

MSOD 612 Written Assignment #3 – Post Session Reflection

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Concepts I Plan to Take Forward.

The course exposed me to many different concepts and tools. Combining theory with practice proved to be extremely valuable for me during the intensive. Being able to practice them on myself and others in the safe community environment allowed me to connect on a deeper level, to experience directly the power of these concepts, and to begin to build capability in using them in the future.

The **Vertical Learning Journey** is a compelling model I intend to use as a daily practice going forward. Having the opportunity during the intensive to go through a full cycle of the four capabilities (dynamic attention, whole person integration, strategic clarity, and authentic collaboration) and experience the four-step process of growing my mindset (recognize current state, deepen awareness, apply insights, and integrate new POV) convinced me this is a framework that is robust and effective in my self-development.

The **Ladder of Inference** provided a rich contextual foundation which explained and clarified what I was vaguely aware of in terms of understanding how advocacy can drive one up the ladder while inquiry takes one down. This tool helped me realize I spend significant time assigning meanings, making assumptions, and drawing conclusions and not enough time exploring and examining the observable data which provides the basis for assigning meaning. I have a graphic of the ladder posted in my home office as a visual reminder to check in periodically and ask myself which rung of the ladder I am on at any given time.

The Method. This four-step process is a fundamental facilitation skill I want to master. The skill I need to develop is the ability to report using language that is neutral, value-free, and event-driven. Too often I make evaluative statements in an effort to draw conclusions, which can taint the data with my own biases and lead a group down a wrong path.

Insights About My Mindset and Resulting Behavior Patterns.

I came into the intensive with an awareness of a need to interact, speak up, and connect. It was driven by years of repressed expression. I created an unconscious behavior pattern of

asserting myself, drawing attention to myself, and making assumptions about others based on my own internally assigned meanings. And, in those instances when I failed to receive the extrinsic validation I looked for, I would allow myself to be thrown into emotional turmoil which would take over me in waves of feelings of rejection, hurt, anger, and self-punishment.

These emotional waves would swing back and forth between the behavioral extremes of “silence and violence”, at times holding back quietly out of fear of rejection or, at other times, speaking out with an emotional intensity not in proportion to the situation. The coping strategy I adopted was to “be an open book” and to “speak my truth” every time I was triggered by something someone said or did that I could either connect with, validate, confront, or challenge.

My mindset was a belief these triggers were meaningful events, empowering moments of opportunity to connect and relate. Responding to these events would improve my well being. Not responding was to admit to being gripped by fear. I promised myself to seek out these opportunities proactively and framed this promise as a bold scientific experiment, using the MSOD program as my laboratory, the Phi Prime community as my petri dish, and my interactions with the members as the culture. I was so excited about this experiment, I created a burning platform for it by declaring my intention in a Yammer post to the community prior to the start of the intensive.

Upon the third day into the session, I realized the experiment was yielding unexpected and even painful results. The feedback I was receiving from others was not always positive or pleasant. The tools and techniques I was learning to apply on myself unlocked something and had started to shift my mindset and challenged what I believed to be true. I came to a new understanding that the “meaningful moments” I so vigorously sought, were, on a much deeper and unconscious level, triggers of an implicit memory clouding my judgment.

The Johari window provided a useful framework to explore my blind self and the drivers of my own impulses and unacknowledged needs. It also brought to my awareness the fallacy of my original hypothesis, that is, that my single focus on self-disclosure as the means for connection and well being was sufficient. It proved not to be the case. I had to accept that whatever benefit I might have derived by reducing the size of the “secret self” window pane, was negated by the feedback from others regarding my blind spots.

As I created my narrative, I was challenged to look for data to support the truth, not just my own narrative. A powerful technique I learned in my Insight Group was to pause before speaking and to ask myself, “What will my question or comment serve?” What I learned was that I don’t need to respond each time I’m triggered. I can listen more, love, breathe, go into the mental hub of my wheel of awareness, and utilize mindsight to gain a new perspective.

Other key insights I learned at the intensive:

- Receiving feedback and addressing blind spots can be a powerful and effective entry point toward learning about the subconscious self. In my particular case, the need to be heard was based on an implicit memory that took control over me as part of my belief structure.
- Being a witty conversationalist and setting the intention to listen and to do no harm are not enough to support authentic collaboration. Inquiry skills are a thing and these skills must be learned and developed to be an effective OD practitioner. It’s also okay to acknowledge that deficit within myself and to take action to develop these skills.
- It’s a gift to experience discomfort, confusion, and emotions, and to use this experience to work toward integration.

SPINE Action Plan Focus Areas.

Two areas I plan to continue to work on are the Physical and the Emotional dimensions.

Regarding the Physical, I need to take action to improve my overall health and fitness. I am overweight and have been pre-diabetic for three years. I have tried several times to address this, each time with mixed results. When I returned from Pájaro, I learned I have diabetes. The physical symptoms I am experiencing are the result of this condition and the health risks will continue to increase if I don’t get this under control quickly. I plan to review treatment options with my doctor to determine if I can successfully manage my condition without insulin. Specific actions I can take in the meantime include getting daily movement and exercise, removing processed foods, sugar, and fat from my diet, and monitoring my blood sugar regularly.

