



5 SCIENCE-BACKED STRATEGIES TO BOOST DECISION-MAKING WITHOUT BURNING OUT

By Dr. Preeti Vats



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high-impact habits. Let’s dive into five proven strategies that elite leaders use to stay sharp, calm, and effective — without burning out.

1. REGULATE BEFORE YOU STRATEGIZE

Meet Maya, a fintech founder I’ve coached. She’s smart, visionary, and driven. But for a long time, Monday mornings felt like chaos — her mind spinning, emotions tight, decisions rushed. She didn’t realize that her nervous system was in a low-grade fight-or-flight mode almost all the time.

Once she began practicing **coherent breathing** (inhale for 5 seconds, exhale for 5 seconds), she found

something remarkable: clarity returned. She spoke less but with more power. Her teams felt her presence.

That’s not magic — it’s neuroscience. According to research from the HeartMath Institute, when we slow our breath, we synchronize the heart and brain. This shifts us out of survival mode and activates the **prefrontal cortex**, the region responsible for insight, planning, and emotional regulation.

Dr Vats Pro Tip : Before any major decision, pause for 90 seconds and regulate your breath. Regulated leaders make more intelligent choices.

2. SLOW DOWN TO SPEED UP

Jeff Bezos once said he aimed to make just three high-quality decisions a day. “That’s enough,” he added. Sounds counterintuitive in a world that worships hustle, but he’s right.

The brain operates in two modes: **fast, automatic thinking (System 1)** and **slow, deliberate thinking**

(System 2), as explained by Nobel laureate Daniel Kahneman. Under stress or fatigue, we default to System 1 — fast, reactive, and full of bias.

Top-performing leaders train themselves to activate System 2 when it matters. They pause. Reflect. Sleep on it. They don’t confuse urgency with importance.

Dr Vats Pro Tip : Build in a rule: “No major decision in a reactive state.” That 24-hour pause could be your smartest strategic move.

3. PROTECT YOUR BRAIN LIKE A BILLION-DOLLAR ASSET

Because it is. Every good decision costs cognitive energy — a limited, daily resource. When you spend it on things that don’t matter, you have less left for what does.

Take Barack Obama. While in office, he wore only gray or blue suits. Why? To **eliminate decision fatigue**. He understood that wasting brainpower on trivial choices could reduce the quality of his critical decisions later in the day. As a leader, you don’t just manage time. You manage **decision equity**.

Dr. Vats Pro Tip : Design your mornings to reduce choice overload. Automate what you can. Delegate what you don’t need to decide. Protect your mind for high-stakes thinking.

4. MASTER YOUR EMOTIONAL TRIGGERS

We like to think of decision-making as rational. But if you’ve ever fired off a tense email or made a snap call in a heated meeting, you know the truth: **Emotions drive more decisions than we admit**.

Elon Musk’s 2018 tweet about taking Tesla private at \$420 a share — which caused chaos — was later revealed to have been written under immense emotional strain and sleep deprivation. That’s not a fluke. That’s neurobiology.

When emotionally triggered, the **amygdala** (your brain’s fear and emotion center) hijacks the prefrontal cortex. That’s why it’s so important to learn to spot your patterns.

I ask my clients to keep a “trigger tracker” for two weeks. After emotional meetings or impulsive moments, write:

- What triggered me?
- What did I feel?
- What would a wiser version of me have done?

Dr. Vats Pro Tip: Emotional awareness isn’t soft — it’s strategic. Master your emotions, and you master your leadership.

5. BUILD MENTAL RECOVERY INTO YOUR STRATEGY

Let’s borrow wisdom from Serena Williams. You don’t win 23 Grand Slams without understanding recovery.

The same goes for high-stakes leadership. Making good decisions requires glucose, oxygen, and neural bandwidth. When you keep pushing without rest, your brain’s performance drops — and so does your decision quality.

Smart leaders now treat **recovery as a leadership skill**. That includes:

- Micro-breaks between meetings
- Digital detox zones in your day
- Deep rest practices like meditation or yoga nidra
- Sleep — the ultimate cognitive reset
- Go on a 5 day Luxury wellness retreat which does not focus on temporary relaxation of spa or yoga but Total Neural destress and reset.

One founder I work with created a simple rule: no decisions between 3–5 p.m. That became sacred time for walking, resetting, and restoring. Within weeks, his focus sharpened. He no longer woke up at 3 a.m. rethinking everything. *Dr Vats Pro Tip* : After intense meetings, give yourself a 10-minute “reset walk.” Nature and movement restore brain function faster than scrolling emails.

Great leadership isn’t just about logic or IQ. It’s about **physiology, emotional intelligence, and self-regulation**.

The best leaders I work with don’t just refine their business strategies — they refine their inner systems. They prioritize mental clarity. They know when their brain is optimal (and when it’s not). They create space to think. They don’t react — they respond.

And most importantly? They lead from a place of calm power — not cognitive chaos.

That’s your real edge. Not more hustle. Not more hours. **Just a sharper, clearer, more regulated version of you.**

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Dr. Preeti Vats is a Psychologist, Executive coach, and neuroscience expert with 25 years of experience in India and USA helping high-performing leaders enhance clarity and perform at their peak. Blending psychology, somatic work, and brain-based strategies, she works discreetly with CEOs, founders, and elite professionals across India , US, Singapore , Africa and UAE. Her work delivers real, measurable outcomes—not just insight, but transformation.