

Instructions for doing The Work

The Work is a simple, powerful and accessible self-inquiry process for working directly with your own stressful thinking and limiting beliefs right in the places where you get stuck. It is applicable in a wide range of situations in leadership, work and personal life to address specific challenging situations and repeating patterns and also to help us expand our thinking and shift our mindset.

This process invites a different way of engaging stuck and stressful situations by slowing down and inquiring into our own thinking. Many situations are complex and are not resolved by problem solving approaches, which can also miss valuable insights and creative possibilities. You are invited to step out of problem solving thinking (our usual approach to challenges) and open your mind to contemplate each question and give some time and space for new answers, insights and connections to emerge.

The Work has a clear, effective structure that illuminates more aspects of the situation, 'stretches' your underlying patterns of thinking and accesses more of your creative mind.

Step 1. IDENTIFY

The first step of The Work is to identify specifically what you are thinking and believing when you are experiencing stressful emotions or feeling stuck. We cannot shift or learn about our beliefs unless we are aware of what they are. With a specific situation in mind, write your stressful thoughts down in short, simple sentences. Write down your judgments, fears, assumptions, attachments ("I need..."), your advice thinking ('you should..' 'you shouldn't' etc.), your worries and/or your cynical thoughts. ie: "He doesn't listen to me"; "I need more money"; "This will never work"

Step 2. INQUIRE

Working with one belief/thought at a time, answer each of the four questions honestly, from your own experience. The questions support you in a deeper inquiry into your own thinking. As you answer each question (in writing or with a partner) *take your time*, consider deeply and let your answers arise to meet the questions. Contemplate. Be curious. If you notice yourself moving into justification and defense – stop and gently move back to the questions.

Facilitators – your role is to simply ask the questions and listen. Please no advice or discussion.

The Four Questions:

1. Is it true? - Answer only 'yes' or 'no'. Take your time. There is no 'correct' answer.

2. Can you absolutely know that it is true? - Answer only 'yes' or 'no'.

Take your time to really consider. Can you absolutely know for sure it is true?

3. How do you react, what happens, when you believe that thought?

Take your time and observe the effect of believing this thought. This is valuable self-education.

What emotions and sensations do you experience when you believe this thought? How do you treat that person? other people? yourself? What images come to mind? What do you get for holding onto this belief (payoff)? What are you not able to do when you are believing it?

4. Who would you be without the thought?

Experience for a moment what it would be and feel like in that situation if you did not believe the thought. You don't have to let go of it in reality - just be curious for a few moments. What do you experience and notice without it? Take your time.

The Turnarounds

The turnarounds provide a structure to stretch your thinking to consider the other possible perspectives beyond what you believe to be true when you are attached to a particular belief. Each turnaround can bring insight and understanding. They can be both playful and profoundly insightful, and sometimes uncomfortable and humbling. Be curious and compassionate.

Moving beyond judgement or 'right' vs 'wrong', and considered with an open curious mind, the turnarounds can offer a powerful window to understanding of yourself, others and the situation. You may not "agree" with, or condone the turned around perspective, and it can still be valuable to consider any truth and understanding available. Over time the practice can build your capacity to hold and understand multiple perspectives.

Note: It is important to do the turnarounds after taking your thought through the four questions.

Turning the thought around.

Using the original wording of the thought/belief you are working with, turn the thought around in as many of these ways makes sense.

For each turnaround find at least three specific, genuine examples of how this turnaround could be true. Give yourself time to take in whatever learning or insight you find in each turnaround and example.

Example: He doesn't listen to me

Turn the thought around to the opposite:

ie. He does listen me

Specific example: *He answered my question, showing he had listened.*

Turn the thought around to the other:

ie. I don't listen to him

Specific example: *I didn't listen to his opinion about my idea.*

Turn the thought around to the self:

ie. I don't listen to myself

Specific example: *It was a good idea I had, and I didn't follow through when he disapproved.*

Turnaround to "my thinking"

When you are doing The Work on an object, group or your body – you can sometimes turn the thought around to "My Thinking" and get some valuable insight.

For example - "My job is stressful" could turnaround to "My thinking (about my job) is stressful
specific example – *I spend a lot of time thinking about all the things I don't like about it.*
(*helpful to see more clearly where the stress is coming from.)

Silence: *When you have completed your inquiry, allow yourself (and your partner) the gift of silence. The Work continues to work after you are finished answering the questions if you allow space for that.*