

MIT OpenCourseWare
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

PE.550 Designing Your Life
January (IAP) 2009 - Spring 2009

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.

Lecture/Discussion 3: Theories, Purges, and Thought Logs

Principle: Purge

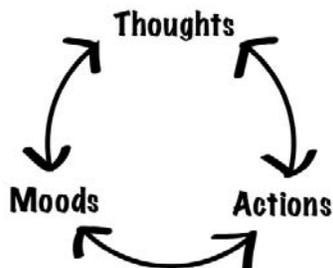
A purge is a dump of whatever is in your brain about a certain subject. It is not a final letter to be sent to someone, it is a look at what the chicken and the brat are squawking at you. As long as you keep their reasoning in your head, it can never be seen for what it is: faulty logic that has a lot of flaws. Put it out in daylight where it can be seen for what it is. While you keep it inside, it will own you.

You should do a purge any time you are stopped in anything. Cleaning up a haunting, keeping a promise, writing a letter, etc.

Principle: Authoring Our thoughts

There is a theory, loosely borrowed from Dr. David Hawkins, with which we disagree. We refer to it only to demonstrate our position. The theory goes as follows: we each vibrate at a certain energy level. Ghandi vibrated at a certain level, and you vibrate at your own level. And try as you might you can only move up or down a tiny bit, say, 2%. You are stuck. Now, we think you can move, but it takes a profound paradigm shift in what is going on in your head, and how you structure your life and your consciousness. You need to intervene and redesign that whole construct.

The first step to this restructuring is to see what you spend your time thinking. Our thoughts lead to actions, which lead to feelings, which lead back to thoughts.



So one way to intervene in this cycle is to design where you want to direct your thoughts. But first you need to understand where you are *currently* directing your thoughts.

We spend an enormous amount of time thinking the same types of thoughts over and over and over again. You will be shocked by the narrow range of thought patterns going on in your head. These thought patterns can tell you volumes about your personality traits, theories, priorities, and where you are directing large amounts of your energy. Oftentimes, when you feel stuck in an area of your life, it is because your traits, theories, priorities, or uses of energy do not align with your dreams. Thus, by recording your thoughts, you can learn more about the factors that keep you trapped in the same old patterns, vibrating up or down at that 2%. And you can redesign new factors to bring about a new internal structure, at a whole new energy level.

A thought log is also a way to go hunting for theories; by examining your thoughts, you can see what theories you believe and prove, day after day. Our thoughts are a reflection of our theories, because theories are the lens through which we view and process the world. But there is no "objective" truth about any theory, so if one theory isn't serving you well, you could pick a new theory, called "re-authoring," and set about proving that. That new, better theory is just as true as the old one.

Class Participation

Participant 1: I have noticed a theme in my thoughts that I need to attend to other people's thoughts before we can attend to mine. And then when I talk about things I am going through, it is uncomfortable for the other person. They find an excuse to leave. They think I'm crazy.

Gaby: It sounds like you have a theory that people won't be able to relate to you. Before you've opened your mouth, you have already decided how they are going to relate to you. So if the other person really says "I'd love to help, let's schedule another time, I have to go now," you only hear "... I have to go now...". To solve this, you want to reauthor the theory. How about "people are happy to help me, I just need to ask."

Participant 2: I am battling with the idea of truth. The premise of theories is that you make your own truth. But I think there is an objective truth out there. God knows if I am a good person or not, no matter what I say about it.

Gaby: It's all about your dream, and where you want to go, and how theories can help you get there. You have an intention, a dream, of being a good person. So you walking around saying "I am a good person" furthers that dream, because believing that you are a good person will cause you to act like a good person. Beliefs fuel action. Choose theories that will further your dreams.

Participant 2: I try to be a good person, and then if I am, I will be judged to be. Not vice-versa.

Gaby: Yes, but in the meantime, how are you going to be living your life? You need to have a conversation with yourself about what you are aiming for, what it means to be a good person. And then believing that you can be that person means having a theory that "I am a good person."

Participant 3: I think this is all too philosophical. Yes, there are some objective truths out there. I have a son. People die. Obama is the President. It's hard to dispute that. But there are so many things in your life that are less objective than that. Joe doesn't like me. Jill is irrational. I get stressed out before calling someone on a phone.

Gaby: So what new theories are you going to prove?

Participant 3: I will turn all suffering into wisdom.

Gaby: And how will you do this? By turning anything bad that happens into an opportunity. Adopting the theory that "if that didn't work out, then it must not have been the thing to get me where I want to be." You are always looking for the next opening. What new theories are people going to prove?

Participant 4: I have a theory that people are inconvenienced to talk to me.

Gaby: So how about a new theory of “people like to talk to me.” I am going to try to push you to the point where you are mildly uncomfortable.

Participant 4: But I am so bogged down with fixing the wounds of the past. I don’t have time to focus on the present right now.

Gaby: How about a new theory “resolving the incidents from the past doesn’t take a long time”? It doesn’t have to be so heavy. And you don’t have to wait to have everything in the past resolved before you can move forward. In fact, as you are inventing new theories in the present, you start to see the past differently. There is no beginning and end to this relationship between past, present, and future.

Participant 4: But if I assume that people like to talk to me, isn’t that arrogant? I don’t want to be arrogant.

Participant 5: My father had that theory. That if you believe you have a good quality, it’s arrogant.

Gaby: There is a difference between arrogance and appreciating yourself. Consider that embracing the good qualities of a human fulfills on the underlying mission of the Catholic Church [relevant for this participant. For others, your particular spiritual practice applies to you instead]. So then the theory is that you are being of service to the Church by appreciating good human qualities.

Participant 5: I think my scheduling problems come from me being inefficient.

Gaby: So my new theory would be “I am efficient.” And then you make promises that are consistent with your new theory. And live them. So I want everyone to prove a new theory that inspires them, and excites them. Don’t suffer with it.

Homework

1. Continue making and keeping promises, reporting in every Sunday. Report on whether you kept or did not keep your promises. Suggested format:
 - a. Describe the promise
 - b. Write for each promise “KEPT” or “NOT KEPT”
 - c. Describe the consequence
 - d. Write if you paid the consequence or not. IF no, by when will you pay it?
 - e. What are your stats on keeping the promise (e.g. I kept 5/7 days).
 - f. What did you notice about yourself? Where did you stop yourself? Where were you a chicken or brat, and where were you great? You can include this for any promise, but ALWAYS do this for every promise that was NOT KEPT.
2. Thought logs. Three times per day, stop and write down the thoughts you were having over the past hour or two. It’s a good idea to set a timer, such as on your cell

phone, to remind you when it's time to record your thoughts. Write down as many thoughts as you can remember, but make it light and quick. Give yourself a time limit, such as 5 minutes, and challenge yourself to write as many thoughts in that time as possible. Don't edit your thoughts; just literally dump whatever is in your brain on the page. Do this for 2 weeks. Some of your thoughts are embarrassing, and you won't want to share them with us. But the things you hide own you, and become truth. So the key is to have a sense of humor about it. Isn't this cute/funny that I keep thinking this thought? Ha!