

# INTROSPECTION

## The Process Of Analyzing

*Why I Do What I Do?*

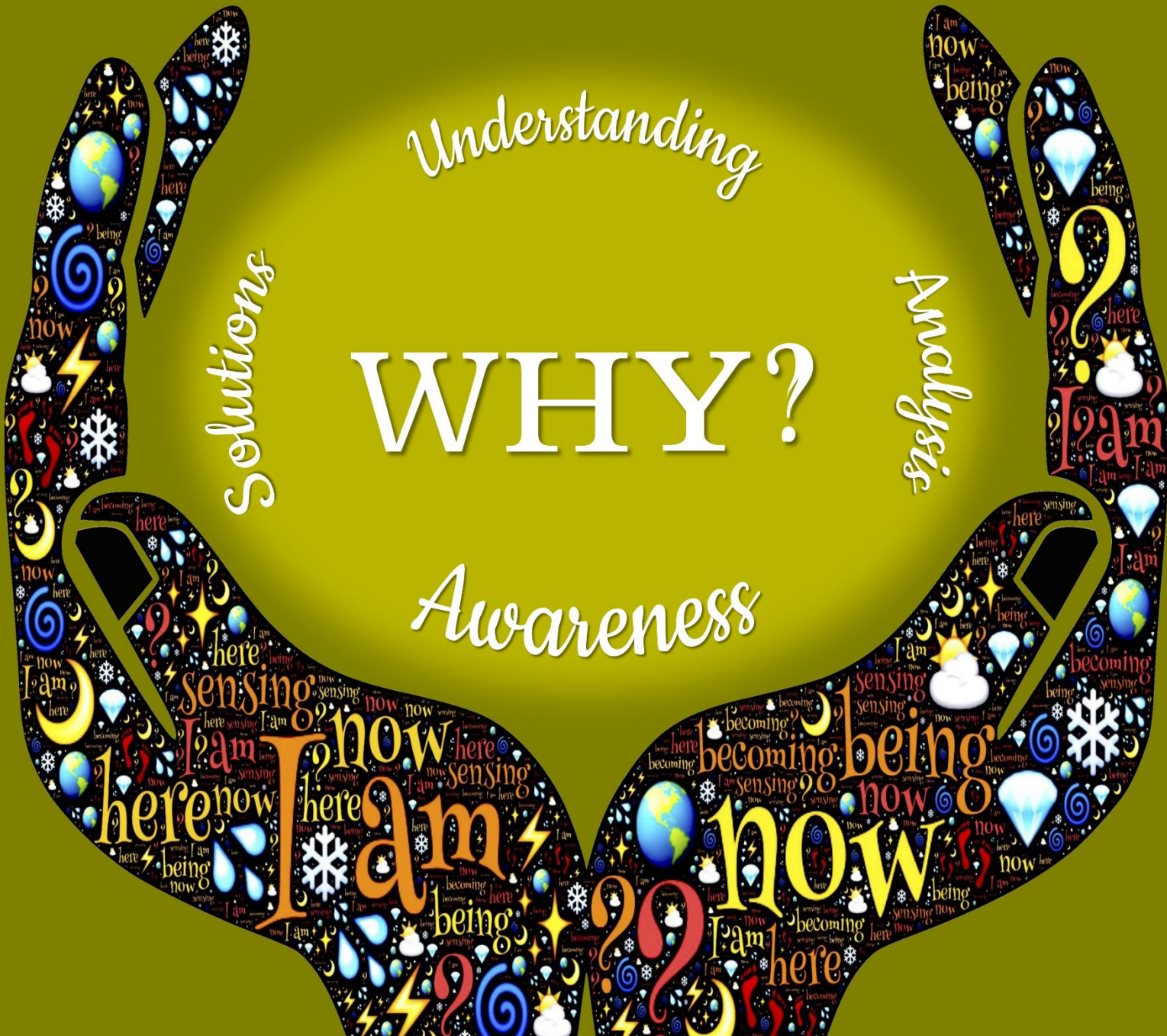
*Understanding*

*Solutions*

WHY?

*Analysis*

*Awareness*



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## Introduction: Self-Analysis

When you find yourself faced with a challenge, how do you respond? I would hope that you would make time for introspection, to analyze what led you to this point. How else can you determine why you do what you do and whether you should be doing something else? If it were easy, the self-help industry wouldn't be on a billion-dollar boom. Having said that if there is one big secret to self-help and personal development it's introspection.

Have you ever squeezed your eyes shut so tight when the alarm sounded that you hoped the act would be enough to whisk you away elsewhere? Why do you have to live through the *same* day again? You get up, you grab a coffee and a bite to eat, you shower, get ready, and go to work, then you deal with the same people and the same problems until it's time to go home and scramble to make dinner and spend time with your family before bedtime.

