



Deep Practice - Change One Thing Process

The process described in this document can be used to change any behavior. It is a complex process that is applied over time. If you are not committed to changing a behavior, don't bother reading any further because this process takes a complete and focused commitment. It is one of few successful ways I know of to deliberately change your behavior. It is not hard, but it does take time, consistency and focus.

Leadership Simple: Many of the concepts presented here, particularly those describing self-evaluation, are explained in detail in our book, *Leadership Simple, Leading People to Lead Themselves* by Steve and Jill Morris. It is a very short book and a quick read. Please read it to support your efforts in making the change you want to make...

You can apply this process to almost any behavior change with the exception of those that may be grounded in deep psychological difficulties.

Control: You only control one thing: yourself. You **cannot** control other people and most other outside situations and events. You can **influence** other people, situations and events. Many things and people are **totally** outside of your control and influence. Knowing what you can control, what you can influence, and what you cannot control are critical factors in understanding change. You can control yourself and make choices and changes.

Behavior: Every behavior has four components: thinking, doing, feeling and physiology. Although we may not actively think about a behavior there is a thinking component behind each behavior we choose. It may be unconscious thinking behind our behavior, but we are thinking just the same. For instance, I have too much work to do so I decide that I have to work faster. Faster is the thought behind getting more work done; a solution to the problem I casually posed in an instant in my subconscious mind. Doing is the physical action component of behavior. We move a hand, stand up and walk, or we talk or type. Feelings are signals our minds and bodies send us that are like happiness, anger, neutrality or fear. And Physiology signals us with physical feelings, like tingling, tension or pain. In every behavior all four components are present. This understanding leads to behavior change.

Choices: Behavior is a choice. Most behaviors are habits of choice that are deeply ingrained. They become automatic. However, you still have many choices you can make in the context of behaviors. You can:

- Control your thinking
- Control what you do;
- Choose how you perceive a situation
- Choose what you want
- Choose the behaviors you use to create what you want.

You cannot choose for other people and you cannot control other people. You do not think for others. Other people cannot do any of this for you. It is you who choose and act using your body and mind. New behavior is a choice.

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Locus of Control: People's thinking is oriented in two ways, what we call locus of control. People with an **external locus of control** feel that they are controlled by outside or external events, other people and/or situations. They feel like victims, even though they may not admit it. Victims blame, deny and defend their positions. Victims claim that their parents, friends, fellow workers, subordinates and bosses are responsible for the victim's problems, negative feelings and actions. They believe that someone else or outside events control them.

People with an **internal locus of control** believe that they are responsible for the quality of their own outcomes. They are not victims of anyone but they and they accept that they are the masters of their lives. No one else is at fault. They acknowledge that they always have a choice. There may be consequences for those choices but they still have a choice.

In other words, no one else can change your behavior. Although you can ask others to make choices for you, the choices they make will not be your choices and you will be giving up the one thing you can control; you. You will have made a choice to give up that choice.

The process described here will be highly effective if you adopt an internal locus of control. If you approach it from an external locus of control you will fail.

Three Environmental Factors:

Making changes requires an environment composed of three key elements. For this process to be effective, these three elements must be in play:

Reframe: The change one thing process is a formal reframing of how you think about a specific behavior. In this situation reframing implies that you change the way you think about something so you can change your behavior... For instance, let's say that you are one of those people who are always in a hurry. You are moving fast juggling many projects, processes and problems, always adding to your to do list, thinking that you will get more done by going even faster. You tend to be impatient with people who think and talk too slowly; who just ramble on. You want to get more done in less time. Unfortunately, your behavior causes you to miss details, rush the other person so that they are dissatisfied, miss something they say, or you may act on impulse, actually interrupting the person you want to influence. One way you may choose to reframe your relationship with time and getting things done is to slow down instead of speed up. After all, when it comes to how much you can get done each day, at some point you will be maxed out. Slowing down may help you produce more out of each thing you choose to do and it may reduce errors and rework. In this case you would reframe **from** moving faster to get more done, **to slowing down to get more done.**

Relate: Get a coach, a family member, a friend or a group who believes in what you are trying to create for yourself and have them encourage you to stay in the game. This can be a spouse, a parent, a friend or a formal group of people who are committed to the same thing like a business organization or a 12 step program. Make commitments to these people and have them hold you accountable for those commitments. The man who is considered the most successful business coach in the world, Marshall Goldsmith, has a friend who calls him every night to ask him some

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simple questions about what he has done each day in the context of exercise, personal development and relating to his family. There is no substitute for having outside help from people and partners.

