

Principles of Bounded-Free Choice

Bounded-Free Choice (Bailes & Hoy, 2013) is the belief that people should be free to choose but yet be guided to make good choices. Thaler and Sunstein (2008) call this idea libertarian paternalism, which is a creative combination of two opposing and contradictory perspectives. The libertarian element of the phrase rests on the idea that individuals should be free to choose, whereas the paternalistic element of the phrase assumes that others may be in a position to make better choices; hence, individuals should be pushed to make the better choice regardless of their own view. In other words, if individuals are about to make a poor choice, they need to be gently corrected to get them on the more beneficial path (beneficial for them). We agree with the strategy of nudging people to make choices in their own best interests, but we find the phrase, “libertarian paternalism,” a little off putting. Although libertarian paternalism is a weak, non-intrusive kind of paternalism, in which choices are merely highlighted, both the terms, libertarianism and paternalism, are loathed by large numbers of people; consequently, we prefer the term **bounded-free choice** to describe *a decision strategy in which people have the freedom to exercise free choice while simultaneously be guided to make beneficial choices.*

Principles for Bounded-free Choice

1. Make the default a positive choice.
2. Make prudent choices easy.
3. Make situations consistent with automatic good choices.
4. Protect people from their own mistakes.
5. Keep choices simple and direct.
6. Set clear, reasonable deadlines; and reinforce them with reminders.
7. Enable, do not hinder, smart actions.
8. Provide constructive feedback that supports positive choice.
9. Structure complex choices for action: first, determine the acceptable criteria, then take the first choice that meets the criteria—satisfice.
10. In general, require people to make choices except when choices are too complex.

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