Have you ever felt like that? Like you're stuck in a time loop? Like you're living in the *Truman Show* version of *Groundhog Day*?

If you have felt that way you have taken the first step in changing your life for the better. You have identified an issue. You can see that you feel like a hamster in an uncontrolled wheel. When you find a way to articulate that feeling then you can do something about it.

That self-awareness isn't the end of the journey, it's merely the beginning. What you need now is the self-awareness to recognize that you are more than just the actor in front of the camera in this movie, you are also the person sitting in the director's chair. No one can do this but you.

# Introspection: What To Do And What Not To Do

## Do Not Obsess

One of the biggest negatives of the self-care movement is how a lot of people have misunderstood what it means. It doesn't mean that you have to think about yourself obsessively all the time. Guess what? Introspection doesn't mean that either.

Obsessing about you isn't going to help you gain greater insights. It's probably going to skew your results. You're going to end up more miserable than you ever were. Why? Because they're doing it wrong.

Often, people who spend a lot of time in introspection end up with more anxiety and struggle more socially. The reason for this is they are doing it wrong. They have become more focused on themselves rather than themselves in the world.

## Do Not Ask Bad Questions

This is one of the ways that people get it wrong. Part of the introspection and analysis process is asking questions, but *which* questions?

We tend to ask why a lot. That *can* be good advice, for other undertakings, but not for this one. If you're searching for underlying causes or reasons for discontent or dissatisfaction with life, then why isn't enough. When you ask why your brain churns out an obvious answer. So, armed with the answer you march forward believing you have cracked it.

You haven't though, the answer your brain provided you was based on your pre-existing beliefs. This is a natural human response, our motives tend to be in our unconscious mind. You have to dig deeper to get into it than just seizing on the obvious why. Instead of asking why, try asking what, who, or even when.

**Let's look at some examples.**

### **Example One**

Margaret enjoys her job, however, she has recently lost her temper with a colleague. It isn't the first time her temper has gotten the better of her when working with Patrice. So, Margaret assumes that it's Patrice. There's just something about her that makes her impossible to work with.

Most people would find that a reasonable deduction. I would suggest that they (and you) are wrong. Perhaps instead, Margaret should be thinking about what is going on in her wider world. Patrice might just be the unlucky person she was working with when other stress got the better of her and she's chosen to blame poor Patrice. Margaret takes a moment to practice introspection and analyze and realizes that today's outburst was the result of anxiety due to a performance review.

So, Margaret casts her mind back to the last time she was working with Patrice and she realizes that at that same time she was dealing with difficulty in her marriage. It was never about Patrice, there was more going on in Margaret's world than she was prepared to deal with.

This is an excellent example of how we ask ourselves the wrong types of questions when we self-reflect, introspect, or analyze our inner-workings. The wrong questions can lead you to make links between things that simply do not exist. Or you might overestimate the connection to a degree that does not exist. This is known as the illusory correlation.

Let's look at another example.

### **Example Two**

Melanie is committed to her job. She is passionate about what she does and puts everything into every project. Her most recent proposal had to be sent to a committee for evaluation and approval. One of the members of the board just happens to be someone who sat on another board who rejected a previous proposal she made.

She has gone from a place of confidence to a place of intense anxiety because she has asked why and her answer was the assumption that this committee member is going to shoot down her proposal just like they did the last one.

This person was responsible for that defeat so they are going to be responsible for this defeat, too. Melanie has no evidence to back up this feeling. In fact, there were 5 board members on the committee who rejected her and she doesn't know how anyone voted. Now Melanie has added to her anxiety and stress levels because she tried introspection and asked the wrong question right out of the gates.

The reality of many why questions is that they only lead you to obsess about your problems instead of asking the right questions to self-reflect, introspect, and analyze.

# The Process of Analyzing

## Focus On What And How Questions

Forget asking why if you want to do introspection and analyzing right. **Instead, focus on *what and how* questions.**

- Instead of asking yourself why do I feel awful? Ask *what is this I'm feeling?*
- Instead of why did I do that? Ask *what made me do that? What did I get out of it?*
- What made me do that?
- What are the things missing from my life?
- What was I feeling before I did X?
- What makes it so hard for me to confront my friend who has betrayed me?
- What elements of my life are problematic?
- What people cause me stress?
- What are my biggest challenges
- How do I deal with my feelings?
- How do I see this problem?
- How does this problem make me feel?
- How do I cope with...
- What do people keep doing that annoys me, bothers me, or frustrates me?
- What are my greatest resentments?
- What transgressions against me have I not forgiven?
- How does X make me feel about myself?
- If you are facing an issue and especially one that is recurring consider...
  - What are the similarities between occurrences? What is the common denominator?
  - How does this issue reflect my defects, for example lack of confidence, or inability to deal with difficult feelings?
  - What would be the ideal alternative scenario that would avoid this issue?

