

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, helping to bring new and creative thinking and insights as well as shifting our mindset and reactions. It is applicable to specific stuck, stressful or challenging situations and also to repeating, stuck patterns in our professional and personal context.

This self-inquiry process helps us to identify our own limiting beliefs, gain valuable insights about ourselves, other people and the situations that are causing us stress and keeping us stuck. Many situations are complex and are not resolved by problem solving approaches. Working with our own thinking and beliefs can be surprisingly helpful and impactful both for our own wellbeing and alignment and for shifting stuck dynamics with others and informing wise action and communication.

Principles:

- Self-Inquiry means finding your own answers at your own pace. There is no 'right' answer.
- (Facilitators are hosts and listeners, and do not give advice, push or engage in dialogue.)
- Curiosity and willingness to be uncomfortable at times creates space for deep learning.
- Self-compassion and grace are crucial to gain learning from the sometimes humbling insights.
- The purpose is learning and growth, not self-blame.

Structure:

The Work has a simple, clear, repeating structure that is designed to both illuminate more aspects of the situation, and to help shift your mindset and stuck patterns of reaction.

Step 1: IDENTIFY

With a specific stressful situation held in mind, the first step of The Work is to identify your own thoughts and beliefs connected to the stressful emotions or stuck feeling. Write your stressful thoughts down in short, simple sentences, prompted by questions from the “JYN” or other basic exercises that help you to identify your assumptions, judgments, fears, attachments, aversions, and cynical thinking.

i.e.: “He doesn’t listen to me”; “I need more money”; “This will never work”

Step 2: INQUIRE

Choose one belief at a time to work with, with a facilitator or in writing. Pause, reflect and answer each of the 4 questions (and sub-questions for #3) honestly and from your own experience. As you answer each question (in writing or with a partner) *take your time*, consider deeply and let your answers arise. If you notice yourself moving into justification, defence or long explanations – stop and gently move back to the questions.

The Four Questions:

1. **Is it true?** - Answer only ‘yes’ or ‘no’.
2. **Can you absolutely know it is true?** - Answer only ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Take your time to look again closely. Are there any 'cracks' in your theory?
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 (in this same situation) without that thought?** Take time to experience how it might feel different without believing and focussing on that thought. What do you notice? (You don’t have to let go of the belief in reality, just take a few minutes to explore.)

The Turnarounds:

The turnarounds provide a structure to help you to open your mind and 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.

Moving us beyond single perspective and polarized thinking, judgement and fear, 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 the 4 questions.

Turning the thought around.

Using the original wording of the belief you are working with, turn the thought around in as many of these ways as makes sense. (note: depending on the wording of the belief, there may be all 3 turnarounds listed below – or there can be more or fewer.)

For each turnaround find at least 3 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.

Belief: I am angry at him because he didn't listen to me.

1. **Opposite:** He did listen to me.
 - *Examples: in the situation what ways did he listen?*
2. **Other:** I didn't listen to him.
 - *Examples: in the situation specifically where was I not listening to him?*
3. **Self:** I didn't listen to myself.
 - *Examples: in the situation specifically where was I not listening to myself?*

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”.

**See Turnarounds guide for more details on how to turn around judgements, advice, needs, underlying beliefs and fears.*

Silence:

When you have completed the 4 Questions and Turnarounds, 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.