Master Coaching: (Optional) If you chose a master coach, you will be working with someone who has a deep understanding of the various components that go into the new behavior you are trying to create. This is someone who can observe you and give you incremental feedback about narrowly defined elements of your new behavior. They are people who can read the individual “dance steps” of that behavior and point out how they fit into the whole and what you need to do to execute them. They will point out what you are doing wrong and what you have to do right.

Repeat: Unless by pure luck, no one gets what they want without repeating, over and over again, actions and thinking that support their goals. If you repeat the steps in this deep practice process over and over again, constantly making small adjustments in what you are doing to get closer to your ideal, you will be successful. Constant repetition and adjustment are key elements in this process. You will learn from your experiences and you will make adjustments to come closer to your target. You want to make mistakes so you can correct them consciously. Learning a new behavior requires that you make mistakes. Take action. Make mistakes. Take slightly adjusted action again.

New positive habits need to be reinforced and the only way to do this is by repetition. Once you are acting from this new behavior, keep reinforcing it with repeated listening, repeated actions that produce results, repeated thinking that supports who you want to be.

Myelination: The best athletes, musicians and experts in every field build skill by building myelin in their brain circuits. When you repeat the same behavior over and over again, you use the same brain circuits repeatedly. As you use a brain circuit over and over again it develops insulation around it called myelin. Myelin is the white matter you see in brains when the skull is opened. The more myelin you build around a brain circuit the faster and more directly impulses are transmitted within that circuit. You can consciously build myelin around circuits in your brain by making improvements in narrow areas of expertise and by repeating, over and over again, the same positive thoughts and actions. You can also reinforce negative thoughts and actions in the same way. The brain building processes does not distinguish between right and wrong. Myelin can grow to 50 times its normal and original thickness and when it does get that thick it will transport data without leakage to other circuits and move that data at up to 3000 times faster than uninsulated brain circuits. In this way repetition of the right consistent thinking and action develops skill.

Circuit Memory: Because these circuits have well insulated memory they are hard to change. But you can change a behavior by creating a new insulated skill circuit and that is what this process does.

The Answer to How is Who: One of the factors that defines who you are is the behavior you choose to interact with the world around you. People often ask me, how do I go about being a better manager, sales person or leader? **The answer to how is whom.** Who do you want to be to achieve what you want? When you change a behavior you are changing **who** you are so that you

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can achieve what you want. It may only be a small change, but it does change who you are. For instance, if you improve your listening you will learn more, have a better understanding of people and situations and you will be more aware of the details. You will be equipped to ask better questions and you will be more responsive to others. People will see you differently and you will be different. You are your behaviors.

Behaviors as Tools: Behaviors are tools. You can deliberately achieve what you want by choosing the right tools to apply to each given situation. In order to navigate the world we generally let most of our behaviors run on auto pilot. In other words, we do not consciously select a behavior. We act out of habit. If we choose some of our behaviors consciously we can apply them selectively to achieve what we want.

Self-Evaluation: The most effective people in any field are usually excellent at self-evaluation. In this process we ask you to self-evaluate often, many times a day if you choose. Every action or interaction is an opportunity for self-evaluation. We suggest a simple process that combines many of the elements listed above to facilitate self-evaluation.

You will be asked to self-evaluate after every major action or interaction in which your new behavior, your new tool can be put to use. For instance, suppose you want to slow down in your interactions with other people so that you accurately hear what they say, respect their style of delivering it, and learn as much as possible about the thinking behind their speaking. You have a conversation with Jane about a new product your company is bringing to the market. Jane is a very detail oriented person and you are more action oriented. Jane spends thirty minutes explaining in fine detail the history, development and evolution of the product **before** she gets to her description of what it does, its features and benefits and what the price is. These things she presents last are the things you want to know most of all. In the meantime, you are crawling out of your skin with impatience. You interrupt Jane several times but she stays on track. You ask questions to get her to tell you what you think you need to know to launch the product, but she thinks you have to have the whole story and comes back to the her line of thinking after she answers or deflects your requests. You miss much of what she had to say because you were so upset with having to sit through her long descriptions. Jane's plan called for a one hour presentation. She gave a one hour presentation. You wanted a 10 minute presentation. You sat through a one hour presentation. In the end, you missed much of what she said including important things you wanted to know.

