

Unit 8

1 Look at the question in the title of the text and decide which statement (1-3) you think will summarise the text. Then read the text to see if you were right.

- 1 Women are better decision-makers than men, despite the stereotype. For example, women decide what to wear each day much more quickly than men decide which new car to buy. At times of stress, women keep calm and are slow and careful in decision-making, whereas men get angry and shout at people. Inside companies the old stereotypes are rapidly disappearing, and women's decisions are valued as much as men's.
- 2 Women and men are similar in their decision-making ability, but there are some small differences. For example, women tend to ask for the opinions of others more than men before making a decision, which is a positive thing. In times of stress, women take safer decisions than men, and their decision-making speeds up. Despite the differences being small, women's decisions are criticised more than men's.
- 3 Women and men are similar in their decision-making ability, but there are some small differences. As teenagers, boys are less decisive, but they soon catch up as adults. At work, women's decisions are sometimes valued more than men's in teams because women ask for other people's opinions. At times of stress men make better decisions, as they react quickly before a problem gets worse. However, in the modern workplace the old stereotypes are disappearing, and women's and men's decisions are now valued equally.

2 Read the text again and decide if the statements are *true* (T) or *false* (F).

- 1 At Seattle University, Therese Huston studies how the minds work.
- 2 In her book, Therese ignored scientific research on decision-making because the studies were all done by men.
- 3 In an experiment using gambling to create a stressful situation, women either stopped betting while they were winning or made very low-risk bets.
- 4 Ruud van den Bos found that if a deadline was near, women became more stressed and made worse decisions.
- 5 Marissa Mayer and Hubert Joly both made a similar decision, but Mayer was criticised in newspapers and Joly was not.
- 6 Therese's fiancé quit his job and moved to be closer to her. When he did that he was criticised for giving up his career.

3 Choose the best meaning (a or b) for the words/phrases in bold according to the text.

- 1 There's a huge **double standard** when it comes to how men and women are seen as decision-makers.
 - a when one group of people is unfairly given different treatment to another
 - b when one group of people have to be twice as good as another to get the same respect
- 2 You see slightly **mocking** studies comparing women and men.
 - a saying unkind things to make someone look stupid
 - b based on unreliable data
- 3 Women are more **collaborative**.
 - a good at listening to other people's worries and offering them sympathy
 - b good at working together with other people to achieve a goal
- 4 **Ironically**, this is often seen as a weakness rather than a strength.
 - a used for saying that a situation is more surprising or shocking than you imagined
 - b used for saying that a situation is strange, because it is the opposite of what is true
- 5 It was the exact same **scenario** we'd been in a year before.
 - a location
 - b situation

4 Use your understanding of the text to complete the sentences (1-8) with these words from the text.

critical effective incapable indecisive poor risky same top-ranking

- 1 There's a cultural belief that women are _____ of making smart choices at work.
- 2 There is a belief that men are quicker and more _____ at making decisions.
- 3 Decisiveness is the _____ quality we look for in a leader.
- 4 During the teenage years girls are more _____ than boys.
- 5 When stressed, men tend to make more _____ decisions than women.
- 6 Women in the study were more _____ of their own decision-making ability.
- 7 It was the exact _____ scenario we'd been in a year before.
- 8 My boss came into my office and told me I had _____ judgement.

Are women better decision-makers than men?

They say the average person makes 35,000 decisions a day. Some are quick and don't require much thought, like whether to have tea or coffee; others concern the big stuff, like what school you should send your child to or whether to apply for that job.

5 In her book, *How Women Decide*, Therese Huston explores the theory that women's decisions are respected less than men's and why this could be holding women back.

'There's a huge double standard when it comes to how men and women are seen as decision-makers,' explains Therese, a cognitive psychologist from Seattle University. 'Men are respected as decision-makers more than women, especially in the workplace, largely because there's this cultural belief that women are incapable of making smart choices at work.'

10 'You see slightly mocking studies about women taking too long deciding what to wear each day – but where are the similar ones looking into how long men take to choose a new car? These stereotypes support the belief that if you want a decision to be made quickly and effectively, ask a man.'

Therese set out to pick apart the stereotypes to see what scientific research had found.

15 'Firstly, I found that the quality of decisiveness is very valued. Studies show that it is the top-ranking quality we look for in a leader. Studies also show that society sees men as being more decisive. However, scientific research shows that men and women struggle with decision-making equally. The only difference I found was during the teenage years – teenage girls are more indecisive than teenage boys. Otherwise, there's little difference between the genders.'

20 However, there are some differences. 'Women are more collaborative,' says Therese. 'A female boss is more likely to ask the opinions of those around her when making a choice. Women ask for input, which has been shown to help you make better decisions. Ironically, however, this is often seen as a weakness rather than a strength.'

25 She also found that during times of stress, men and women make different choices – and the outcomes are often better when women are involved. Study after study backs this up. Cognitive neuroscientists Mara Mather, from the University of Southern California, and Nicole R Lighthall, from Duke University, North Carolina, recently studied the way men and women make decisions and found that in times of stress, they react very differently. During their study, which involved playing a virtual gambling game, they found that when the females became stressed, they made smart decisions – quitting while they were ahead or taking safe bets – but when the men became stressed, they did the opposite, risking
30 everything for a small chance of winning big.

Another study, by neurobiologist Ruud van den Bos from Radboud University in the Netherlands, also found a greater tendency in men to make risky decisions when stressed. At the same time, it found that women make better decisions when under pressure and the closer a woman gets to a deadline or stressful event, the quicker and better her decision-making skills become. However, van den Bos found
35 that the women in the study were more critical of their own decision-making ability than the men.

Therese says women are often brought into big companies when things are falling apart – yet if they were included when key decisions were initially being made, it might prevent problems in the first place.

40 In her book, Therese gives examples of how women's decision-making skills are criticised. In 2013, Yahoo's newly appointed chief executive Marissa Mayer announced that the company would be ending its full-time work-from-home policy. Her decision was criticised by everybody from newspaper columnists to Richard Branson. But then a week later, another well-known US chief executive, Hubert Joly of Best Buy, announced the same thing – yet nothing was said.

45 Therese gives another example from early in her own career, when she was living and working five hours away from her fiancé. Both were advancing in their jobs but they decided that he would quit his job to move closer to hers. 'His bosses wished him luck and people accepted his decision,' she says. 'A year later things changed and we decided I would move to follow his career. It was the exact same scenario we'd been in a year before, yet I faced a lot of questions. My boss at the time came into my office, closed the door and told me I had poor judgement.'

50 It would seem that women have their decision-making questioned a lot more than men. Which is ironic, given that they may be making better decisions, especially during times of stress.