

How To Screw Up, Stress Out & Get Nothing Done!

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Digit Demo

What's the next number in the thought bubble?

18 00 54 29 93 —



Ten Questions

Think of a recent tough problem or a decision that you regret. How might one of these questions have helped you make a better choice?

1. What's My Problem & How Am I Framing It?

Write a succinct problem statement: It's far easier to deliberately and systematically reframe a problem when you have a definite point of reference to move away from.

2. How Will I Know When My Problem's Solved?

Visualize solving a problem as a shift along a line of satisfaction: "A" represents an accurate assessment of where you are now, stuck with your problem. "B" represents what you'll see when your problem is solved. You must define "B."

3. Why Is It Important That I Solve This Problem?

Reframing around a higher-level goal sometimes uncovers a different problem, one more amenable to a practical solution. At other times, it enables you to bypass your problem entirely and still achieve your objective.

4. What's My Second "First Solution?"

When you find a solution, set-it-aside and keep looking for clues to the second, third and fourth "first solution" to your problem. Don't let a good solution distract you from a great solution.

5. What If The Opposite's True?

A quick reminder that sometimes you, and the conventional wisdom in your industry, are completely wrong!

6. Why Isn't My Problem Worse?

When you figure out why your problem isn't worse you can focus on doing more of what's already working.

7. Pre-Mortem: Our Initiative Failed, What Went Wrong?

This is a thought experiment that places you six months in the future, looking backwards. When enthusiasm is high, it's an effective way to overcome group think, expose holes in your plan, and set safety nets to catch problems before they become disasters.

8. What Have I Learned Elsewhere That's Relevant To This Problem?

Brain-Frames compartmentalize your expertise. So, whenever you're focused on a specific problem, much of your relevant knowledge remains unavailable to you. This question redresses the balance.

9. What Advice Would I Give To A Friend Or Colleague?

It's so much easier to see the mistakes other people are making than to spot our own errors of thinking. This deceptively powerful question helps us look at our own situation through bystander eyes.

10. What Are The Emotional Aspects of This Logical Problem?

Always reframe a significant problem around at least two of these four facets...

- *Logical*: Analysis, statistics, expert diagnoses.
- *Emotional*: How the problem (and solution) makes stakeholders feel.
- *Individual*: Cognitive pitfalls.
- *Situational*: Context, environment, organizational culture.

For example, in addition to thinking about the logical aspects of a problem (analytics, statistics, diagnostics), try pondering the emotional aspects as well: How does the problem (and proposed solution) make stakeholders feel?

Notes...



Control & Eliminate

How do you usually handle unpleasant emotions? How effective have these approaches been over the long term?

1. In what ways do you “argue” with unpleasant emotions?

- Do you ruminate over situations where you felt unfairly treated?
- Do you get caught up in over analysis of people or situations you can do nothing to change?

2. In what ways do you “avoid” unpleasant emotions?

- Do you try to suppress upsetting feelings?
- Do you try to distract yourself from unwanted emotions?
- Do you try to push troublesome feelings away?
- Do you force yourself to “think positive?”
- Do you get caught up in escape fantasies?

3. In what ways do you “vent” unpleasant emotions?

- Do you punch your pillow, whack a “Damn It” Doll, etc?
- Are you quick to blame other people, situations and things?
- Do you get lost in revenge fantasies?

Creating Space

This exercise is conducted in silence. I **won't** be asking you to share these stories. The goal is to create and then feel the space between you and an unpleasant story you're making up.

Step 1: Unpleasant Story

Tell yourself an unpleasant story. Don't say it out loud, this is just a thought in your head: *"I am [something unpleasant]."*

Examples: ...boring | ugly | too old | stupid | irrelevant | unloved | ignored

Step 2: Create Space

"I'm having the thought that I am [something unpleasant]."

Step 3: Extra Space

"I notice I'm having the thought that I am [something unpleasant]."

What Am I Making Up?

What toxic stories are you making up in these three areas?

1. Stories About Yourself

Example: 'What if I hurt my back?'

2. Stories About Your Relationships

Example: 'This patient is a total nightmare!'

3. Stories About Your Circumstances

Example: 'I should get more respect from Dr. Smith!'

Tip: To help identify your stories, think about these questions, words and phrases...

- Are you asking "what if" questions?
- Are you thinking in absolutes using words like: "always, never, totally, completely?"
- Are you telling demanding stories: "You should!" Or "You must! Or "It's got to, has to, needs to, ought to!"

The Habit Journal

The first step to changing a habit is **not** changing the habit.

1. Mind The Gap

2. What's Your Routine?

What habit would you like to change?

How committed are you to making the change?

3. What Are The Triggers?

What's happening around me?

- Who am I with?
- What am I doing?
- When am I triggered?
- Where am I triggered?

What's happening within me?

- What are my thoughts and feelings?
- What are my sensations and urges?

4. What's The Reward?

Can I identify a reward?

Does the reward deliver on expectations?

Summary

	Think	Feel	Act
Understand	Brain Frame	Emotion Equation	Habit Paradigm
Notice	Red Flags	Sensations/Stories	Habit Journal
Apply	Ten Questions	Distance/Space	Habit Hacking

