

Getting Clarity

Self Guided Journaling Exercise

This is a reflective activity that works with areas of life that are hardest to change. This reflection requires that you go deep and is most effective when you look at parts of yourself that you don't typically show to others.

1

SET ASIDE A CHUNK OR SMALL CHUNKS OF TIME WHEN YOU WON'T BE DISTRACTED! It doesn't matter if you do this all at once, or if you like to do it in pieces so that you don't feel so much pressure. Allow yourself time to explore and make notes. The reflection will yield the best results if you work through each question sequentially without considering what the next question is asking.

2

BEFORE YOU BEGIN – SIT QUIETLY FOR ABOUT FIVE MINUTES

Just sit quietly and relax for several minutes. Intend that this be a deep and meaningful activity!

3

COMPLETE YOUR REFLECTION

Read the information block below and then follow the instructions for the questions on each page.

THE THOUGHTS AND ASSUMPTIONS THAT DRIVE OUR BEHAVIOR

Any time we are "stuck", we are operating on a set of assumptions and thoughts that conflict with one another, and if we are truly stuck, we can't see the two equally important thoughts or assumptions that are holding us in place. Looking at things in a different way can help us break that "logjam" and get clarity, particularly if we are willing to look at our thoughts and assumptions that we typically hide from others (and sometimes ourselves.)

THE QUESTIONS

The journaling exercise takes you through a series of questions, one on each page. Take your time with each and use additional paper if you need more space for any of your journaling.

THE OUTCOME

You will identify hidden assumptions that drive your thoughts and actions. By knowing those assumptions, you will have the opportunity to examine, test, and with time, to change them. When you change your assumptions and your thoughts, ultimately your actions will follow. Sometimes, just seeing the conflicting thoughts and assumptions will create the change you desire. Other times, you can reshape them through a series of experiments. If you need further support, contact Lynn Carnes at lcarnes@carnesassociates.com.

1

What sorts of things, if they were to change (at work or home) for you, would make a positive difference- the bigger the better- in how you feel and are effective in your life?

EXAMPLES:

I would be able to say no and mean it.

I would be fit and healthy

I would be able to trust my colleagues/delegate more work/be a better team player.

2

When you look at the previous question, what does it reveal to you that you are committed to? Make a list of what you are most committed to in your life, and then put a star by those that are very important to you and not fully realized, plus when fully realized, would make a significant improvement in your effectiveness or satisfaction.

EXAMPLES:

I am committed to...deeply honoring my promises to others

I am committed to...my health and fitness

I am committed to...building a strong, self-sufficient team

3

There are many ways that you support that commitment. There are also things you do (or do not do) that keeps that commitment from truly being realized. What are you doing, or not doing, to keep the commitment that really matters to you from being fully realized?

EXAMPLES:

I take on far more work than I can handle

I eat way too much chocolate and frequently skip my workouts

I am often so mired in the details that I don't talk to my colleagues or keep them up to date

4

Imagine doing the opposite of what you said to answer question 3. List any discomfort, worry or even vague fear that you have. (Hint: The deeper you go from here forward, the better. The magic is in the things we don't tell people, including sometimes ourselves.)

EXAMPLES:

I like to please other people

I want to eat whatever I want

I am worried that my colleagues might not agree with me/think I'm not competent

5

Given your list on Question 4, what outcome might you be preventing by doing what you listed on Question 3? Look for what you fear or avoid. If it is something that slightly embarrasses you or is something you would rather not look at, you are on to something! This is known as your competing commitment and can be tricky to uncover.

Write this outcome as a commitment by finishing this sentence: I am also committed to...

EXAMPLES:

I am also committed to be liked by everyone

I am also committed to having the freedom to do whatever I want, even if it hurts

I am also committed to avoiding rejection, especially by those I work with

6

Without our being aware of it, our competing commitments have a way of creating logjams in our lives, keeping us stuck in the same old ways. The competing commitment is kept alive by a BIG ASSUMPTION. In order to start understanding your Big Assumption, you flip the Competing Commitment and include some imagined consequences. I assume that if I did/did not [fill in answer from previous page], then [fill in your version of really bad things happening.]

EXAMPLES:

I assume that if I were not liked by everyone, then that would prove I'm not good enough

I assume that if I did not have the freedom to do whatever I want, I am useless

I assume that if I were rejected, I would lose my job and end up homeless

CONGRATULATIONS!

If you made it this far, you have journaled your way into some useful insights that have the potential to break the logjam and free you to truly fulfill your deepest commitments. While it might feel like the hard work is behind you, in most cases, it's actually in front of you. Why? Because we had good reasons to create that BIG ASSUMPTION and you have neural pathways that are designed to support that belief. If you want something to change, you can change that belief with your strong intention, some experimentation and some new actions. Ready?

INTENTION

First, take a look at what you are hoping to change and calibrate your commitment. On a scale of 1-10, how big a difference would it make in your life to change the Big Assumption? The higher the score, the more likely you will be able to change it. Write your intention to change it in clear language, including who you would be without that Big Assumption running you.

EXPERIMENT

Instead of trying to change everything at once, experiment. Test that assumption just like a scientist would. Notice when that Big Assumption is operating, and then look for other explanations other than your natural default.

IF YOU ARE STILL STUCK...

You may have uncovered an assumption that is too big to break on your own (or something that isn't a 10!). If you still want to break free of the logjam, order the "Getting Clarity" workbook by emailing lcarnes@carnesassociates.com.