

USING YOUR TIME WISELY TO ACHIEVE YOUR CAREER GOALS: STRATEGICALLY SAYING YES AND NO

Josée Dupuis

Professor and Chair

Department of Biostatistics

Boston University School of Public Health



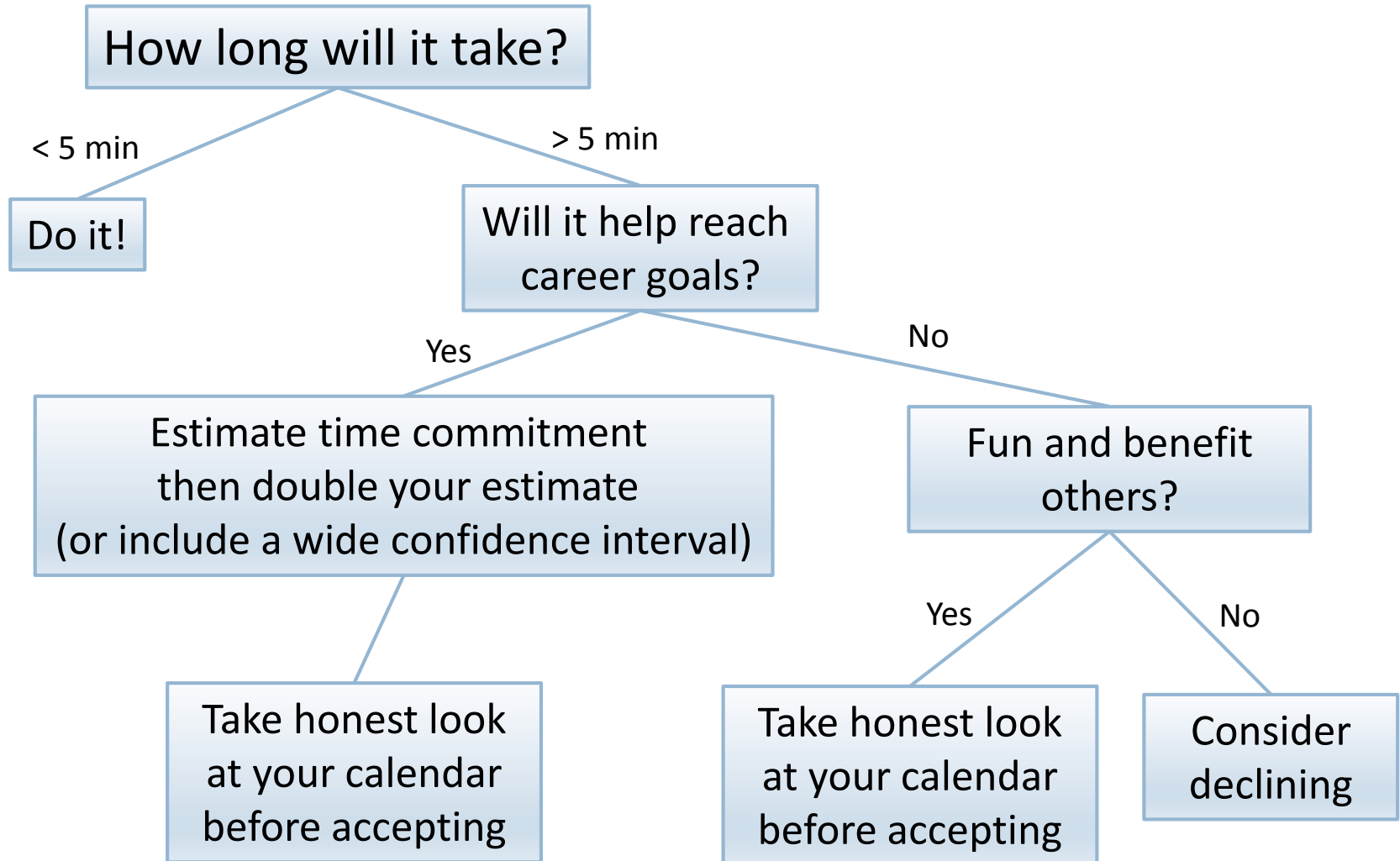
Outline

- When to say no
 - ▣ What are your career goals?
 - Always answer yes/no with these goals in mind
 - ▣ Josée's decision tree
- How to say no
- Examples

Career Goals

- Set short-term and long-term career goals
 - ▣ May involve promoting the career of others!
- Always evaluate demands on your time with respect to these goals
 - ▣ The benefits may not always be direct

Josée's decision tree



Five-Minute Tasks

- May not see immediate benefit, but accumulation of these 5 minute tasks will pay off
 - ▣ May need a favor in the future
 - ▣ May benefit people you don't know who may help your career in the future
 - ▣ Being a “good citizen” often pays off in the long run
- One word of caution: “do it” always comes with the caveat that accepting will not be detrimental to your career

Help Reach Career Goals?

- Very loosely defined
 - ▣ Could have direct benefits
 - Invited talk at a national meeting will increase your visibility and visibility of your department/school/university
 - Joining a research team leads to publication, grants, etc.
 - ▣ Could have potential/indirect benefits
 - Networking event where you may or may not meet people who will help advance your career
 - Opportunity to develop new skills

Fun and Benefit Others?

- Some tasks may not benefit you, but may benefit others
 - ▣ Examples: extra teaching, mentoring
- My rule of thumb
 - ▣ If it will take < 1 day and I will enjoy doing it, I will not say no automatically
 - Take into consideration how busy I am, if there is someone else available who could do it better, etc.
 - ▣ If it will take > 1 day and will not help reach my career goals, I tend to decline

Other considerations

- Is now the right time?
 - ▣ Will the opportunity be available in the future?
 - ▣ Will I gain greater benefits from saying 'yes' in a few weeks/months/years?
- Is there someone else available?
 - ▣ Do I bring unique skills to the task?
 - ▣ Could someone else perform the task?

Other considerations

- Of course, who is asking will influence your answer
 - ▣ Not explicitly stated in Josée's decision tree
 - ▣ Included under “help reach career goals”
 - Doing a favor for someone who can help you reach your career goals is beneficial to your career, even if the task itself is not

How to say no*

- Acknowledge the person and his or her interest in engaging you.
- Identify the importance of the task.
- State with regret that you cannot do the task asked of you.
- Wrap up with a positive wish for success. You may offer suggestions of an idea or another person to help if doing so does not distract you from your priorities.

*Borrowed with permission from N. Karl Haden, President and CEO of Academic of Academic Leadership.

How to say no

- If possible, suggest someone else who could do the task
 - ▣ I am not available, but I think Dr. X would do a great job
 - ▣ This includes invitations to be a referee. The person soliciting a review may be asked to write a letter of recommendation for you some day, or be on a committee deciding on an award for which you are a nominee!
- If the time is not right, say 'no, not now' instead of 'no'
 - ▣ You can negotiate for more time
 - E.g. Cannot do this in the next week, but could do it next month
 - ▣ Give an indication on when you think would be a good time or simply say "please keep me in mind for future opportunities"

Examples

- ❑ Guest lecture in a course
- ❑ Serving on a committee
- ❑ Leading a task force
- ❑ Serving on a study section
- ❑ Writing a review article
- ❑ Associate Editor of a journal
- ❑ Other examples?