The what and how questions are easier to answer and can offer more insight. The truth is you are not likely to know why when you first start to analyze what you do, so asking this may be futile and frustrating. It's putting the cart before the horse. The what and how questions help



you identify many different facets of whatever you are reflecting on. This is what introspection is for and eventually we will learn the why. All this introspection and knowledge will facilitate the actions we need to take to make changes.

## **The Walk Down Memory Lane**

You're starting with introspection for the first time, then you may want to hop into the way back machine to dig into your childhood.

Often, a view of your childhood can help you understand more about who you are now. As a child, you knew what you liked to do and had big ideas about what you were going to be as a grown-up. Those types of dreams fade, and it isn't just because we've matured. Rather, we often shed these beliefs and ideas because external pressure has shaped or pushed us in a different direction.

### **Ask:**

- What activities did you enjoy in your childhood?
- What career path were you once sure you would follow, but you didn't? Why?
- If there was something you could do, money and opinions aside, what would it be?
- What made you happy as a child?
- Looking back as an adult what was missing in your childhood?
- What would you change about your upbringing?
- How does your inner child feel?
- How do you as an adult view your childhood?

Notice the what questions rather than solely why? What should come first, why is a follow-up. The what gives you the answer, the why gives you more insight, and together, they help you find the right action to take.

## **What Is The Reward?**

Did you know that everything you do repeatedly in life your mind registers a reward or a payoff, this is what keeps you doing these things. It is very important to note that the reward is not always positive in the normal sense, but often for those who have issues, a negative reward is a positive.

**For example:**

- If you don't love or like yourself, and you engage in self-defeating and self-sabotaging behaviors that is rewarding because your negative view of yourself is being reinforced and it gratifies the belief you have about yourself.
- Children who grew up in chaotic families such as those with alcoholism, these children grow up into adults who are more comfortable in chaos and hell. So a chaotic life is a reward, it is the answer to the question of "what do you get out of this life," answer: "I am comfortable with it, I know what to expect and what to do, been there done that."
- Mary attracts men who are emotionally unavailable, they always wind up leaving her which causes her great pain. She really wants a long term commitment and cannot figure out why this keeps happening. Deep down Mary suffers from abandonment issues as her father left her when she was 9. Mary internalized this abandonment as her fault, that she was somehow defective and unworthy of love. Consciously Mary craves committed love and support but since at her deepest core she does not believe she deserves that she attracts men that will reinforce the perception she has of herself, unworthy of love. This, no matter how negative or nonsensical is her payoff, this is the reward.

**What is the payoff in this? What is the reward I am getting? These questions can often yield great insight.**

When you identify the reward, you get the opportunity to make connections between past experiences and your actions today. Typically, the reward of a dysfunctional behavior stems from a perception, mindset, or belief we acquired through some type of traumatic or negative experience. Like the adult child of an alcoholic previously mentioned.

That adult child of an alcoholic's life may be chaotic, dramatic, out of control and dysfunctional. For that adult child, these are rewards. Why? Because it is comfortable, normal, and reflective of what he or she is used to. The payoff is that adult child knows how to navigate these waters, no matter how crazy it may seem to someone looking at it from the outside.

## Reflect On Negative And Traumatic Experiences

A very effective way of analyzing yourself and what you do is to reflect on negative and traumatic experiences in your life. So, if you have trouble actually focusing on today's actions, look to your past, think about an experience that impacted you greatly and look at how what happened then is affecting you today.

For example, that adult child of the alcoholic can reflect in detail on...

- What happened in my childhood home?
- What did I learn?
- What role did I play?
- What were the main feelings I experienced while growing up? Fear? Anger? Pain?
- What were the frustrations?
- What would I change about this experience?
- What did I learn?
- How does what happened affect me today?
- What perceptions or ideas were created by this experience in my mind? About myself? About life? About others?
- I am afraid that...

Once such questions are answered, the adult child can start to make the connections and notice the parallels between their life growing up and their life today – *how is my life now similar to then?*

## How You Ask The Questions

Something else to consider is how you ask the question. You have settled on what questions, but how do you get those right?

Your best bet is to avoid asking problem-centered questions. For example, *what trouble is facing me right now?* Instead of this, frame your question with a goal in mind. *What should my relationship look like in a month?*

It's about solution-focused questions that make you feel good because problem-focused questions are deeply dissatisfying.

**If you are dealing with a persistent problem, now is the time to use this learning to change your focus from problem to solution. It can be more straightforward as well.**

So, you can ask *what is a solution to this specific problem? Or what is the obstacle to get over this problem?* When you have answers to such questions, you can move on to another what question – *what is a way I can move toward making this solution happen?*

**That is the key to proper introspection. There are two major benefits to opting for solution-focused questions.**

1. It reveals possible solutions to problems.
2. It boosts your confidence in how able you are to solve problems and dilemmas.

