



Wisdom to Know the Difference: A Webinar for Non-Supervisory Staff

Highlights & Key Concepts

Presenter: Rebekah Demirel, L.Ac MPCC, Founder and Director of Trauma Integration Programs

Summary Ideas:

- Cultivate self-awareness to know your decision-making style and to make decisions from a place of balance and ease.
- Understanding how trauma has affected your life and your clients can help with decision-making in the field.
- Resilience results from the integration of all three approaches: “head and intellect,” “heart and feelings,” and “gut and survival instincts.”

Questions & Responses:

Q1 *How does self-awareness lead to having agency?*

A1 When we cultivate self-awareness, when we understand our inner experience, we can better choose how to act. Our nervous systems, belief systems, and physiology can get stuck in a loop and self-awareness can lead us out of this loop.

Q2 *How can we use begin to access our body for decision-making?*

A2 One way is to point in the direction of your own decision-making. The head represents communication; the heart represents feelings and emotions; and the gut represents our instinctual responses, such as “fight, flight, or freeze.”

Q3 *What is the “head and intellect” approach to decision-making?*

A3 Our head is useful for communicating when we want to appear knowledgeable—it represents outward-facing knowledge. The “head and intellect” can act authoritatively, overruling our other ways of knowing. When people only engage the “head and intellect” in decision-making other parts of us can become disconnected.

Q4 *What is the “heart and feelings” approach to decision-making?*

A4 The “heart and feelings” approach can feel open and expansive—or risky. This approach is often connected to the “gut and survival instincts” approach and can often drive decisions automatically. It can be hard to distinguish between “heart and feelings” and “gut and survival instincts.”

Q5 *What is the “gut and survival instincts” approach to decision-making?*

A5 Our “gut and survival instincts” is our deepest way of knowing, linked to our amygdala and enteric nervous system, also known as our second brain. However, our instincts can be damaged when a person has experienced trauma and abuse. Depending only this approach to decision-making is often a trauma response.

Q6 *How do we help ourselves make decisions?*

A6 Notice how potential answers—a yes, a no—feel in your body and which emotions arise. Breathe, take your time, get grounded, and discuss the decision with a trusted person, which includes yourself. Create a list of pros and cons, asking yourself how to be in alignment with your values and who is impacted.

Resources:

- *Anchored: How to Befriend Your Nervous System Using Polyvagal Theory* by Deborah Dana
- *Nothing's for Nothing* by Rebekah Demirel
- *Activate Your Vagus Nerve: Unleash Your Body's Natural Ability to Heal* by Navaz Habib
- *The Myth of Normal: Trauma, Illness, & Healing in a Toxic Culture* by Gabor Maté
- *Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle* by Emily Nagoski and Amelia Nagoski
- *Widen the Window: Training Your Brain and Body to Thrive During Stress and Recover from Trauma* by Elizabeth Stanley
- *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* by Bessel Van der Kolk
- [The Wisdom of Trauma](#) (video)

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