

Automatic Choices

How to use this card:

*Pass this card around. Each person please state your name and read a small section of the content on *Automatic Choices*:*

Concept 5: Automatic Choices

The choices you make when you aren't consciously participating.

The concept of automatic choices tells us that if we do not consciously work on change, we will be run by our default settings or automatic choices. If appetite foolishness governs your automatic choices, you are likely to have health, mental health, or addiction problems. There are lots of reasons for the gaps between what we know is best and what we actually do. Here are some of the influences that drive our choices:

- Unfamiliarity. Staying the same is familiar and easy. Changing is strange and hard.
- Discomfort. The pain of staying the same is less than the anticipated pain of changing.
- The nature of addiction. The forces that make us want to change are weaker than the forces that keep us addicted.
- Time. Changes require intention, acquiring information, creating a plan, implementing the plan, and adjusting the plan. These things take time.
- Expectations. We expect change to be difficult, and so it is.
- The unknown. The grip of addiction doesn't happen for just one reason. It's the unknown forces you aren't addressing that will sabotage your process.
- Support. If supports are not in place, changing and maintaining changes are sabotaged by the ease with which we can fall back into the relationship with the addiction. Appetite foolishness will prevail without support.
- Personal reasons, in addition to the above.

You can get help from your therapeutic friends at Suppers by learning to observe how your default settings are running your life.

Casey's Story: Salmon for Breakfast

A few weeks ago, I was on my way to the facilitators' training for Suppers and I left the house without having a substantial breakfast. I had grabbed a handful of sunflower seeds, which satisfied my appetite almost until the end of my driveway. The drive is about 25 minutes, so you can imagine that by the time I reached town I was focused not on the meeting but on food – eating – now! I made a beeline for the bakery. I could smell the fresh-baked bread before I got out of the car. I actually sat there for a few moments while thoughts of warm buttery croissants took over my brain. I thought about how many I would order. One for now, one for the car ride home, and maybe one just in case. But something happened at that moment, as I played out the whole scene in my head. I wondered if this was such a good idea. I allowed myself to mentally go into the shop, purchase the croissants, come back to the car and eat one of them. I took a moment to think about how I have felt in the past after doing this exact thing. I remember feeling like having another immediately and spending

the rest of the day in a coffee- and junk-food-consuming downward spiral. Not to mention the brain fog and fatigue. What could I do?

I thought of the Suppers breakfast challenge and discussions we have had at meetings about avoiding the trap of automatic choices and the importance for many people of consuming a high-quality protein and fat in the morning. I am one of those people. I have become familiar with my personal biochemistry over the years through proactive nutrition education, and I now know that omega-3 fats work well for me. So I did something I have never done before: I ate salmon for breakfast. That's right. I marched myself down the street and bought a piece of pre-cooked salmon from the deli and marched right back to my car and sat there and ate it up. Within ten minutes (no joke, ten minutes), I started to feel focused, energized, happy, satiated, and altogether good about my decision.

I had no trouble driving away without a bag of croissants. Perhaps I showed up at my meeting smelling like fish, but it was worth it. I told this story because I was covering the concept of automatic choices, "the choices you make when you aren't consciously participating." For me the most important words in the description were "consciously working on change," "support," and "time." Consciously working on change is an ongoing process. It's what I was doing in the car that day. Support has been the key. I have studied nutrition and for years have known what I needed to do to change my life, but without support I was not able to act on that information. Suppers has supported my change process without any pressure about which changes to make or how fast to make them. As for time, I told the group that three years ago I would not have paused for a second before buying those croissants. That day in my car, I may have taken 15 minutes to make a good decision. I was able to slowly work through it and come out on top.

Continue around the table by briefly sharing how you relate to the Suppers concept of Automatic Choices.

Identify something you consume or a behavior you do repeatedly that you would be better off stopping. What makes you more likely to make the automatic choice?

Discussion Prompts (Each person select a prompt that works for you.)

- What helps you live in your intention?
- From whom can you get the support you need to make healthier choices?

Ideas for Next Steps:

Experiments and Observations:

- Journal an automatic choice experience in a [food/mood notebook](#) (instructions on the Suppers website) with no intention of changing anything, just noting how you feel.
- Share your feelings about making this change at your next Suppers.

Between Meetings:

- Read how other Suppers members have dealt with automatic choices.
 - [Joni's Story: Dor Is in My Fridge](#), page 113 in the 2nd edition of *Logical Miracles* and on the Suppers website.