



Your Life Is Controlled by Your Decisions and Your Commitment to Them

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

Over 20 years ago, I was at a relative's house in the country and he made a crazy statement (which he appeared to believe) that all Japanese were Jewish, and that was why they were in the process of controlling all the car manufacturing in the world, just like they were controlling the entertainment and [banking industries](#).

My relative was a [truck driver](#) in his 50s, and he made this statement as if what he was saying had a certain level of profoundness to it. Under normal circumstances, when not involved in "intellectual" debate, he was a very nice man and good father. The statement was offensive on many levels. It was racist, stereotyped people, and was just plain wrong. So wrong it was hard to believe.

"Are you kidding? That is not true at all! They are Buddhist!" I screamed. I was about 16 at the time and absolutely amazed at what I was hearing.

He was a big burly man, probably close to 300 pounds of fat and muscle, and he punched me in the side of the head hard enough that he knocked me out. I am not sure how long I was out. Incredibly, when I regained consciousness, he was still involved in this debate with a couple of other people who were talking like nothing had happened. Those men were sitting outside on picnic tables and plastic folding chairs while all of the women were inside cooking. Seeing stars, I took a seat back on the picnic table next to my uncle while I regained my composure.

After a few moments, I looked up at him. "What the hell!?" I muttered, still semi-conscious.

"You need to keep your mouth shut and not talk about stuff you know nothing about!" he said.

I told my mother about this experience when we were driving home. I was incredulous I'd been punched for asserting the entire nation of Japan was not Jewish, and I expressed profound disappointment at being related to these people. My mother is pretty smart. She said something to me I will never forget. A close relative of hers she'd grown up with--I'll call her "Patty"--had married this man. My mother told me Patty had been very beautiful and also very intelligent when they were growing up. She said Patty could have married any man she wanted and instead chose to marry the truck driver. In fact, Patty's sister had married a man who was the owner of a large bank and they lived an upper crust lifestyle with boats, fancy cars, mansions, and frequent extravagant foreign vacations. At family events at Patty's house, they would look with disdain at the cars on the front lawn and practically shudder at the bad grammar exchanged by Patty and her friends.

My mother told me Patty had much more going for her than my mother ever did or her sister ever did.

"She chose the life she has," my mother said. "She could have had any life she wanted, and she chose this life. We were actually talking about this after I found out about you getting knocked out because I was a little upset, too. Patty said she could have had a different life, but this is the one she chose."

Since I was young at the time, this was a pivotal event for me. I realized right then and there we are in complete control of our lives and what happens to us. It is all about what we choose.

We choose the lives we lead and we choose what happens to us. You have the power to choose in your life, and where you are today is the result of the decisions you made long ago. Think back on your life 10, 20, or more years. Where were you back then? What were you doing? Where are you now compared to where you were back then?

We have the power to choose the lives we lead and what happens to us. We choose:

1. Our jobs
2. Our mates
3. Where we live
4. Our friends
5. What we do with our free time
6. The number of children we have
7. How hard we work
8. How healthy we are
9. How we dress
10. What we eat

The number of things we choose is phenomenal. We choose our lives and what happens to us and shape our own destinies. Most people are more interested in blaming outside events and circumstances for what happens to them in their lives. The truth is what happens to us is almost completely the result of the decisions we make. We are in charge of our own lives and our decisions shape our entire existence.

One of the most important times we are forced to choose is when we are in the position of losing a job or deciding between jobs. This is a time when a lot of people find themselves stressed out and are forced to figure out what they need to do with themselves. People react to stress in different ways. Some people start to drink a lot or use drugs. Others start exercising a lot. Others avoid people who may ask them about what they are doing. Your decision about how to deal with stress and your [job search](#) is something that can and will permanently shape your destiny and what happens to you in your life. How are you going to deal with losing a job?

When some people lose a job, they decide to sue their employer. While many law suits against employers are legitimate, most I have seen are not. I make this judgment from having been an attorney who represented both employees and

employers. People sue their employers because they decide someone other than them is responsible for their job and their livelihood. People make this decision to go after their employer and often spend years not working and involved in a bitter lawsuit. In the interim, they do not even look for a job. In some cases, they do not want to [find a job](#) because if they find one, they will receive fewer damages from their lawsuit.

Other people who lose a job take a different approach. Instead of being angry with their employer, they may be angry with themselves. They may withdraw and stop trying. They allow this experience to have such a negative effect on them they stop trying their hardest. This is a very common reaction as well.

Others who lose jobs may launch a new business, go back to school, or try to get even better jobs than the ones they lost. These are all decisions as well. You need to choose to make empowering decisions in your life and your career.

In 1980, Candy Lightner's 13-year-old daughter, Cari, was killed by a drunk driver as she walked down the street. Instead of feeling sorry for her daughter and herself, Lightner chose to found Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) to crusade against the problem of drunk drivers.

"I promised myself on the day of Cari's death that I would fight to make this needless homicide count for something positive in the years ahead," Candy Lightner later wrote. Her organization rapidly rose to national prominence and Lightner appeared on major national television shows, addressed numerous groups around the country, testified before the government, and worked to promote new legislation. She chose to take action in a way which empowered the world and made a difference rather than allowing outside events to negatively influence her.

A similar story exists for John Walsh. Walsh is the host of *America's Most Wanted*. Walsh was a successful businessman living in Hollywood, Florida, and the partner in an important [hotel management](#) company. On July 27, 1981, Walsh's wife left their son Adam in the toy department of Sears while she went to look for a lamp. Sixteen days later, Adam's severed head was found in a drainage canal more than 120 miles from the mall, according to an account on the America's Most Wanted website.

