3 Decisions That Will Define Your Life.

By Mark Van Ness

It’s been 28 years since Julie Farkas and Seth Goldman made one of the most important decisions of their lives; to marry each other. In time, they chose careers they loved that were fulfilling: Julie creating and running programs focused on economic and racial equity and Seth as a social entrepreneur, both agreeing to take the risk of entrepreneurship with the co-founding of Honest Tea a few years later. The mission was to create great-tasting, healthy, organic beverages. In 2011, Honest Tea was acquired by The Coca-Cola Company, becoming the first organic and Fair Trade brand in the world’s largest beverage distribution system. Today, Honest Tea is the nation’s top selling ready-to-drink organic bottled tea and carried in more than 140,000 outlets in the United States. Over the years Julie and Seth have identified the three decisions we all make that have the greatest influence on our success and happiness. Here is some of the timeless wisdom they recently shared with me.

WHO YOU CHOOSE AS A LIFE PARTNER
It’s critical to find someone who shares your values, who you respect intellectually and professionally. That person should be a partner in every way. Entrepreneurs usually have a certain tolerance for risk, but if their partner doesn’t share that same tolerance, then you may end up with an unsuccessful home life. There are many examples of entrepreneurs who have successful companies, yet unsuccessful family lives. We’re fortunate to be aligned around the goals and vision for our careers, and most importantly, a willingness to venture into the unknown. Having a male and female opinion on the branding of Honest Tea has been invaluable - after all, our product is sold to both. It’s interesting how many consumer-driven companies are led by male teams, and yet their customer base is at least 50% women.

WHAT WORK YOU DO
There is one thing we always warn people about: Don’t become good at something you don’t like doing. At business school, recruiters may present you with an amazing career opportunity – a fantastic job in a big city. They will try and convince you that this is crucial for your next big opportunity in life. The danger of taking this job, is that you may actually do well at it; at the expense of something you may really be passionate about.

Julie’s father was the son of immigrants who wanted him to become an engineer, because that was the practical thing for an immigrant child to do. He became a television producer instead, and he didn’t want his children to do things just because they were practical either. He wanted his children to follow their passions. And that’s the advice we gave our sons. It’s advice we’d give to any 18-year-old: Develop a passion for things and then follow them and make a life and career from it.

WHERE YOU CHOOSE TO LIVE
We chose a location with a strong sense of community. There’s a park at the back of our house which is a gathering place and our children were lucky enough to walk to school. Everyone walked, and so we got to know all our neighbors too. We made a commitment to invest back into our community by supporting the local schools and leading efforts to plant more than 200 trees in our neighborhood. One of the lessons we’ve learned with work is to make sure you have a short commute. So much of your life can be spent in traffic. It’s unproductive for your health, your family and your social life. It helps us spend more time with our family, which is far more enjoyable than traffic.