The questions you may ask to self-evaluate are the following:

- What did I want?
- What did I do to get it?
- Was what I did successful in getting me what I wanted?
- What else could I have done?
- How would these alternatives work to get me what I want?
- What will I do next time?

Let's do the self-evaluation.

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- **Setting the Goal:** What did I want? I wanted to get a full description of the product, its benefits and features and its price so I can sell it to my customers.
- **Identifying Your Behaviors:** What did I do to get it? I got much more information than I wanted and lost track of some of the things I wanted most of all because I was impatient and frustrated over things I could not control or influence.
- **Effectiveness:** Did my actions work to get me what I wanted? No, I did not get what I wanted. I was so upset I missed a few important facts.
- **Alternatives:** What else could I have done? I could have slowed down to Jane's pace and realized that I had to sit through the whole presentation anyway so I might as well take notes and learn as much as I can. I could have focused on listening fully to what she was saying. I could have prepared myself in advance for who I know Jane to be. Planning to stay calm and patient while she rambled on. I could have asked her to tell me only what I wanted to know.
- **Evaluate Potential Improvements:** Will these alternatives work to get me what I want? Thinking in advance about how Jane acts might help me be prepared. Reviewing the materials in the change one thing process in advance would help. Taking notes often slows me down and keeps me focused so I do not wander off. Giving in and not expecting Jane to change this behavior would be more realistic. Asking Jane to change her style to accommodate me may have been an alternative, even though I have tried this before.
- **Choose and Commit:** What will I do next time? I will prepare in advance. I will think about how I am interacting with Jane and others. I will review my Change One Thing Process. I will get realistic about who I am interacting with. I will take notes.

This is self-evaluation in action. You reviewed what you wanted; you evaluated your effectiveness in getting it. You created alternatives and you analyzed their potential effectiveness. Then you committed to some or all of those alternatives. Never, never, leave out the commitment.

Even with this self-evaluation you may not get things right the next time you meet with Jane. You may move closer to your ideal but you will still have room for improvement. Self-evaluation moves the process of improvement along. It does not often generate instant change. It is a necessary component of deep practice.

Personal Language of Skill: Our thinking is grounded in language. Self-evaluation will help you develop a personal vocabulary focused on the skill you are building. In order to create this vocabulary you need to deconstruct the behavior you are trying to create so you can practice its component steps one at a time. For instance, if you want to improve your listening you will discover that effective listening is composed of some of the following parts:

- Being patient
- Waiting
- Suspending your agenda
- Delaying judgment
- Withholding reaction
- Stop thinking about what you want to say next

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- Asking clarifying questions
- Paraphrasing what the other person said

You can actually practice each of these parts of listening one at a time and self-evaluate around each.

Change One Thing Process:

There are three phases to this process:

1. Definition or Reframing Phase in which you get clear about and define the new behavior you want to create. This phase can take a few days to a week or two.
2. Activation Phase in which you define and activate processes that will support you in making the change.
3. Repetition Phase in which you take action, self-evaluate, make adjustments and keep moving towards your goal. Phase three can last 6 to 10 weeks or more. The review is also part of the repetition phase in which you periodically self-evaluate to determine what you are doing well and keep practicing until the new behavior is stabilized in your life.

Phase One - Definition:

1. Define the behavior you want to change. Choose a single word or a two or three word phrase that best represents what you want to move towards. You cannot get what you want unless you know what you want. You must choose a goal or target. Since your goal is to change a behavior or add a new behavior what is the new behavior that you want to develop. Describe the new behavior in positive language. If you want to focus on slowing down, you would not say, stop moving fast. Slow down would be the description you use. In the example we used earlier the purpose of slowing down was to work more effectively with others. To listen more accurately, to hear more of what is said, to reduce or eliminate impatience, to collaborate more effectively. To slow down when working with others. I would call this behavior, slow down with others, or steady or steadiness.
2. Open a new file in your computer or get a journal for the specific purpose of behavior change. You will use this journal to write about the new behavior that you want to develop and keep track of your progress and your setbacks.
3. Examine the behavior change you want to make. What do you want to leave behind or what do you want to create that is a new behavior. I suggest you keep in mind what you want to leave behind but put most of your focus into choosing a word or short phrase that represents your goal. As one of my clients often says, something that resonates with you.
4. Look up your key word(s) for your target change in the dictionary. (I.E. If your target is listen, what does the dictionary say about the word?) Write down two or more definitions that seem to fit in the context you are focused on, your work and/or your personal life.
5. Look up and write down a synonym or several for your focus word that fits your context.

