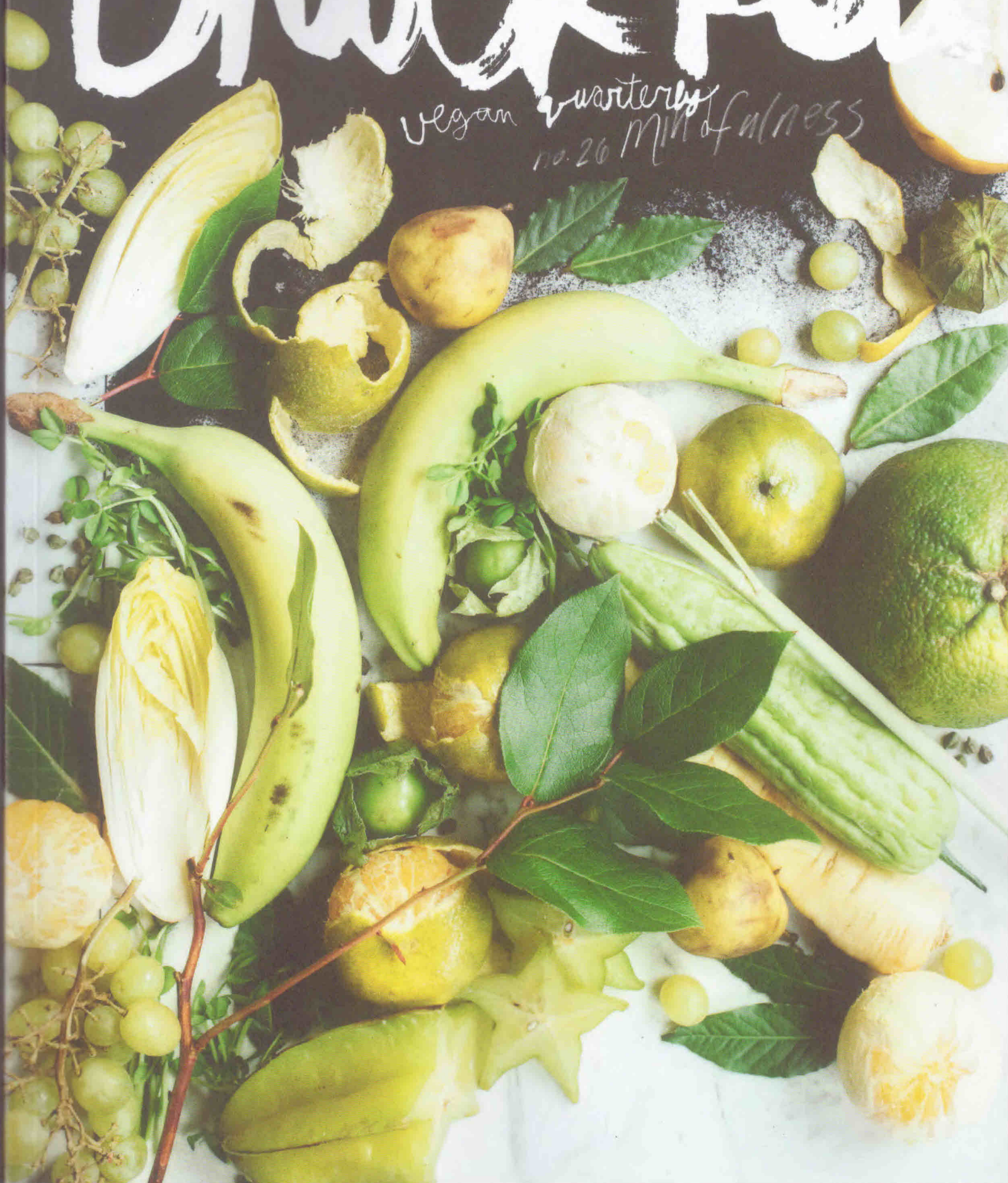


# CRACK PEEL

*vegan quarterly*  
no. 26 *min of alness*





# DECISION FATIGUE

words by Lesley Hobbs / [opentoabundance.com](http://opentoabundance.com)



It's 9am and already I have made too many decisions. Snooze or rise? Yoga or walk? Tea or coffee? Spinach or kale smoothie? Skirt or shorts? And on, and on; the list is endless. I am exhausted and I have yet to leave the house. Absentmindedly, I wonder if there is something wrong with me; should I make an appointment with a doctor? Instead, I google my symptoms.

Aha! I have decision fatigue. And apparently, so does every other person living in the developed world.

We are all familiar with muscle fatigue; we're at the gym doing bicep curls and eventually, we're unable to do even one more curl, no matter how strong we are. Decision fatigue is not too different; it is the idea that making many choices impairs subsequent self-control.

Every day we face decisions, by some estimations, 35,000 daily.<sup>7</sup> Some are seemingly insignificant (sandals or flip-flops) while others may be life-altering (which career to pursue) and each one places demands on our limited abilities. In recent years, our choices have multiplied exponentially. In 2003, Starbucks boasted that it offered its patrons 19,000 options in every store. The average grocery produce section carries more than 250 options and every year approximately 50,000 new products are introduced to the market.<sup>1</sup> Seriously? No wonder life is tiring!

