibility if I go fall off that waterfall or make it look really good or make a GoPro or whatever it is, it might get me more clients or, you know, and I think it's I think that's unhealthy to fall into them traps when you're out and about.

But if you continue to push yourself in your own time, you start to see that it highlights that. And then you can start to reflect on that and think, Did we make that decision because of this? Now, that question that I just asked there is really key. That's the question: did we we do that because of this?

Well, it's you can have that conversation if you've got a really open environment with the people that you're doing things with, if you've got people that you're doing things with and they are a bit stronger, stronger willed, stronger, not very approachable, then that's just not going to work very well for you all my phone's ringing.

Lee Pooley 00:34:08

Expert Halo, the term you use an expert that's not always self-appointed, is it?

Georgina Maxwell 00:34:14

Definitely. No. No. So it might be that people are looking at you to make decisions and you're doing the same to others. So you might become the expert when you're thinking, I'm just having a cruisy day out with my pals here, you know? Not, doing things like off the cuff, bad practice because we don't do that. But, you know, just having a good day out with your friends and they might just fall to you for the decisions. I find this so interesting this topic you know and I absolutely love reflecting on why did we why did we do that why did that happen?

But before we get to that and thinking about, well, does it start right at the very beginning where someone goes, shall we run this river? If you're out with your pals and you've come up with the idea, then perhaps you've already created the expert halo yourself because you suggested something. And I don't know, it's something to think about.

Lee Pooley 00:35:02

One of the things that, you know, what I want to say, say now is this is just the beginning of these particular discussions and resources that we that we hopefully will build over time to help people understand about decision making. But I think probably a question that listeners will have is going: oh, that's good. I like that. Yeah, it makes sense to me. Some really good top tips and you know, almost gives a bit of clarity. But how do I get better at decision making.

Dan Wilkinson 00:37:29:14 - 00:37:55:04

Georgina's definitely alluded to it there is that is the process of the noticing what decisions have been made during your day out. At the end of the day, I'll just have a think to take 2 minutes just to think what decisions did we make and think when did we make those decisions? Then then ask yourself the question Why did we make those decisions?

And that will trigger that reflective process for you. Just as you go through this, you start to recognize the multitude of decisions you've made in the day out. So the first time I did that, I was like, Oh, I just chose to eddy out here and then go down that line there because we had to scout it to check there wasn't a tree in it.

As I get better, why did I choose to wear two layers of thermals today, you know, and breaking all those just starting to think about all those micro decisions we make will really help us to go. I did that. Why did I do that? And asking that question, why is a really important one not reflective practice reflective is an incredibly broad topic that's really personalized to people to finding a way for yourself to reflect accurately on your day out is really important because that is how you're going to get better at those decision making.

I can also suggest trying different decision making. So if you're in somewhere familiar, try doing something different in the same environment. So it might be a classic example be we always jump out to inspect triple step on the dart on river right and walk down it. Could I run triple step in different way? It's an environment that's familiar to me.

Could I try managing in a familiar situation in a different way that will help me when I come to an unfamiliar environment? Because I've gone through decision making processes different to the one

that I've always done and and then going through that, why did I do that? Why did that work? Did that not work? Sort of process of asking self questions?

Lee Pooley 00:37:34

There's a, healthy as it is, that reflective practice on decision making usually follow from an incident, and that's healthy because reflection on an incident is. But what you're talking about is not from an outcome of a, you know, outcome of something that's happened. You're you're talking about reflecting on all your decisions, basically. So rather than a point in time.

And yet people reflect on incidents and we still would absolutely 100% support that. But you're you're bringing it into a different dimension now, aren't you? This is this is everyday decision making.

Dan Wilkinson 00:38:11

Yeah. Every time you go out in the water, you can reflect on your decision making. Every time you kind of like we've set the shuttle, where did we meet? Why did we meet there? All these different things. Even if you day out has been successful in the best day out ever, ask yourself the question why was that the best ever?

Because traditional. It's a very British approach to take, isn't it? Is the idea that I only think about things when they've gone wrong, but actually thinking about what went right is even more important because if we've got it right, we can get it right all the time. Probably, but probably not actually. But you know, we can keep getting better at getting it right rather than worrying about not getting it wrong next time, which is a much nicer mindset to have as well. I find for me.

Georgina Maxwell 00:38:56

Yeah, I agree with that and it's quite easy to focus on an epic and try and gather the learnings from that. But actually if we can get positively reinforce all the good stuff that's happened and that that's where it's at because if we do that, we get better and better at reflecting. Now it could be that would deflect it reflecting on them decision making.

But if we're not really sure and that's quite a complex subject, then perhaps why don't we try learning to reflect on our performance or getting in and out of an edit or, you know, something small. And to go through that process of asking questions and really picking it apart when it comes to decision making, sometimes it might be easier to reflect on that with someone else, and that's where a community of practice comes in.

And so it's really, I think, important to be able to share these good moments or maybe not so good moments. Sometimes a client might not even notice that it was a bad decision, but to me it was a bad decision and I could do much better. I could get a better outcome. And they are the gray areas where you think might being hard on yourself myself am I reflecting too negatively on my performance as a as a coach or a leader or, you know, can I just have that conversation with someone?

And if we've we're open for discussion we work well together, we share similar thoughts with one another. And it's really easy to have that, that decision. But yeah, I think you're boxing yourself in if

you don't allow that to happen for sure. If we don't get better, if we don't allow any form of reflection to happen.

Lee Pooley 00:40:32

Yeah. And that collaborative approach is a really healthy isn't it. You know, as long as it's the right climate, that community of practice where people can actually talk openly about the decisions made throughout the day, as long as people are open to feedback and reflective practice, that's a really healthy environment, isn't it?

Georgina Maxwell 00:40:51

Yeah, absolutely. And it doesn't have to be. Oh, you did this. Why did you do that? That that would that would setting up the whole conversation to fail. It's more about listening and, you know, oh, did you make that decision? Why did you do that? I've never done that before. In in in a certain tone, because emails or chats or anything that can come across to negatively and pick apart somebody's day is it's not going to be healthy.

And so it kind of has to come from two ways and in a way which is friendly and also allows that learning to happen. So I'd say that's key.

Dan Wilkinson 00:43:37:19 - 00:43:56:07

When I'm doing this and going through this process. I think about talking about the options we had rather to see what options did we have. So I'm going, Oh, I've got, I've got this thing in front of me that's happening. It might be I'm going round a headland in my seaboat, but what options do I have for going around that headland?

How can I go around this with my with the people and with what ways to do that and then going and even if I didn't verbalize all those options at that time, at the end of the day I can think about these are the options I thought about what other options did Lee have? What other options did Georgina have?

We can just reflect back and go now. I didn't even think about doing it that way. Georgina That that might have worked pretty well too here, you know, and then that changes that tone of that conversation from why did we do this? To What options did we have? And then we can look at the pros and cons of those.

Lee Pooley 00:42:15

It's a really big subject, isn't it? And what I'd hope that's happened today and a big thanks to Georgina and Dan is that this is just the beginnings of exploring this particular subject. And as I alluded to earlier, that's you know, we will be exploring this subject throughout 2023 and beyond. That feeds into all of our coaching and leadership that we do in the safety awards.

But actually, you know, by promoting an awareness of decision making will hopefully make people safer on the water. So yeah, Georgina, thanks very much for your time today and Dan thanks very

much for your time as well. Really appreciate it and hope everyone that was listening really enjoyed the podcast. Take care everyone!