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6. Find one or more books on the subject described by your phrase or key word and read them or just skim them in a bookstore to get additional ideas about the word. Keep your ideas in your journal.
7. Look up the word or phrase on the internet. You will find articles on almost every idea humans can generate on the web. Read them and jot down the information in your journal.
8. You are making this phrase or word your focus and your study. You are going to create a visceral understanding of this **trigger** so that whenever you see or hear or think of the key word or phrase, it will activate all the knowledge base you have developed in this process.
9. Take the time to visualize and write down what you would be doing, thinking and feeling if you were being the person you are defining; if you were successfully applying this new behavior. This is more important than the definition phase.
10. Explore in writing at least two times you've acted in the way you are describing in the recent past when you were able to get the results you wanted. If you cannot think of an example from your own actions, please look back at experiences you've had with other people who can stand as an example of this kind of behavior and describe it in writing. You can use the stories of famous people you admire or others in your life. Or do both.
11. For a few days to a week or two, play with these images of the way you want to be.
12. Include in your writing some descriptions of what your current behavior or lack of this new behavior has cost you in your life. Don't dwell on it. Get it in the journal.
13. Write a final paragraph or two describing who you want to be in this situation as if you are already there: I.E.: I am patient with others. They see me as someone who will take the time to listen and be with them. I listen without driving for my agenda.....Use your own words and images. A key factor is to describe the behavior **as if you have already achieved it.**
14. List all the ways your new behavior will add to your life. Keep on adding to this list as you think of additional ways this behavior will enhance your situation. Link the creation of this new behavior to your wildest dreams.
15. This is all about your target word or phrase. The word(s) should act as your anchor and trigger for the behavior change.

Phase Two - Activation:

16. Write the word or phrase on your screensaver at home and in the office. (I.E. Slow Down With Others, Listen, etc.)

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17. Write the word or phrase on 3 X 5 cards and place one on your mirror in your bathroom, in your car, and write it in your calendar, and other conspicuous places in your life.
18. Make a recording of yourself describing the new behavior and the benefits that will accrue to you and then play it back on your computer and in your car on a CD at least two or more times a day. Most anyone with a computer today can create this kind of recording or do it on an old fashion tape machine. Use your written description of the new behavior as part of the script.
19. Write or note your trigger phrase or word in your calendar or task list so that it shows up at least once per day.
20. If possible, enlist the help of a partner, coach, mentor, or follow employee who can support your efforts and encourage you when you are not feeling positively. Or join a group that has a similar interest. Relate to others and get support.
21. Break down the behavior into component parts. The more individual parts you have defined the more successful you may be. Do this in writing and keep it in your journal.

Phase Three - Review:

22. Choose one component part to focus on at a time.
23. Each time you are going into an appointment or situation where your new behavior will be useful; take a minute or two to plan how you will utilize that new behavior in the situation. Do this for the whole behavior and the component part you are working on. Just a few notes are needed but if you want to write more, please do.
24. After the appointment or situation review how well you did. Do the self-evaluation process described earlier, if possible, in writing in your journal. Ask the questions:
 - a. What did I want?
 - b. What did I do to get it?
 - c. Was what I did successful in getting me what I wanted?
 - d. What else could I have done?
 - e. How effective will these alternatives be to get me what I want?
 - f. What will I do next time? Which of these alternatives will I use?
 - g. Do this evaluation for the whole behavior and the component part you are focused on.
25. Notice what you did when you created what you wanted. Celebrate your successes and look at what you could have improved. Examine where you did well and where you went wrong. Look for patterns of repetitive behavior that do not produce the results you want and examine those patterns. Don't beat yourself up over the times you go astray. Just look at what you could do to improve what you did and what you can do the next time.

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Make brief notes in your journal. You may go back to the journal when the day is over and expand on what you have written.