This new knowledge is comforting; we do not make poor choices because we

lack willpower, but rather because our decision-making muscles are exhausted. Just like at the gym, the more we do, the more fatigued we become. The more decisions we make during the course of a day, the harder it is to make good choices. This phenomenon likely explains the almost 100% increase in non-fatal car crashes during evening rush hour vs morning commutes<sup>3</sup>, a lousy call in the final minutes of Super Bowl XLIX that cost the Seahawks a back-to-back win, and the much higher number of impulse purchases made at the end of a long day.<sup>6</sup>

Most of us don't make decisions daily that dramatically alter the course of another's life, but some of us do. Alarming research from 2010 suggests that parole hearings are affected by decision fatigue.<sup>2</sup> The data indicates that cases held early in the day or shortly after a break with food are 65% more likely to have positive outcomes than those cases coming later in the day, regardless of crime or behavior of the incarcerated individual. The judges are not corrupt; they are likely unaware of the discrepancies. They are simply human and just as susceptible to decision fatigue as the rest of us.

All this information is interesting; I am sure most of us can relate. But if making decisions is part of daily life, what can we do about it? There are several steps we can take to reduce decision fatigue and avoid many of the poor choices we all make when our brains hurt.

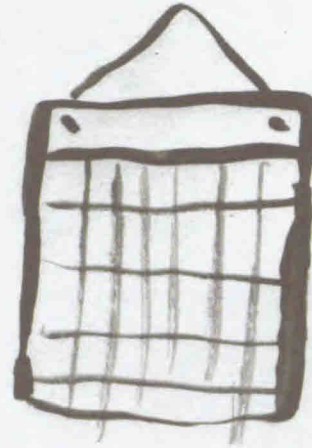


## LIMIT CHOICES

Got a bulging wardrobe? Take a leaf from President Obama (gray or blue suit), Mark Zuckerberg (grey t-shirt/jeans) or Steve Jobs (black turtleneck.)<sup>4</sup> Limit clothing choices; black pants with white blouse, anyone?

What's for dinner? Creating a meal plan significantly reduces the daily stress and choices around meals. An added bonus - the shopping list is easier to build because we already know what we'll be eating on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and so on.

Delegate. A spouse chooses the menu three nights each week. Children love to choose their own clothes, so have them do so each evening. Build a support team of friends and loved ones and bounce big decisions off them.



## TIME BIG DECISIONS

Whether it's an important work decision or shopping for a home, make the most important decisions early in the morning or directly after a meal and a short rest. We will then be more likely to ponder the options, make better decisions and reduce the chances of future regret.

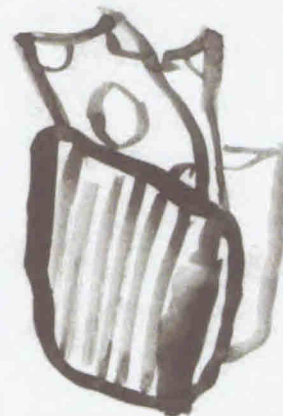
Consider the time-frame impacted by each decision and decide how much time each deserves. Will this matter in 10 hours, 10 months, or 10 years?<sup>9</sup> Skirt or pants affects you for 10 hours, and so deserves little decision time. Quitting a job to start a business may affect you for 10+ years, so take extra time and ask for input from a team of supporters.



# PRIORITIZE

Just because there is a large selection to choose from does not make the decision important. I hate to admit it, but I have been paralyzed more than once by the ridiculous number of choices on a menu or neatly hanging on the sock display. A better approach is to limit the time set aside to make an unimportant decision and move on.

If you're meeting friends for a meal, check out the menu online and make your choices beforehand.



# MAKE CHOICES BASED ON A PERSONAL MANIFESTO

(AKA VALUES STATEMENT)

Most of us reading this have already made values-based decisions about food; allow those same values to dictate other choices. By writing them down, we reduce the choices we have to make.

- I only drink wine on Saturdays. I always ride the bus to work. (No more waffling.)
- I don't spend over \$100 without discussing it with my spouse/support team. (No more expensive impulse purchases.)
- I only donate to X and Y organizations. (No more dodging those endless requests for time or money donations.)



As we become more aware of our daily habits and how often we are faced with a choice, we adjust course, practicing techniques that enable us to better function. By limiting choices, we do not limit our lives; rather, we increase the energy needed for the activities and decisions we deem truly important.

## 15 EASY STEPS TO AVOID WAFFLING

1. Put breakfast smoothie fixings in the blender and refrigerate overnight.
2. Pack a lunch in the evening to reduce temptation.
3. Arrange to meet a friend for an early morning workout.
4. Always shop with a list and limit purchases to that list.
5. Keep a running list of needed items on the fridge.
6. Shop only once or twice a week, including online shopping.
7. Find a brand that works and stick to it. (E.g. jam, shampoo, running shoes, etc...)
8. Hang tomorrow's clothes on the door before bed.
9. Reduce a bulging wardrobe.<sup>5</sup>
10. Remove all social media from a phone.
11. Turn off any computer applications not currently in use.
12. Check email as often as you'd check physical mail. (Once or twice a day.)
13. Create a checklist for every regular activity and consider having the equipment in one place.
14. Only choose books and music recommended by trusted reviewers.
15. Prepare and send all birthday cards and gifts on a single day the month previous. △

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