Self-reflection, introspection, and analysis will help you learn a lot about you. You will learn why you do the things you do and what it means about where you are. Whether you are at your happiest or lowest point, there is a place for introspection.

Don't you want to know where your emotions are coming from? What is guiding you? You can't grow as a person until you take time to pause, reflect, introspect, analyze, and move forward.

# Examples Of Analysis Introspection

## Introspection One

This introspection is about deep-diving into your subconscious. This is where you keep your self-image. Your values, beliefs, attitudes, and experiences are stored deep within your subconscious. This is what drives your behavior and ultimately, shapes you to your core.

It isn't often that we think about ourselves in this way. So, the idea behind this type of introspection is that you're putting a proper effort into thinking about your values, beliefs, attitudes, and experiences. Essentially, you're taking a moment to meditate to gain a greater sense of self-awareness.

## Introspection Two

This is a visualization exercise. Within your mind, create a vision board. Imagine it (feel free to make it a reality and create a vision board for real) and imagine yourself filling it with the things that are important to you and items that you believe represent you accurately. It could be photos, drawings, personally significant items, words, or even poems. It doesn't matter. In the end, you should have a clear vision of what you love and what represents you.

Is it accurate? How can you get yourself closer to what's on your board? Perhaps deeper introspection can help you come to a decision on that front, which brings us to your next opportunity for introspection.

## Introspection Three

This introspection is all about asking yourself questions. It isn't tough, you just have to ask yourself questions about you, about who you are, what you want, what you see in your past, what you see in your present, and what you envision for the future. You should write questions that offer insight, engender positive feelings, and motivate you.

There are no right answers, as long as you are honest. Remember, the more detailed your questions are the more detailed your responses will be. A quick search of the internet should

provide you with a long list of potential introspective questions if you are struggling to come up with a list of your own.

## **Introspection Four**

Journaling is a common hobby these days, but there is a wealth of benefits that come with it. One of those is the opportunity for introspection. How can you do that through observing and journaling? Here's how!

- Daily – write one positive thing from your day – whether it happened to you or around you.
- Ask yourself at least one question.
- Reflect on yesterday's question and take the time to come up with a thoughtful, honest response.

On day one you will only address the first two points, but from the second day onward you will do all three. This is a basic form of introspection and leaving a gap between asking the question and answering it it's giving you an opportunity to observe yourself in light of this question.

## **It Is Not All Negative**

One thing to keep in mind is that introspection does not only yield a discovery of issues, dysfunction and so called negative revelations. There are many positives about yourself and your life that you can become aware of through introspection as well.

Let's refer back to the example of that adult child of an alcoholic. We discussed some of the negative effects of that upbringing, such as being comfortable in and attracting chaos, drama, and dysfunction in their adult life.

**But did you know that growing up in an alcoholic home can also yield many positive effects?**

- For example, those adult children can be highly resilient and possess a large amount of inner strength as a result of living through and surviving a turbulent childhood.
- Those adult children may also possess extraordinary crisis resolution skills, and a profound optimism since for many nothing in adulthood will be as bad as what they have already gone through as children.
- They may also be extraordinarily calm and focused when under pressure or stress.

Often when we go through hard times, crisis, trauma, and dysfunction that create issues in our lives, those same events often facilitate a wide variety of skills, character traits and positives that make us who we are today.

Keep this in mind as you reflect and become self-aware, do not just look at the negative effects, but focus on the positives that may have come from your experiences and consider the totality of who you are as a result of those experiences.

## Summing Up

There's a reason that self-awareness, introspection, and analysis are so difficult. It's easy to pick up a book, buy it, and believe that by reading it and taking no action we're making a difference. That's a nice feeling, to think that you've taken a positive step.

The problem, though, is that introspection takes time and the only person capable of determining problems and finding solutions is you. A book is just the first step, it means nothing if you don't take action off the back of it.

While the benefits of self-awareness and introspection are endless, the process does take time. This isn't about finding an easy solution, it's about taking time out to reflect.

Introspection isn't about quick fixes or easy solutions, it's about taking the time to reflect properly to get to know yourself on a deeper level.

**Through introspection, observation, and analysis you will find the key to unlocking a lot of those issues within you.** By practicing introspection and analyzing what you find you will do a better job at narrowing down the information and questions necessary to move you to the next step.

There's a solution for all your struggles, challenges and dysfunction that are hindering your life, it's just waiting to be found. When you permit yourself to reflect, introspect, and analyze, you allow yourself the space to come up with new and creative solutions.

You don't always need a book to give you the answer. Sometimes, the answer is within you and it's just waiting for you to find it.

**So, why do you do what you do? You might not know yet, but you now have the tools necessary to figure it out.**