26. Use the same approach in unplanned situations and conversations. Review what happened and how you can inch towards the change you want: who you want to be in these situations. Make brief notes in your journal.
27. At least once per day, review the description of the new behavior you want to create. Think about the component part you are working on visualize what success looks like with that component and the whole new behavior. Look your definition or goal in your journal and read it. Read every word of that description. Feel free to tune it up and change it to get closer to who you want to be.
28. When you feel you have improved your performance to where you want to be with the component you are focused on choose another component.
29. After you explore your new behavior for a while, at least a week, make a list of your commitments around the actions and thinking of your new behavior. Link them to your previous successes or the successes of others by writing a little about how you've used them in the past or how you observed others using those behaviors.
30. Once per week take the time to review how you did for the whole week and appraise your progress as you did previously.
31. If you have not made any progress after a period of three weeks, try not focusing on your target at all for a day or two. Completely let go of all attempts to institute this new behavior. Make notes about what occurs for you and then go back to working on behavior.
32. If you meditate, please focus your attention on your key word or phrase during the first weeks of this process. See how reaching your goal can change your life and visualize, with all your senses, what being the person you want to be would look like.
33. If you "fall off the wagon" a few days don't berate yourself about it. Just go back to practicing this behavior. Mastery is often a matter of moving forward and then leveling off. If you level off for a week or two, keep working on your focus word or phrase and the new behavior behind it as well as the component parts. You will move to the next level if you are persistent and follow this process comprehensively.
34. Live as if you have already accomplished your goal. Reflect on how the new behavior will look in your life. Act as if you are already there.
35. Avoid looking at your past behaviors - the old behavior you are leaving behind. Don't blame yourself or others for what you don't have in relation to your desired behavior. Do not deny, defend or justify your imperfect progress to any person.

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36. You want to focus on the present and the future. You cannot change the past and you will only live in the present and the future. Focus on what you think and what you are doing. Don't spend a lot of time looking at your feelings. You can only control your thoughts and actions. Your feelings are shaped by what you think and do but you cannot control them. They are just signals.
37. Focus on only this behavior change for at least 6 to 8 weeks. Do not take on other behavior changes.
38. There are probably many people in your life who accept your current behavior. Practice your new behavior even with these people. It will be easier if you live from this new behavior with everyone.
39. If you follow this process for about 6 to 8 weeks you'll make a change that can stay with you the rest of your life. However, I suggest you self-evaluate about the new behavior for at least two years. Review your journal and self-evaluate on this following schedule:
 - a. Three months after you started
 - b. Six months, nine months
 - c. One year.
 - d. Every four months until you reach two years.
 - e. If you feel like you are going off course start self-evaluating and keeping your journal on a daily and weekly basis.
40. Some behaviors are hard to change and others are easy. If you use this process you can expect a behavior change to take from three weeks to two years to be fully stabilized – a habit rather than something you have to think about.

Learning New Behaviors:

You will learn and stabilize new behaviors faster if you operate on all three channels of learning; auditory, visual and kinesthetic. Speaking and listening is **auditory**. That is why we suggest you record and listen to the written picture you have of your new behavior and its potential positive impact on your life. Enlisting the help of another person or group will add to this auditory learning.

Visual learning includes reading what you wrote of your own materials that you created in this process. You will read your journal frequently so that you can review what you are doing and I suggest you read and review yourself evaluations as well. Read as many books that illustrate or support your new behavior as is practical. You can just skim them and take out the key ideas.

Kinesthetic learning is created by the act of writing in longhand or typing in the computer or drawing diagrams or writing notes in your journal. The more you physically do something with what you are trying to learn, the more you will implement.

Mind Mapping: The mind map process is a powerful tool for developing your thinking and creating visual thoughts. Read Tony Buzan's *Mind Map Book* or the work of Colin Rose if you

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want to learn more about mind maps and learning. There is no better way to get all the concepts of your focus in one place for quick and in depth reinforcement then to have a mind map.

You can apply this process to any behavior change you want to make. However, do not work on multiple behavior changes at one time. If you work on a different behavior change every 6 to 10 weeks you can potentially change or create 6 to 8 new behaviors in one year. That is huge progress. Most people do not change 8 behaviors in a lifetime.

Good luck with the process. Have fun with it as well. Laugh at yourself because some of what you do will be dumb, funny and always an opportunity to learn. None of it is sad as long as you keep moving forward.