With the recent revelation of my current health status, I have found myself in a mild depression. Part of that is due to general fatigue. I have no motivation to move, get going, or follow my SPINE action plan. It takes tremendous effort and will power to overcome the inertia.

The “Denier” in me wants to hide under a rock and pretend nothing is wrong. I feel frozen to taking any action. Another part of me is angry and blaming myself for causing this situation. The “Judge” in my inner committee has ruled that developing diabetes is all my fault and I must be held accountable. The punishment is just and deserved. The child in me feels frightened because he watched both his mother and mother-in-law suffer with the long-term physical deterioration and pain associated with Type 2 Diabetes. However, another part of me, the Wise Self, feels confident, empowered and hopeful, knowing that my health can improve significantly with lifestyle changes and diet that I can control.

The tendency for self-punishment is an old behavior pattern that must be integrated. My body issues and associated health issues have finally reached a point where to continue to ignore them will have dire consequences. In a very real sense, the concepts and techniques I learned in MSOD 612 have entered my life “just in time” and applying them at this moment in my ongoing learning and self-development can best be described as life changing, and perhaps, quite literally, as lifesaving. Specific action steps I intend to take include daily MAPs, journaling, and following the Vertical Learning Journey process. My intent is to apply dynamic attention techniques toward these emotional issues, gather insights, and incorporate them into a new mindset. And, to repeat this cycle until sufficient integration has occurred which can help me to sustain the necessary behavior changes required to improve my health. I am also considering seeking professional help with these issues if my efforts on my own are not sufficient.

Brain Power Inquiry Follow Up Actions.

A recurring behavior pattern I became aware of at Pájaro was my quick ascent up the Ladder of Inference in my interactions with others. This was a stunning and devastating realization for me as it contradicted what I had previously considered to be a well-honed empathic and intuitive skill. What I perceived as one of my defining strengths (i.e., to assign meaning and draw assumptions based on sensory and intuitive information), turned out to be an unreliable and, at times, a painful and embarrassing miscalculation which negatively impacted myself and others. Much of this was driven by being too much in my own head, being unaware of the selective data filtered from what I observed, and not being fully present and attuned to others.

To change this, I must “reset” my trip up the ladder to focus more on the observable data and, as described in The Method, seek to confirm or refute what I’m seeing or hearing. Specific to the *Brain Power Inquiry* handout, the areas I intend to take action on are:

- To regularly focus my attention, allowing no distractions
- To moderate the flow of information that comes my way
- To pause to observe and reflect on what is happening in the moment

Reflection

I found it easy to reflect during our daily MAPs in community. Being in a relaxed state of mind allowed insights to bubble up easily. Spending time with my SPINE buddy also yielded powerful insights. Our exchanges were organic, not forced. And, each time we concluded a session, I was given a new insight to reflect on.

The easiest time for reflection, however, was at night while I slept. The technique I learned was to ask myself an intentional question before going to bed and then put it aside and not think about it as I went to sleep. Upon waking up in the morning, I would receive an answer. This technique worked for me three nights in a row and I intend to use it as part of my daily practice.

Conversely, I had a challenging time reflecting in our insight group sessions. The intensity of the process and the deep insights that surfaced brought out strong emotions which gripped me and distracted me from reflecting from a Wise Self perspective.

Inquiry

Throughout the intensive, my inquiry skills were put to the test and each day I became more aware of my deficiency in performing them. Coming in believing I was already an advanced practitioner and having that belief shattered unnerved me and damaged my ego. Having to rely on feedback from others on when I asked a good question or not made the inquiry process very painful for me. However, it was necessary for me to go through that experience to get to the clarity I needed regarding where I am at this point in my MSOD journey.

Recognized Strengths.

I recognize a resiliency within me and a willingness to be open and trusting of the process. I have been offered the knowledge and the tools to sustain me as I continue down the OD path.

Apotheosis.

Inspired by the Martin Luther King quote from Adam Kahane's book, *Power and Love*, I wrote my own riff using music to describe whole brain integration. The three standard elements - melody, harmony, and rhythm - are metaphors for the various levels of integration (Melody for Conscious Integration, Harmony for Bilateral and Vertical Integration, and Rhythm for Memory and Temporal Integration). It's not an exact one-to-one correspondence, but it adequately reflects my current level of understanding.

Melody, Harmony, and Rhythm

Melody is the song in one's heart – one's own unique song.

Harmony is the emotions which color the melody.

Rhythm is the energetic flow which pulses and moves the melody forward.

When harmony clashes with melody, it creates discord.

When rhythm clashes with melody, it disturbs flow.

When all three are aligned, however, the power of the melody is magnified and the music of the whole can touch the soul.

Whole brain integration is the state I desire for my music to not only be heard, but to make a difference in the world. For myself, to be a clean instrument means two paradoxical things: to be able to attune to and serve others without personal bias, and, to lead and inspire by being my true self.