Walsh's search for justice and his determination to never let Adam's death be in vain led him to fight back like few other Americans ever have. Although he's never held political office, Walsh has been the driving force behind major pieces of child protection legislation. His hard work led to Walsh being honored five times by four presidents: Ronald Reagan (twice), George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush. One of Walsh's proudest moments was when he and his wife Revè stood beside President George W. Bush, as the "Adam Walsh Child Protection & Safety Act" was signed into law on the 25th anniversary of Adam's murder.

Walsh became the host of *America's Most Wanted* after much of his crusade. The story of Walsh is one of someone who made a decision about how to react to a negative event, and this decision made a huge impact on his life and the world. Think about the things that have happened in your life and the decisions you have made in response to them. What have you done with the things that have happened to you? How can you take a negative and use it to empower the world?

People have so many reasons for not succeeding. Most of them have to do with people and forces outside of ourselves over which we have no control. It is how people react to the world through the decisions they make that ultimately empowers us and changes our place in the world. This is what you need to do.

The greatest weakness most people have is they never make a commitment to back up their decision. Making a decision is the most powerful thing you can do, but it must be backed up with the power of commitment. You can never do anything or reach great heights if you do not commit to what you're doing. Most people never truly utilize the power of commitment.

There is a huge difference between simply being interested in something and committing to it. For example, Lightner and Walsh certainly had every reason to be interested in putting drunk drivers in jail and finding child killers. They committed to something and made a decision they would fight for what they believed in. Their decisions are what made all of the difference.

In 1519, Hernan Cortes anchored his 11 ships off the Yucatán Peninsula. At the time, the Aztecs, who had tens of thousands of soldiers, ruled Mexico. In contrast, Cortes had only 608 men, 16 horses, and a few cannons. Cortes was committed to win the battle despite having so few men. He made the decision he was going to go back to Spain a winner. Cortes ordered his men off the ships and to shore.

In the middle of the night, people screaming "Fire!" awakened the soldiers. They rose from their sleep and saw all 11 ships burning out in the water. The men rushed to the row boats to go fight the fire. But Cortés stopped them. He told the soldiers he had ordered all of the ships burned. They had no way to retreat. That was the message Cortés sent to his soldiers. They had to win. There was no choice.

Under Cortes, just 608 men, 16 horses, and a few cannons conquered the Aztecs. The power of decision, backed up by commitment, made this incredible feat possible. Cortes made sure his troops were as committed as they could possibly be and that they had no means of retreat.

Most of us decide to do something but deep down we keep the possibility of retreat as an option. What I get out of the story of Cortés, and what makes it so remarkable to me, is it shows how many of us never really truly commit to anything and any decision we make. The people who achieve the most in this life are the people like Cortés, Lightner, and Walsh who make decisions and then proceed to follow through with them. There is so much power in making decisions and making these decisions with commitment. We may have an interest in doing something or want to make a commitment to something. However, very few of us ever follow through. We must follow through and commit. This is the difference between mediocrity and greatness--commitment to a decision.

Many people are tormented by their inability to make a decision and commit. Soap operas are a perfect example of this. Lives are wrecked over and over again by the inability to commit. No one ever knows who they want to be with in soap operas, and relationships are never characterized by commitment. Everyone is always crying, and entire stories are tragic and insane. The only reasons these stories are so nuts is because the characters in them simply can never commit. You need to commit to succeed. You can go back and forth in:

1. Your choice of a mate
2. Your [choice of a job](#)
3. Your choice of a profession
4. Your commitment to your job
5. Your commitment to your mate

6. Your commitment to an education

7. Your commitment to being better at what you do

When you do not commit to a decision about what you want to do, however, you will never have clarity. Instead, you will be in a state of perpetual confusion. This is how most people live their lives. Making a decision and committing to it gives you clarity. Clarity gives you power. Most people say words like "I'll see how it works out" or "I'll give it a try." This is not what you should be doing. You should say "I am doing this!" and move forward by taking action. This is the only way to be empowered by your decisions.

There is a huge danger if you do not make decisions about your life and stand behind them: your life will be made and shaped by someone else. This is what happens to most people. They allow their complete existence to be shaped by someone else. Is this really what you want? You should be the one shaping your life and deciding exactly what happens to you. Do not let others and the world decide what happens to you.

The people who become movie stars, presidents, CEOs, and incredible people in different professions do not just suddenly end up in these positions due to a combination of luck and fate. They generally reach these heights of success because they decide this is what they want and make a commitment to it. You need to realize you have the power to be whomever you want when you decide to do this. Decide what you want for your life and take action.

The most amazing thing about your career is it controls so much of what happens in your life. It controls where you live, the people with whom you socialize, where your kids go to school, how excited you are to go to work in the morning, the kind of car you drive, how many days a week you work, how much you work when you are working, and more. Your career is such an incredibly important thing. Where you are today in your career is due to the power of decisions you made in your life over the past 10 years. You have the power to change the next 10 years and make them even better than the last by the decisions you make today. You need to make decisions that will empower you and create the life you are entitled to and deserve. Start making decisions based on what you want, and do not want, and commit to those decisions today.

SUMMARY:

In this article Harrison discusses how your life is controlled by your decisions and your commitment to them. You have the power to choose in your life, and your decisions shape your entire existence. You need to choose to make empowering decisions in your life and your career. You need to make a commitment to back up your decision. People who achieve the most are those people who make decisions and then proceed to follow through with them. There is so much power in making decisions and making these decisions with commitment. If you do not make decisions about your life and stand behind them, your life will be made and shaped by someone else. Do not let others and the world decide what happens to you. Decide what you want for your life and commit to those decisions today.

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